

“Pink Ice”

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From The Principal's Pen

Thanksgiving at my grandmother's meant many things. It meant a properly roasted eighteen-pound turkey. There would always be two pans of dressing, one with and one without onions. Someone always hated onions, and Granny wanted to make sure everybody was happy. There would be more vegetables than I can name. We would have cranberry sauce out of a can, evenly sliced, and placed in a serving tray. It meant authentic brown gravy. It also meant both pie and pound cake. But mostly, for all six grandkids, it meant pink ice. When I was very young, and some of my cousins were still waiting for their parents to meet, Granny decided to treat us with pink ice. She would make several gallons of pink lemonade for Thanksgiving and then pour some of it into ice trays to make her famous pink ice. Looking back, it wasn't that hard to make, and it didn't require any unique ingredients, but we only got it at Thanksgiving and Christmas, that's what made it special. The grandkids would also get in trouble at some point during the day for drawing out the word "ice" in our best southern slang and making the "i" in ice sound more like an "A." It changed the meaning entirely and was another one of those things my mother hated. The question wasn't if someone would get the eye from mom, just a question of if I would get it before or after my brother.

I wouldn't trade anything for the "pink ice" memories I have of those Thanksgivings. As I look back at those years, I failed to appreciate at the time how special they were. I am so thankful for the memories, but I miss the moments. Family. Togetherness. Drawing names for Christmas then putting up the Christmas tree together. It's those simple moments that we only get once that make these times so unique. The pink ice that Granny made didn't take a single extra ingredient. She had already made the pink lemonade she would use, and she already had a dozen ice cube trays in the freezer. What made it meaningful was the thoughtfulness and care she took to make Thanksgiving a little more special for her grandchildren. So often, the most meaningful memories last a lifetime and cost very little.

For many of us, we need Thanksgiving. We need a short break from the day-to-day grind, and we need a moment to recenter ourselves. The last nine months have been extended and unforgiving. This year, there seems to be enough anger and hurt to go around. Anger and hurt because of the circumstances we all face with the dangers that surround family gatherings. Anger from all the things we lost in the last year and all of the moments we have missed. A wise man once reminded me that anger is rooted in the idea that we are hurt because something has been taken from us. And we are

somehow owed. The only way to truly experience thankfulness is to let go of the hurt and appreciate what we have and what we have had.

Dr. Seuss once said, "You ought to be thankful a whole heaping lot, for the places and people you're lucky you're not!" We can always find someone who has it better than us, but we also find just as many that have it worse than us. Beginning to play the comparison game is a dangerous decision that often leads to more heartache than healing. We take transportation for granted until we have a hurricane and fuel supplies run low, we forget that we are blessed that we don't have to walk to work. We usually take the electricity in our homes for granted until a nasty storm leaves us without power or running water. I don't make it a habit of being thankful for that until the weatherman starts calling for snow. I haven't ever appreciated the simple act of gathering for a holiday meal with our family like I do after being asked to be mindful of social gatherings. And, I never really appreciated having students in the school building until they had to stay home. Now, I feel so much more blessed to stand out at the car line and welcome them into the building each morning. If this season teaches us anything, I hope it is to be more thankful and less entitled.

As we get ready to celebrate Thanksgiving, I will take a few minutes to appreciate all of the things we did get to do this year. I am determined to be more appreciative than I have in the past. I will do a better job of seeing blessings that I have missed and possibly even find a "pink ice memory" to pass on to the next generation.