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In All Things Both Great and Small

by Ann Sallie

Have you ever wondered what it is like on Christmas morning for our missionaries who are away from family and friends in a faraway land? Come have a seat with me on my front porch swing and I will pass on a glimpse of a young missionary couple in Leuven, Belgium, long ago, with their young son on Christmas Eve.

Thinking back on their first Christmas in Belgium as young missionaries, the mother* reminisced how lonely and forgotten she and her husband had felt. The ache in her heart on Christmas Day was unrelenting as they ate pancakes and each opened a small gift—one that had reached them from the states and one from someone in Belgium—then they had a good cry, lonely and longing for home. After that first year, Stone Church in Chicago, Illinois, heard of their first Christmas, and began sending them a Christmas “box.”

Recently, when this story of thirty five years ago was shared with me, it was if it happened yesterday. The mother detailed how the box would have maybe thirty gifts, each lovingly wrapped, a book, a magazine, a nice gift, a scouring pad, a small toy. She said it was not about the gift per se, but the *gift* of someone from *home* who cared so much they would wrap these gifts individually and send them far away to a missionary family. All the presents would be placed under the tree to await the excitement of Christmas morning. Except one year, the Christmas “box” did not arrive.

“Mommy, it has to come. I know it will. I just know it.” The young missionary mother explained to her young son that the Christmas “box” would not make it to them by Christmas morning since it was already Christmas Eve and there was no box in sight. This did not deter the young boy. “Oh, but Mommy, I know it will be here. I am sure of it.”

As the never-ending hours of Christmas Eve moved on at a snail’s pace, gloom settled over the mother as she looked at her young son. It was difficult to ignore the little tree in the small apartment in Leuven with not one gift underneath. She had to get some fresh air. Stepping out

of the house, her feet bumped into—you guessed it—the “box”—yes, the Christmas “box” from Stone church.

She recollected vividly the young son saying over and over, “It is here! It is here! It is here! I knew it would be here.” They opened the Christmas “box” and joyfully removed each gift and placed them under the tree to await Christmas morning.

After hearing this account, I was reminded once again, in all things both great and small, our precious Lord and Savior cares for us.

Immanuel God with Us!

*The young boy in the story is my son-in-law, Jay Sandidge. His parents, Jerry and Pat Sandidge were Assemblies of God missionaries to Belgium. Jerry has since gone home to meet the Lord, and Pat is a missionary wife for a second time to David Plymire, missionary to Northern Asia (China).