

HOLES IN THE CHRISTMAS TREE

I did something this year that I have never done before. I put my Christmas tree up in October. Now, before you think I am a total fruitcake let me explain. For the months of October and November the tree was decorated with fall decorations and not Christmas things. So, I guess technically it was my 'Fall Tree'.

I love having a pretty tree so I tend to be a tad bit overzealous when it comes to decorating it. I will re-tie bows, re-string garland and re-hang ornaments at least a hundred times before I think it's just right. I won't even begin to tell you about the chaos I experienced throughout the years of stringing lights over and over again. Do you remember the old "I Love Lucy" episodes? I'm pretty sure that must have been an accurate picture of me trying to deal with strings and strings of lights! Can I tell you how thankful I am now for pre-lit trees? I would hug the neck of the one that came up with that brilliant idea and marketed it. The stress level in my home went down about 20 degrees when my husband brought one home a few years ago. Actually, I think it was his stress level that caused him to purchase the new tree without me asking for it. After all, he was the one that had to listen to me fuss and squeal and do all but throw the darn lights out the door year after year!!

When I asked him to bring the tree in from the barn on the first day of October, he gave me *that* look but as always, he was a sweetheart and did it for me. While I love autumn, my real intention for putting up a fall tree was to draw attention to the Thanksgiving season... to have before me a reminder of all I have to be thankful for. I also think of harvest time when I think of fall and Thanksgiving; and this year the tree was a reminder of the great harvest of souls that's before us. Once I explained this to him, he liked the idea of a fall tree. It was the putting up with me decorating it that he dreaded. For better or worse, right?

As always, I set the tree in the stand and began the process of straightening out the branches that had been mashed in the box for ten months. I wanted my tree to look full so I labored to make sure all the branches were spread out and the gaping holes were filled. This year it seemed like my tree had more holes than it did branches. I knew the wide ribbon and ornaments I used to decorate with would help fill in some of the gaps, but after all of those things were on the tree there were still those awful 'bald spots'. In reality, those holes were really not very noticeable. They were actually quite small, but in my mind they looked huge. No amount of rearranging ornaments or twisting branches would help. I'd get one spot fixed and that would cause another hole somewhere else. I worked and worked to cover those holes and finally thought, "I've had it. I'm just going to plug in the lights and see how it looks."

Amazingly enough, when the lights came on, the tree was all I'd hoped for. Those gaping holes were no longer visible because the lights shined through and reflected off the ribbons

and ornaments making everything so full and complete. Why hadn't I just plugged in the lights an hour ago? Oh well, my mission was accomplished! My tree was done. I tidied up a little bit from all the mess of boxes, scissors, pieces of ribbon and the like and then treated myself to a cup of coffee. I sat in front of the tree for a few minutes just to relax and enjoy the season. With a very full heart, I began to give thanks and count my many blessings. My mind kept returning to those lights and the difference they made in the tree. Hmm...the lights. THE Light. Immediately, numerous scriptures began to roll through my mind.

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. John 8:12

In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. John 1:4

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14

Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.
John 12:36

The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. Matthew 4:16

As Holy Spirit brought these words to me, one right after the other, I began to understand what it was He was trying to tell me. You see, I desire with all my heart to be a witness to those around me. I desire to please the Lord in all that I do. I desire for all those I know to see Jesus in me and be drawn to Him and His love. Unfortunately, in wanting this so badly, I sometimes labor in my life trying to fix things just like I labored over that Christmas tree. I work and work to make things right. I strive to be all that I can be. I juggle things and re-do things striving for that perfection...striving to cover the holes in my life that would be a hindrance to my relationship with the Lord or to others. Unfortunately, with that striving comes defeat, frustration and ends with the enemy saying, "Just quit! Just sit down. You're never going to get it right." Much like those strings of lights being flung out the front door, I have hit those points of wanting to just chunk it all away. I admit that I've had those fleeting thoughts from time to time and yet, I know when it comes right down to it, it's never my true heart's desire to throw in the towel. But that striving gets old and wears us out. That's the enemy's plan.

I know how Holy Spirit speaks to me so I was certain there was a lesson to be learned from those tree lights. Much of my labor that day was in vain because the second I plugged in the lights on the tree, it was all I could ever have asked for. The Lord was showing me that our lives are much like that tree. Yes, there are holes...some are small and only we know about them; and some are gaping open for the world to see. We can work and labor to the point of frustration all day long...every day...and not accomplish anything for the Kingdom and the only thing we've gotten is tired!! However, when we spend time in His presence...when we plug into Him...in seconds, those holes aren't nearly as noticeable. His

light overtakes the darkness in our lives. His light covers the holes and fills in the gaps. His light shining in us to a dark world is what will bring the harvest. Plugging into the Source and letting Him shine through us will produce fruit. We will have peace and rest and joy and life abundantly and that light will go forth to those around us.

Plug into Him this holiday season and “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven”.

