

Children at Christmas

by Mike Tucker *

Last weekend, our daughter and son-in-law decided to take a date night, which meant Gayle and I had the distinct pleasure of having our grandchildren for an overnight stay. Being the doting grandparents we are, we decided to take them for a special outing to the mall on Saturday night. Now, this is not just *any* shopping mall. This is the fancy one in town, with a four-story Christmas tree in the middle of a huge ice rink. The one with an elaborate play area for the kids and ten billion twinkling lights in the trees lining the sidewalks.

We began just before their parents left to tell Anna and Anderson that we had a special surprise. We were taking them on a date night, too. It would be such fun! It's possible that Gayle and I were more excited than they were, but Anna, who is nearing her third birthday, joined in the fun and asked over and over, "Where are we going, Papa? What's our surprise, Grammie?" Anderson, who's not quite a year old, picked up on the anticipation and talked all the way to the mall in his own unique language.

The evening was a joy! Their eyes danced with delight at the sight of the gigantic, shining tree. Anna was thrilled with the ice skaters and the Christmas carols. Anderson loved the play area and was enthralled with the beautiful lights.

When Mommy and Daddy arrived to pick them up the next morning, Anna's eyes lit up once again as she told the stories of "lots of lights, ice skating, a great big tree," and more.

Children love Christmas. But what is it about the season that captures their imaginations so completely? It occurs to me that it has to do with the adults around them. Suddenly their parents and grandparents are decorating trees and cookies, singing carols, and taking time to drive slowly through the neighborhood just to look at the lights. They're lighting candles and gathering the family around the fireplace to read the story of Jesus' birth.

I think children love Christmas because adults love it and tend to become a bit more childlike themselves.

And why do adults love Christmas? Because adults can understand the bigger picture. Christmas isn't actually about the lights and carols and gifts and food. It's about Jesus. If it weren't for Jesus, no one would be singing. If Jesus hadn't become one with us, no one would light the candles. If Jesus hadn't become our salvation, there would be no "peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

So, Gayle and I are endeavoring this year to join with Anna and Anderson's parents to be sure that, as we celebrate the childlike wonder of the season, they understand that the joy of Christmas is more than just lights and ice skaters. It's Jesus.

With love,
Mike

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Faith Moment
December 9, 2013