

I remember waking up one Christmas Eve morning and seeing a foot of new snow on the ground. And it was still snowing.

Mary and I were living in a house on Grantham St. in St. Paul, Minnesota. That house had no garage; we parked on the street. And there sat my car, halfway buried in a snow drift. Knowing that “a little snow” would not deter the people of my small church in the north suburbs from attending the Christmas Eve service that night, I pulled on my long underwear and wool socks, put on my boots, stocking cap, jacket and gloves. I grabbed my snow shovel, and went to work.

I started digging and shoveling early in the afternoon, after the snow had stopped. The snow clouds quietly drifted away and the sun came out, a brilliant diamond low in a blue winter sky. I dug and I shoveled the snow around my car into great piles. By then the late afternoon sun was casting blue and purplish shadows and causing the snow to show orange and red.

My work was almost done, my car almost free. It was then that I heard—what is that?—and then I saw. I saw the snow plow growling up the street and toward my car. Oh, no. My shoulders drooped, disheartened. Closer and closer came the plow. Then an amazing thing happened: The plow stopped. And then—I could barely believe my eyes—I saw the plow’s blade begin to turn, to turn miraculously away from the curb and toward the street. The operator waved a merry Christmas to me from the cab above as his plow below churned the snow into the middle of the street. As I waved a merry Christmas thank you back to him, he made another pass, pushing the snow to the other side. I can’t remember, but I may have been jumping up and down as I waved. I do remember being pretty happy.

Later that evening and sure enough, there they were, the people of my church. I think *all* of them were there that night, too. And they were happy to be there, happy to be singing Christmas carols and lighting candles to Silent Night together, happy to be saying merry Christmas to each other. I remember being pretty happy, too.

An angel above them said to those shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy.” A miracle had happened, something they did not at all expect, something not at all in accord with the usual: “To you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is Christ, the Lord.” Those shepherds made haste to see this child. Off they ran and, after having seen the child, it says that these shepherds returned, “glorifying and praising God” as they went. It doesn’t say they were jumping up and down, but I bet they were pretty happy.

Pastor Neal