

An Advent Series: The Father Said Goodbye



*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)*

I've rarely run across anyone who's thought much about Christmas sadness. But I think about it each December. There's joy, to be sure, as we celebrate the gift of the Christ child and welcome Jesus' arrival on earth. But Jesus' Father? He was left behind. We may say hello, but the Father said goodbye. I have no idea whether the Father actually spoke the words, but there was a goodbye, a separating, when Jesus left His Father's side and entered Mary's womb.

I remember crying the night before I sent each of our kids off to kindergarten. It was hard to let them go, even for a morning, for I had no idea what the world would offer them. God knew what the world would offer His child – nine short months of safety, then birth, thirty-three tough years, and a cross. Yet the Father gave us Jesus in spite of the pain. (Sometimes love's gifts break the heart.)

**Praise God! The Child is born! And weep with God ...
for Father, Son, and Spirit faced a heart-piercing goodbye.**

God, as we well know, gives us many gifts: sunsets and sunrises, children, friends and lovers, tastes of joy and peace and love. But there's a nuance about His goodbye-gift that we miss. This love gift holds unique value. It's not simply one gift in a string of gifts, but the *prerequisite* for other gifts that only God can give.

Had the Father not said goodbye, there would have been no cross, no buying our entrance into God's presence, no future in heaven, no life, no glory, no forgiveness, no peace, no spirit-piercing intimacy, no fullness of joy. Saying goodbye was the necessary gift that permitted all these other gifts. Unless the Father said goodbye these other gifts could never be given.

People who love us sometimes give us costly gifts, not just monetarily, but gifts that cost them personally. They give time when they're exhausted. Hold back unkind words when we've hurt them. Put on a smile to hide tears that would dilute our delight. Parents do this regularly (and most children don't catch on 'till they have children of their own). But Jesus knew. When the Father said goodbye Jesus surely shared His Father's pain. Saying goodbye cost them both. Yet they gave. And this best of gifts – this goodbye gift – gives our Christmas special sweetness. We are indeed deeply loved.

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