I am not sure what was very different from last year, but it seemed like Christmas was more hectic than usual for me.
I bet it had something to do with the fact that we added another little Patterson to the family with the arrival of baby Elsie this year.
Or it could have been that our son James has officially become a toddler, and he was really excited about all the joys that come with the season.
Although it was a little more stressful, it seemed more fun as well. Having little children this time of year makes for some interesting stories but awesome memories.
Several things–some small, some big–happened to our family over the past several weeks that have made it one heck of a fun ride.
The Christmas season began immediately after Thanksgiving in the Patterson home. I patted myself on the back this year because I was able to get most of my Christmas shopping done on Black Friday. Proud of my accomplishments, I slept in the next morning to treat myself.
Happy to begin the actual Christmas season without the shopping stress, I eased out of bed that following morning to the sounds of Elsie playing in her crib.
Grabbing a cup of coffee while the baby played on the living room rug, I stopped to gaze out our bay windows to the beautiful morning.
Only it wasn't the dog playing in the yard, James on top of a truck or birds hopping from branch to branch.
It was my husband Jason dressing a deer he had killed earlier that morning. For some reason, he thought the best place to put the skinning rack was right in front of the bay window where we eat breakfast.
"And so it begins," I mumbled to myself, making my way to the other end of the house.
Aside from that one setback the season continued to be joyful.
James and Elsie met Santa Claus and took a few pictures. I was so excited that both my children didn't cry in their photos.
It was Elsie's first time, and she had fun tugging at Santa's beard. James was grinning from ear to ear and spent half the time trying to remind Santa how good he has been. Pay no mind to the fact that he fell to his knees moments later in anguish right in front of him because he couldn't get a sixth cupcake.
We were also able to put our tree up again rather early this year. We found a perfect one, and our house has been filled with the scent of evergreen over the past few weeks.
And in typical Patterson tradition, the tree is leaning heavily to one side.

We had a wonderful company Christmas party at our home this year. The food was delicious, and the house filled with the sounds of co-workers sharing stories and a few jokes. Kids were running around like crazy with toys, but the laughter was the best sound to hear that night.
And the smell of burnt rolls was the first thing that hit every visitor when they walked through the door. Bread has also been my weakness. There were two different occasion this season when I forgot about the bread in the oven.
James helped me out a little more this year by being my little assistant. He helped hold paper while I searched for tape during a few gift wrapping sessions. He helped me mix cupcake batter for a party at church. He promised me to start sleeping in his own bed, even though he ends up in ours by midnight.
And he made my heart melt when he sang a few carols at church. It was his first time in front of a big crowd, and he managed to spot me in the pew. Grinning, he waved at me.
Elsie has used this season for an excuse to warm up her “pre-walking” skills. The bright lights of the tree and other decorations along the furniture have inspired her curiosity as she attempts to make her way around the house. And she has developed a taste for the corner of Christmas presents.
Having a young family during this time of year has been very exciting. The smiles, joy and anticipation in their faces would make any parent fall to their knees.
And as I look over the presents under the tree, I am reminded about the true reason behind the season with the glorious birth of Jesus.
But as I bend down to pick up baby Elsie, sneak a kiss on James’ cheek and grab a quick hug from Jason...I am also reminded of all the other blessings in my life.