

One December, Tom gave Lisa a gift on each of the twelve days of Christmas. He didn't have to do that. Tom's family knew he loved them. But he liked to show it. Tom sensed there's more to a gift than the gift. A gift speaks the unspeakable mystery of love. When words fail, a gift speaks.

People in love practically speak their own language. Parent and child can look at each other's faces and know exactly what's inside. Some mysteries are locked so deep within us that only love can read them.

It must have been this way between Jesus and the Father. The mysteries of God are so deep, that only the Son could read them. "No one knows the Father but the Son," Jesus says, "and no one knows the Son but the Father." The Father revealed his mysteries to Christ, and Christ reveals them to us.

When life hands us a mystery we cannot understand, our instinct tells us God must be behind it, because there is so much of God we cannot understand. That's a good instinct, but it can mislead us. We may actually blame God for the tragic mysteries we cannot figure out. Sometimes tragedy obscures the marvels we can't understand either.

Jesus is God's greatest marvel. God loved the world so much he sent us a gift. He didn't have to do that. We know God loves us. But God likes to show it. The gift speaks the unspeakable mystery of God's love. And God's love outweighs human tragedy.

Tom's death is not a sign of God's wrath. How could anyone be angry with Tom Smith? He loved golf, literature, crossword puzzles, and Star Trek. He was so patient he had season tickets for the Kansas City Royals. God could never have abandoned Tom in life--Tom was too much fun. God will not abandon him in death. We have not seen anger. We have seen people care these past few days. We have seen hope in eternal life.

We take a lot for granted--our family, our friends, our faith, even our daily routines. What makes Tom a hero is that he was each one of us--someone who loved life; someone who loved his family; someone who went to work every day. For me, that's what makes Tom such a hero: his last day was so ordinary. He went to work. In that simple activity he was making a home for his family, and helped the world see a little more clearly.

Today we thank God for the privilege of knowing and loving Tom Smith. And we entrust Tom to the care of our Father in heaven. Like a loving parent, God will offer Tom gifts that will delight him long into eternity: a hole in one, a private screening of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and the greatest hits of the Beach Boys.

Tom's memory will linger happily with us, and his example will shine before us. He loved gifts. How important are the ordinary gifts we give one another! In them we'll begin to read the mystery that Tom now knows completely; in our good deeds we'll come to know the mystery of love.