



Got gratitude — for The Gift of today?

Every day is a bonus. Tomorrow is promised to no one. I've had a few too many reminders of this during the past 12 months.

Adam Gaspar, my buddy from the first grade, learned — and taught me and many others — how to truly live, in the moment, during his 10-month battle with brain cancer. Adam died last year about this time, at age 42, encircled by loved ones including me. He left behind a wife, six children, two parents, a sister and many friends. He also left behind a legacy of living in the now, teaching guarded men like me how to pour out our love and laughter, along with our tears and fears, more openly.

Five months after Adam peacefully went home to God, my oldest brother Jim knocked on Heaven's door. Jim was 47 when he suffered a heart attack on Feb. 9. News of my beloved brother's death was shocking and devastating to many. That was the day my mom, my eight other siblings and I — along with Jim's wife and three children — realized Jim and my dad shared much more than just their names and birthdays. These intertwined souls had huge hearts, and both were called away too early, and too suddenly, for our liking and understanding.

Yesterday, a former co-worker of ours lost a loved one. Mike Seuffert, *Landscape Management's* associate editor from 2004 to 2008, and his wife Tricia and their 3-year-old Ava, said their final goodbyes to Parker Seuffert. Had Parker lived until tomorrow (Aug. 7), he would have been 5 months old. But no one is promised tomorrow.

Parker endured several heart surgeries and so-called minor brain surgery. After battling hard and long, he found himself much closer to God's home than ours. Last night after work, I went to the hospital to meet Parker for the first time, and to pray for him, Mike and his family — as I've done from afar for 10 months (ever since Mike told me Tricia was "with child"). But Parker had bigger

plans. Just an hour or two earlier, he got to meet his loving creator.

No matter the day's obstacles — at work or home — we owe it to Parker, Jim and Adam to cherish "The Gift" — to show gratitude throughout today, for today, by truly living in the moment. We must live today with faith, hope and love — no matter the hurdles.

Fortunately, we can follow my brother's lead: Live large, laugh often, and love always.

When things get really difficult, like they are now for so many in this business, we must dig deep, band together and fight through it — one day, one moment at a time — just like Adam and Parker did.

At a rare loss for words, I'll close with a poem my mom and my sister Lisa gave me and my wife Bridgid 14 years ago — the day our second child, Jamie, was born with Down syndrome:

THE WEAVER

*My Life is but a weaving
between my Lord and me.
I cannot choose the colors;
He worketh steadily.*

*Oft times He weaveth sorrow,
And I, in foolish pride,
forget He sees the upper,
and I the under side.*

*Not 'til the loom is silent
and the shuttles cease to fly,
shall God unroll the canvases
and explain the reason why.*

*The dark threads are as needful
in The Weaver's skillful band,
as the threads of gold and silver
in the pattern He has planned.*