

December...2013

Dear Friends Far and Near,

The year was 1942 and I was in Chicago participating in missionary training classes and working on the side. It was Christmas time and as I read the story of the Christ child in Luke 2, I read, "The angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and said, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.'" It is the first indication in the New Testament that the gospel story is for all people and that was why I was going to the mission field.

I did go ... and spent a year in Mexico, three years in Bolivia and some 35 years in Brazil.

Let me tell you about our first Christmas in Bolivia. We had been married in November and we were sixteen people living in our one little house with an attached kitchen and bedroom. There were two young girls and they thought we had to have a Christmas tree. What would Christmas be without that? Bob was raising a piglet to one day be a feast for many, but we all decided it would make a wonderful dinner for the holiday. The girls found a branch that we could put in a clay pot and that would be the tree, but what about ornaments? We were so far from any resources that we couldn't even buy colored paper.

Remember Spam? Every Sunday night there was a family that made small breads or rolls and we would go to their home and buy two for each person. One was for a Spam sandwich. I'm sure you remember the can opened with a type of key and then peeled off a strip of metal and the can opened. We cut the spam into 16 slices and we each had one slice. Our other piece of bread was used for dessert...butter mixed with cane syrup. All that, to tell you that we decorated the "tree" with the strips of metal from the cans. Thus, we had a tree that was decorated and roast pork with rice and beans. A little boy came to the door and sold us a handful of green onion tops which we cut up and mixed with cut up onions and mayonnaise which we always made ourselves. I know I remember that Christmas more than many others when we had all our hearts desired. We knew that baby Who was God incarnate. He gave His life to satisfy the justice of the Father and redeemed us from our sin and made us His own...and He ever lives to intercede for us and take us one day to be with Him forever.

O Lord, Most High, with all my heart
Your wondrous works I will proclaim
I will be glad and give You thanks
And sing the praises of Your Name.

Many dear friends have been promoted to Glory this year and Heaven is nearer and dearer with each passing day. I was with three of my four children for Thanksgiving and that was wonderful. God has given me good health with very few episodes of A Fib. I praise Him for this and the many blessings that are new every morning. I thank Him for

each of you, dear friends. I am grateful for the many gifts that you have sent me to supplement my Social Security. Would love to be able to give you each a Brazilian hug. Pretend I did! I pray always that I will have a grateful heart. I look around and so many seem to think they are owed so much... I am owed nothing, but owe everything. One day I was going over some memories and came up with this: The past is a picture of the future. When trying to determine what will be, it is important to know what has been.

Throughout the wilderness journey God reminds Israel what He has done in the past...to give them courage and hope for the future. He encourages Joshua with a review of history as the leadership is passed from Moses to him.

In light of this thought I want to recommend a book by Burk Parsons about one of the great reformers, JOHN CALVIN A Heart For Devotion Doctrine and Doxology. Reading the lives of the godly men who went before us gives us such an appreciation for what we have and are in the Church today.

I wish each of you a blessed Christmas as you join family and friends to worship King Jesus and contemplate his soon return.

Thank you for your friendship, our relationship and for every expression of your love for me and for Bob for so many years. Truly, you are cause for rejoicing. I love each of you and treasure every thought of you.
In His care,

Julie Collins