The Master Builder: Stories of Faith, Family, and Miracles from the Life of Waymon Meadows.

Christmas Morning at 3:00 AM in the Dundee Garden

By Waymon Meadows

Most folks in Dundee, Florida, think Christmas only comes once a year, with Santa sliding down a chimney in December with a sack of toys. Those folks clearly don't have five raised garden beds waiting for them out back—and they haven't learned how to carry 61 years of joy into every single morning.

For me, Christmas morning happens at 3:00 AM—and it happens every single day.

While the rest of Polk County is sound asleep under their blankets, my eyes pop open in the dark. For over sixty-one years, waking up meant sharing the start of the day with my precious Judi—even if it was just a quiet, joyful wave of the hand across the room as we greeted another morning together. That kind of happiness doesn't just go away; it stays with you, turning even the quietest hours before dawn into something bright and full of gratitude.

Now, a normal man might roll over and go back to sleep at 3:00 AM. Instead, I slip on my indoor socks and flip-flops, shuffle into the kitchen, and check the clock. 3:00 AM. Right on schedule.

Before I head out to see what "Santa" left in the dirt, I fuel up like any good elf—sometimes with a quick spoonful of plain yogurt, or by firing up the stove for a batch of pancakes sweetened with a little fruit. Then, after swapping into my regular shoes, pulling on a long-sleeve shirt, and grabbing my hat—even if the sun is still three hours away from rising over the Ridge—I step out into the cool Central Florida night.

To the neighbors, an 89-year-old man tiptoeing across a 1.72-acre yard with a flashlight before dawn might look like he's lost his marbles. Let them wonder! They don't know the thrill of approaching a 4-by-12-foot raised bed like it's a brightly lit tree on December 25th.

Every single row is a wrapped present waiting to be opened.

Over in Bed Number One, I peel back the decomposing mulch like wrapping paper to see if the carrots planted in neat little strips decided to poke their green heads up overnight. Look at that—a sprout! You'd think I just found a brand-new bicycle under the tree.

Then I shine my flashlight over to the lettuce patch, and my heart always smiles a little wider. For years, Judi and I loved planting and growing all kinds of lettuce together—watching the crisp romaine, butterhead, and curly leaf varieties fill out row by row in the cool Florida winter. Standing there in the quiet dark, looking at those tender green leaves catching the beam of my flashlight, it feels just like she's standing right beside me, admiring how well our garden is doing.

I move down the line to the cabbage and the mustard greens, shining my light across the leaves like a kid shaking a box to guess what's inside. In Florida, December isn't about snowmen and frostbite; it's prime time for leafy greens that love a crisp night and a sunny afternoon. I give the beds a little inspection—no fussing, no constant spraying, just good soil, a splash of organic fertilizer when they earn it, and a whole lot of anticipation.

"Look at the size of that cabbage head," I whisper to the crickets, smiling as I think of how Judi would laugh at me out here in the dark. "Better than a pair of wool socks!"

That's the secret nobody tells you about vegetable gardening in Dundee—and about life itself. You don't just plant seeds to get groceries; you plant them to celebrate the joy of watching good things grow. Whether you're building a solid block home from the footer to the lintel, nurturing a family across generations, or growing a crisp head of lettuce with the one you love, there's nothing quite like seeing love and hard work come to life right before your eyes.

By the time the sun finally starts to peek over the block wall and the rest of the house wakes up for breakfast, I've already had a full morning of Christmas magic, carrying the warmth of Judi's love right alongside me.

So, to my children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and dear friends reading this on Christmas morning: I hope your tree is full of wonderful gifts today. Cherish every single morning you get to share with the ones you love. And if you ever find yourself wide awake at 3:00 in the morning wondering what to do, grab a flashlight, put on your shoes, and go plant a garden. I promise—you'll never have to wait until December to feel like a kid on Christmas again.

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The Angels of Winter Haven
Waymon Meadows 11/19/2026

December in Central Florida rarely brought snow, yet on Christmas Eve in 1969, a quiet chill settled over the modest rental house in Winter Haven. Inside, the evening felt heavier than the cool air outside.

Just months earlier, Waymon and Judi had stood proudly on the threshold of their dream home near Lake Elbert. They had worked tirelessly to build a life for their growing family—Judi, fresh from earning her credentials as a Registered Nurse, had begun her demanding shifts at Winter Haven Hospital, while Waymon poured his heart into his work. Then, in a split second of screeching tires and twisted metal, a car accident changed everything.

Injured and unable to work full-time, Waymon watched helplessly as the household ledger tilted dangerously into the red. Pride was a luxury they could no longer afford. Together, they made the heartbreaking yet practical decision to pack up their boxes, lease their beloved Lake Elbert home to cover the mortgage, and move into a much smaller, inexpensive rental house until Waymon could fully heal and stand on his own two feet again.

By the time Christmas Eve arrived, every penny was spoken for. Judi, heavily pregnant with their son Kevin, was still working on her feet at the hospital right up to the final days before delivery, determined to keep the family afloat. Looking around their humble living room that night, Waymon and Judi shared a silent, aching sorrow. Their two precious little girls, Jamie and Jenny, were full of the innocent magic of the season, yet the cupboard was bare of presents. In the quiet dark, it felt as though Santa Claus would have no choice but to pass right by their door. Then came a gentle knock.

Waymon opened the front door to find two familiar, smiling faces framed by the porch light: Brother and Sister Brinkerhoff from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Brother Brinkerhoff, a skilled builder who had been constructing the local church chapel, had spent his own precious spare hours crafting a sturdy, smooth wooden crib. Beside him, Sister Brinkerhoff carried the crowning touch of her own quiet devotion—two handmade rag dolls she had lovingly stitched by hand, one for Jamie and one for Jenny.

For a moment, words failed the young parents. Waymon, who knew the value of honest craftsmanship, looked at the wood and saw far more than timber and nails; he saw the hands of the Savior working through a neighbor. And Judi, exhausted from long hospital shifts and carrying new life, felt the heavy burden of worry lift from her shoulders in an instant.

Tears spilled freely down their cheeks—not tears of defeat, as they had feared earlier that evening, but tears of overwhelming gratitude and joy. They invited the Brinkerhoff's inside, their small rental house suddenly feeling larger, warmer, and richer than any mansion on Lake Elbert could ever be.

The next morning, Jamie and Jenny woke up not to a meager Christmas, but to a pure miracle. The girls instantly adored their rag dolls and wooden crib, cherishing them as the best gift they had ever received. Decades later, with Jamie at 60 and Jenny at 58, both women still look back on that Christmas of 1969 as the very best one of their lives—a shining reminder that angels do not always arrive with wings and halos. Sometimes, they arrive in work boots and Sunday smiles, carrying a wooden crib and handmade dolls, proving that no humble home is ever overlooked by heaven.

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The Story of B. H. Roberts and the Thanksgiving Psalm
Sent

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From: bigw1937@aol.com
To: jenny meadows new email, JUDI MEADOWS, Waymon Meadows, jana, Joanna, Jenny Sue Meadows Eshack, BRENDA, John Meadows, Meadows Joseph, jill, Spencer Meadows, Steven Meadows, Jana Meadows, Jamie Valentine, Jenny Meadows
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The Story of B. H. Roberts and the Thanksgiving Psalm

In November 1918, just two weeks after the Armistice ended the fighting of World War I, thousands of American soldiers and high-ranking military officers gathered in France for a grand Thanksgiving service. [1, 2]

The service was conducted by the army chaplains, who sat together on a large grandstand. Among them was Elder B. H. Roberts, a General Authority of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who had volunteered to serve as a chaplain at age sixty. Because he was the only Latter-day Saint chaplain in the group—and not always welcomed by his peers—he had been placed in one of the very back rows on the stand and was not given a part on the program. [1, 2]

As the service moved along, the chaplain presiding over the meeting suddenly stepped up to the podium and made an unexpected announcement: "Chaplain Roberts, the Mormon chaplain from Utah, will now step forward and read the Thanksgiving Psalm." [1]

Roberts was caught completely off guard. He had no advance warning, and worse, he had never heard of any specific chapter in the Bible called "the Thanksgiving Psalm." Knowing that both his own reputation and that of his faith were on the line before a massive assembly of soldiers and officers, he stood up, kept his composure, and began the long walk from the back of the grandstand toward the front—having no idea what he was going to read when he arrived. [1]

Years later, Roberts testified that as he walked toward the podium, he heard a voice speak to him as clearly as if someone were walking right beside him: "The 100th Psalm." [1]

Stepping up to the pulpit, he paused, opened his Bible to Psalm 100, and read aloud: [1]

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.
For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

The words fit the occasion—and the title "the Thanksgiving Psalm"—down to the very letter.

When Roberts closed his Bible and walked back to his seat in the rear, he noticed that none of the other chaplains on the stand would look him in the eye; their gazes were fixed squarely on the floor. He realized then that the surprise invitation had likely been meant to embarrass him in front of the troops, yet quiet inspiration had turned a moment of intended humiliation into a powerful witness of God's help and gratitude. [1]

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