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Judgment Day

As I'm driving down Trinity Lane (the main boulevard near my house) the following conversation emanates from the backseat, the product of a 4-year old and a 9-year old engaging in debate:

"We're going to McDonalds"

"No we're not"

"Yes we are"

"Nuh-uh, you don't know"

"Yes I do, Daddy said so"

"Daddy, are we going to McDonalds?"

And so a little judgment day comes for the children of the Stepp household. One party in the debate will be judged to have been telling the truth and one to have been deceived. Even though this miniature judgment day brings with it the risk of pain—the pain of being proven wrong, the struggle of having to change one's mind to adapt to reality—both parties in the argument long for judgment to be passed and the truth to be revealed at last.

Yet, even if one of the kids has believed a lie; even if there is weeping and gnashing of teeth as some cherished belief must be given over to the flames of judgment; still, they are both children of their father, aren't they? Both are loved, included, and already forgiven for whatever lies they might believe about me or themselves.

I would never say to one "you are wrong, and because you are wrong, you have never been my child and never will be - I cast thee out into hell's dark fury!" God forbid! (Literally. The very nature of the Father, Son and Spirit—that they exist as inseparable communion without loss of distinction—means that we are all connected and can never disconnect ourselves from the Triune Life or one another.)

No, this little judgment day is not bad news for either child. It may be bad news for lies they have believed, and it may be bad news for their wrong thinking, but ultimately it is good news for both of them—the one who believes and the one who doesn't believe.

It is good news because in that moment of judgment, my love for them will be revealed, their secure and forever inclusion in my life will be affirmed, and they will discover the fullness of what the truth really is.

Because we were, indeed, headed for McDonalds. It may not be the wedding supper of the lamb, but to a 4-year old it is a kind of foretaste of heaven.

~ Jonathan Stepp