

## No Egrets Moose

Heaven became a bit more real for us that Christmas season, as one of our holiday guests made a shockingly sudden departure. The fifty-something father of a young man we love had a spring in his step and a gleam in his eyes as he made his goodbyes. Our hearts went “aww” as that once-prodigal son gently said “I love you,” and confidently planted a kiss on his father’s cheek, wrapping him in a mutual bear hug.

We know our guest arrived safely at his daughter’s home, but sometime before midnight he reached, we believe, his eternal destination. A massive heart attack had whisked him away, creating a vacuum that sucked away our assumptions about how long anyone we know and love will remain among us on earth.

Even as we reeled from the heart-breaking phone call and suffered through the aftershocks of disbelief, we rejoiced that our bereaved friend would not be pained by the guilt of amends not made or loving sentiments left unexpressed. In recent years he had tended well the relationship with his father so that at each parting there was peace. No regrets.

Death as an object lesson goes much better with Easter than Christmas. Yet my first-grade daughter, who observed the young man’s grief first-hand, “got it.”

She and I talked about how important it is to follow this father and son’s poignant example and practice peace in our relationships. Then we can be free of regrets should the Lord suddenly call someone home.

The phrase “no regrets” reminded my daughter of the zoo version of “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” she learned at school. “We-fish-ewe-a-mare-egrets-moose, panda-hippo-gnu-deer!”

“No egrets moose!” she grinned, drawing a critter with both wings and antlers and applying the circle and slash to complete the signage. We’ve agreed that “No egrets-moose” will be our family’s shorthand for “I love you, I know you love me, I forgive you, I ask your forgiveness, and if the Lord calls you home tonight, I’ll have no regrets and a lot more peace.”

“No egrets-moose” indeed became a well-used phrase among us, occasionally affording the opportunity to share our philosophy with mystified people nearby. Just explaining it from time to time reinforced the importance of having no regrets in our relationships and keeping it that way.

What a heavenly way to live.

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