

# Polly's Pondering

Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever.

They will have no fear of bad news, their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. Psalm 112:6-7

Abraham Lincoln has been called by some the greatest American who ever lived. I don't know if that is true but I have always been thrilled to learn new stories about his life. I would like to share one with you.

When Abe came home from having served in the Black Hawk War, he had thoughts of becoming a blacksmith but those plans changed when at 23 years of age he bought a general store in New Salem Illinois on credit with his 21-year-old friend, William Barry, who became his business partner. That was somewhere around 1831. But things did not work out well and the store was not the profit-making business they had hoped it would be.

At some point during the next few years the two of them were standing on the front porch of the store. Barry turned to Abe in the middle of a conversation and asked "How much longer do you think we can keep going?" Abraham is quoted as saying, "It looks like our business has about winked out," "You know I wouldn't mind so much if we could sell everything we've got and pay all our bills and have just enough left over to buy one book, Blackstone's Commentary on English Law, but I guess I can't".

It is about that time that a wagon is said to have pulled up in front of the store. In it was a desperate man who was moving his family West and was out of money. So, in his desperation he made this offer, "I've got a good barrel on here that I could sell for fifty cents." Of course, the man did not know that he was talking to store owners who had debts, and little to no money. In fact, the story goes that Abraham reached into his pocket and pulled out "the last fifty cents" that he had. The deal was made and Abe now fifty cents poorer was the owner of a barrel for which his business partner made great fun. It sat on the front porch all day.

Later as the evening sky descended, Abe walked to the barrel and peered inside. Noticing there was paper at the bottom he reached in and noticed that it was a book. Can you imagine his surprise when the book turned out to be the Commentary on English Law by Blackstone! Here are his words: "I stood there holding the book, looking up toward the heavens. There came a deep impression on me that God had something for me to do and He was showing me now that I had to get ready for it."

I love this story for a couple of reasons: First, Abraham was failing at something when a message from God came loud and clear. Second, Abraham saw in this experience not a simple coincidence but rather God's providence. Third, Abraham trusted in the power of God to use an ordinary man for something that would require much of him, so he dedicated himself to getting ready for it, mentally and spiritually.

On March 4, 1861 Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

On September 22, 1862 Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation declaring all slaves in rebel states should be freed as of June 1, 1863

On January 31, 1865 the House passes the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution with a 119-56 vote.

On April 15, 1865 President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated 42 days into his second term as President.

On December 6, 1865 the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was ratified.

And fourth, that even death could not stop God's plan for Abraham's life to be completed.

Maybe there have been some coincidences in your life lately that you might want to revisit, you might just discover God's providence being spoken into your life.