

The Glad Game

**A Digital Children's Sermon: Written and Presented by Marsha L. Nolf
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When I was growing up, one of my favorite things to do was read. My family's three-story home in Crafton, a suburb of Pittsburgh, was built in 1911. In the attic, there were many dormer-window areas where I could crawl up with a really good book and read. Sometimes I could hear my mother's voice calling me to do a specific chore or task—set the table; walk the dog; sweep the sidewalk—and I would pretend that I did not hear her. It was only when her voice got to a certain tone and she used my middle name—“Leslie”—that I knew that I had to put the bookmark in my book and spring into domestic action.

Now, one of the first things that I was permitted to do by myself was walk to the Crafton Public Library. Mrs. Broglie, the librarian, was my favorite Crafton municipal employee. She always knew what I might like to read. One day she said: “Marsha, I think that you might like this book—*Pollyanna*.” Oh, she was right. In fact, it is still one of my favorite children's books.

In this children's message, I want to talk to you about *Pollyanna*. There is a good religious message in this book. Now, I know that you boys are thinking: “Yuck! *Pollyanna*, that sound like a girl's book. We're not interested.” Well, fellows, let's make the following deal—give me a chance to make you interested in this book. O.K.?

In this book, the title character is Pollyanna Whittier, an eleven-year-old orphan who goes to live in the fictional town of Beldingsville, Vermont, with her wealthy but stern and cold spinster Aunt Polly, who does not want to take in Pollyanna but feels it is her duty to her late sister.

Pollyanna's philosophy of life centers on what she calls “The Glad Game,” an optimistic and positive attitude she learned from her father. The game consists of finding something to be glad about in every situation, no matter how bleak it may be.

It originated in an incident one Christmas when Pollyanna, who was hoping for a doll in the missionary barrel, found only a pair of crutches inside. Making the game up on the spot, Pollyanna's father taught her to look at the good side of things—in this case, to be glad about the crutches, because she didn't need to use them.

The book states: “Oh, yes,” nodded Pollyanna, emphatically. “He [her father] said he felt better right away, that first day he thought to count 'em [that is, things about which to be glad]. He said if God took the trouble to tell us eight hundred times [in the Bible] to be glad and rejoice, He must want us to do it....”

I double checked Pollyanna's father, and he's right; that is, GLAD is mentioned about 800 times in the Bible [it depends on the translation]. I looked in a book called a concordance.

Now, boys and girls, let's focus on the part of the story that I really like—“If God took the trouble to tell us eight hundred times to be glad and rejoice, He must want us to do it.” I think that right now, as we are practicing “social distancing,” we might be struggling to be glad about things. First of all, we

have to stay home! Our daily routines are disrupted! We cannot see our friends! We cannot play games! We cannot go to church! We're bored! What is there to be glad about?

Well, if Pollyanna can be “glad” about a pair of crutches, I think that we can think about things to be glad about. I'll go first:

- I am glad that I have lots of time to be creative and write children's sermons.
- I am glad that I can share my faith with the children of FPC1793.
- I am glad that members of FPC1793 have reached out to help me with errands and groceries.
- I am glad that I have lots of time to sort and organize my belongings. Librarians love to sort and organize.
- I am glad that I have lots of time to read and work crossword puzzles.

Now, it's your turn. How are we going to do this? I have an idea. I am going to ask Jenna to put my e-mail address as a link on the Family Resource Page. You can click on the link and tell me what you are glad about, especially during this time of social distancing. I would love to hear from you. I promise that I will answer every e-mail message. No, Miss Marsha does not text. Well, boys, did I change your minds about Pollyanna? Let me know in your e-mail messages.

Closing prayer: Dear God, I think that so often we spend our time telling people what we are mad, unhappy, or sad about, and we have forgotten how to play Pollyanna's GLAD GAME. Thank you for telling us 800 times to “be glad and rejoice.” **Amen**

