

## **The Road Less Traveled – August 19, 2016**

*I wrote the following column several years ago as Melissa and I prepared to send our kids back to school. I have shared it with you before, but many of you told me that it really puts this time of year into a perspective of faith and that you found it meaningful. So with apologies for repeating that which some have already read, I offer an updated version as we prepare for a new school year – WLT*

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Melissa and I, like many of you, are preparing to send our children off to school on Monday. It's an exciting time for all three of them: Andrew as he begins his last semester of college, and Connor as he begins his first. Emma kicks off a new chapter in her education as she enters her freshman year at Aledo High School. As always, they are excited, if not just a bit nervous. The same is true for Melissa and I as well, but for different reasons.

As parents, we have a sense that we should protect our children -- protect them from danger; protect them from the cruelty of others; protect them from failure. And yet as we send them off to school, we surrender our ability to protect them. We trust others -- largely strangers -- to respond to them with the same caring and grace that we show them. And we pray that something of who we are as their parents will go with them. That they will remember they are loved. That they will remember who they are and whose they are. And we pray that at the end of the day, they will come back to us -- not exactly the same, but having grown.

I guess that must be an inkling of what God must feel about each of us. God created us with all the potential and promise of ones who are touched by holiness. At the moment of our birth, each one of us is a bundle of holy potential. And no doubt God wants to protect us from the cruelty of the world. God wants to protect us from failure. God wants to protect us from sin. And yet, like a loving parent, God sends us off into the world, hoping that something of our Creator will go with us. Hoping that we remember that we are loved. Hoping that we remember who we are and whose we are. And God's deepest desire is that in the end, we will return to God, not the same, but having grown toward the potential of our creation.

It's a paradox, isn't it, but maybe one that is not so difficult to understand. If you are a parent, then you know. We may want to protect our kids, but deep down we know that, sheltered, they will never grow. They will never mature. And they will never achieve their true potential. Interestingly, God knows the same thing.

It's sometimes difficult to imagine why a God who despises sin would allow us to live in a world that is filled with it. But if you've ever had your child run into your arms at the end of her first day of school, then you understand. When you free that which you treasure above all, and it longingly return to you ... well that can only be explained in God's terms.

It is good.

See you Sunday.