

Devotion, Week of August 10, 2025

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

My mother was one of 10 children raised on a farm in western North Carolina. There were 22 of us first cousins. All but one family lived nearby. My Aunt Ellen and Uncle Fred lived in Virginia, and would come home with their 3 children every summer for a week. There would be lots of visits among the families, but at some point, it would be the day of the boxes. Most of the 22 of us would be outside at my grandmother's playing, getting plenty hot and sweaty, and then would come the call. "All of you in the house, now." Not for a meal – that was generally outside in the front yard under the big oak trees in the shade. No – this was because the aunts had just taken out the boxes. In we would plod, generally in groups by age. And out would come clothes – usually "school" and "church" clothes, often wool or corduroy. - and we would have to start trying on the "hand me downs." We hated it – we were already hot, fairly dirty, and we wanted to go wade in the river and skip rocks, not try on itchy, heavy clothes. But these women were persistent. And most of the younger ones of us would end up going home with new clothes for the fall and winter.

It's funny that when it got cool and I started wearing those clothes, I never really remembered the hot day when I had to try them on. I generally was pretty thrilled to have some nice new clothes to wear – they always looked pretty good to me. The family didn't pass along junk. One aunt dry cleaned almost everything, so those clothes really did look new. Another made a lot of clothes with incredible skill, and they were always interesting and slightly different from clothes other kids got at the local department store. To me, they were presents, generously handed down, just as I handed down mine to younger cousins.

I followed that pattern with our daughter, as fellow moms in our church would bring clothes to hand down. We would all smile when someone else's child showed up in our child's outgrown dress. We even had a habit of "pass along" plants. We would see a neat plant at someone's house and ask for a cutting, and share the fun of propagating things from our friends' generosity. This Sunday we will look at Luke 22 and talk about treasure. I hope you have memories of "passed along" treasure and the generosity of friends and families in sharing.

Jeanne