

Christmas 2005

Dear Family and Friends:

Tyler Bradley Ekholm was dedicated on the Sunday following Thanksgiving. After the service, the clan returned to our in-laws' home for brunch and ended up in the living room where the little pooh held court. You can picture the scene—cameras flashing, friends and relatives all but standing on their heads to elicit a smile, a coo, or a glance (anything but the protrusion of the lower lip), a room packed with adults hanging on Tyler's every drool. It was a priceless time. Apart from being an adorable child (a completely objective, unbiased opinion), Tyler radiates a delight that makes you want to grin at life.

Oh, to be sure, Chris and Jessi can testify to sleepless nights, to pungent pampers, to an appetite worthy of any hobbit child, to a radically altered schedule that attends the arrival of a needy newborn. But all that fades before such a delight, fresh-scrubbed from God, like the silver rays of sunset on newly fallen snow. They commence a pilgrimage full of discoveries, each an enchanted first, and all pregnant with wonder.

This grandparents' experience (our first—could you guess?) typifies our past year. It was a joyous year.

We have not always known such delightful years. Even amid this one, we share the pain of dear friends and relatives walking difficult paths, which one day we ourselves will follow. That brings us to the child in the manger, holding court among shepherds and angels, on earth and in the heavens, suffering servant and glorious Lord, acquainted with grief yet fount of everlasting joy. If we learn from our year's delights, we will see them snap into focus on this little infant.

Joy is the embrace of eternity and the understanding of all life in the grandeur of its sunrise. Not merely pie in the sky, bye-n-bye, but the ever-present backdrop to our lives here and now. Christmas points unmistakably to Christ as the source of enduring delight and joy. He comes to those who receive Him with the simple all-sufficiency of His indwelling presence, which supplies, if not mirth, then hope, in the day-to-day grind. The sunrise of eternity bathes our situations with its glimmer of glory. At the core of our universe, the face of God in the person of Christ wears a smile.

The happy serendipities of our past year are not just pleasant respites but occasions of the triumphal in-breaks of God's benevolent purpose and power in our lives. Joy comes to us unexpectedly—in the soft brush strokes of a painter's landscape, in the bubbles of an infant's drool, in the glorious hues of a spring garden in bloom, in the loveliness of a summer sunset, in the magnificence of an orchestral crescendo, in the quiet, simple pleasures of family living. Little hugs from God, if you will, in the ordinary activities of

life, harbingers of a destiny full of hope.

This Yuletide, may you and yours experience afresh a divine embrace and may your New Year be full of moments of pregnant wonder bathed in the glimmer of His glory. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.