

'Fields of Gold': Finding Hope Amid Sorrow

All of us are aware of music's eerie ability to act like a time machine, transporting us back to the places in our past when a particular song made an indelible mark on our memories.

If you're a woman who grew up in the 1990s like me and Hanson's "MMMBop" comes on, you'll probably feel giddy and start dancing and singing along like you are 10 years old again. If you're a Baby Boomer like my mom and you hear "I Want to Hold Your Hand" by the Beatles, you'll also have a similar flashback and reaction to this iconic song of your youth. And no one, no matter our age, can help but sing along to the classic Christmas carols and hymns that unite and inspire us during this "most wonderful time of the year."

But not every song is a joy-inducing mnemonic device. Not every musical memory is shared by our peers. This is how Eva Cassidy's version of "Fields of Gold" is for me.

It was the summer after eighth grade, and I had a newfound obsession with tennis. I watched all the tournaments on television, could tell you the life story of all the top players, practiced against the wall in the garage while my dad was at work, and played with my him on the run-down court near our house nearly every night that summer.

My dad had a serious love for music. I wish I could show you his endless iTunes library along with his collection of vinyl records and scads of CDs—there are enough of them to fill a small music store! He loved all genres of music, from jazz, blues, and rock to techno, Celtic folk, and funk. He loved to share his latest finds with his friends and family.

"Fields of Gold" was one such find that he played for me during our seven-minute drive to tennis one evening that

summer, and my heart immediately fell in love with it. Not only were Ms. Cassidy's voice and the lyrics beautiful, but the song also was made all the more poignant knowing that the young songstress had died a few years earlier of cancer. She was only 33.

I asked my dad to play "Fields of Gold" again, and then twice more on the ride home after tennis. Meandering down our long wooded driveway, staring off into the golden hay fields glowing beside it in the last breaths of daylight, the song sank into my spirit, nestled into my soul, claiming and defining that summer of tennis with my dad as one of the sweetest seasons of my life.

*You'll remember me when the west wind moves
Upon the fields of barley
You'll forget the sun in his jealous sky
As we walk in fields of gold.*

Those are the opening verses of the song. Today, six years after my dad's homegoing to heaven, I view them as somewhat prophetic. Sitting with him the car that night, just like any other night, I had no idea that one day a west wind and the sight of sun-soaked fields could sweep me back to it ... back to *him*.

I'm currently listening to an Audible book by Christian apologists Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale titled *Why Suffering?* Dr. Zacharias made the following summarizing statement that I found rather profound:

"Where there is freedom [free will], there is the possibility of love. Where there is love, there is the possibility of pain. Where there is pain, there is the possibility of a Savior. Where there is a Savior, there is the possibility of redemption."

I couldn't, in this humble blog post, begin to address the complex answer, "Why is there pain and suffering if God is a

god of love?" but I can address my own pain and how it has brought me closer to the Savior who redeems it.

Suddenly losing my father plunged me into depths of grief I'd never experienced before. While I didn't question God or my faith in Him, I did question why He allowed my father to die so young when he was helping so many people in their battles against cancer and being a loving, caring, and generous man so many admired and respected. I was only 22 years old, still a young woman who very much needed her daddy. I couldn't imagine life without him, my hero, teacher, my best friend.

While I won't, on this side of heaven, know exactly why God called my dad home when He did, I do know that the pain I felt—and still feel—points directly to my Savior, to the one who "[makes] all things new" and will one day wipe away every tear from every eye that looked to Him during their struggles and sadness.

Because there is pain, there is salvation—there is *rescuing*. The ultimate Knight in Shining Armor, Jesus Christ, is the substance of true love, heroism, and happily-ever-afters that every woman's heart has longed for since they were little girls. He is the substance of courage, honor, and strength that every man's heart has strived to display since they were boys. He is the One, the *only* One, who can provide the comfort, peace, and unshakable hope we so desperately need, especially when our worlds are turned upside down.

I wish to add two more lines to Dr. Zacharias's observation above, lines that echo the promises of Scripture:

Where there is redemption, there is the assurance of heaven.

Where there is heaven, there is the promise of reunion.

When we place our trust in Jesus Christ and follow and love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we can know *without question* that we will one day be with Him in

paradise, just as the thief on the cross beside Him was the night of His crucifixion.

We can be comforted by His immutable promise that He is preparing a home in heaven for us where we'll dwell forever, surrounded by saints and loved ones who have also "fought the good fight" and faithfully finished their race. We can look forward to a day when melodies will evoke only exceeding joy and jubilation, never the tears of yearning for bygone days of bliss.

I know the holidays can be a bittersweet mixture of both celebration and sorrow as we think back to happier times, times when our loved ones were with us and death and brokenness were far from our minds. Whatever you might be going through, please know that "the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Don't let the enemy draw you into depression, but instead give thanks to God for the fond memories you *do* have (I would much rather have happy memories of my father that make me miss him than have no such memories at all) and for the promise of reunion and rejoicing still to come.

Stay fit, stay faithful. {eoa}

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