

For Joshua

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me.

Psalm 57:1-2

"...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; ..."

Isaiah 43:1-3

"...The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 1:21

As I sit here in the early morning, I'm somewhat foggy from what has transpired in the past 72 hours. Jennifer and I have never been through such a wide range of emotions in such a short time. My family has encountered the living God. We will never be the same. I will try my best to remember:

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

Jennifer, the kids, and I have been waiting for this day for some time. She had written on my desk calendar "Ultrasound 2pm Baby #4". Jenn picked up the kids at 1pm from school and met me at the Sportscenter. My mom was planning on coming, but she began to decide that she didn't want to intrude. We talked her out of it. So as we all sat in the waiting room, we were quite the sight. If it had been a library, we would have been escorted out. Eventually, Jennifer's name was called out and we all made it to the back to the ultrasound room.

"Our Predictions"

It was no secret within the family that we were hoping for another boy. Caleb and Carly both wanted a brother. (Hannah Grace just wanted a bottle – close enough) I had a dream from the beginning that I was wrestling with my boys. I was holding Caleb up in my left arm and another boy in my right. I told Jennifer it was going to be a boy. Caleb clearly brought up the name Joshua. Caleb and Joshua, the two spies! Caleb thought that was the coolest thing. Carly was excited too! Joshua! Do you know what his name means? I will tell you later. Jennifer felt pretty confident that it would be a boy as well, but she kept her vocal predictions to a minimum.

Caleb and Carly were standing on chairs trying to catch a good view of the ultrasound. Mom was holding Hannah Grace. As the nurse was moving the wand around, trying to

get a better view, I believe Jennifer already knew something wasn't right. I will never forget the next sentence that came out of the nurse's mouth. She said, "Jennifer, I can't find a heartbeat." It felt as if all the air was sucked out of the room. I looked at mom and asked her to take the kids out in the hall. Mom started taking them. She didn't hear what the nurse had said. When I repeated it, everything became apparent. One of the doctors came in and began to give us the different scenarios. We decided to come in the next morning to be induced.

"Grace for the Rest of the Day"

Getting home was tough. Caleb began to make cards to cheer Jenn up while she was packing up some maternity clothes. One card said on the inside "remember John 3:16." The other card came via airmail, literally. Caleb had made a paper airplane and taped the card underneath it and flew it in to the closet where Jenn was packing. Sitting around just didn't make sense, so we went out to get a bite to eat. We really didn't know where we wanted to go. We just wanted to get out. On the way, we decided to go to Sonic. As we were driving there, I caught glimpse of a scrolling sign to my right. It read, "Do not be discouraged. God is still in control." Wow! We knew that, but we really needed to hear it. We got to Sonic, ordered our food and ate. Jennifer's didn't quite agree with her so we headed home. As the rest of the evening wore on, I decided to go ahead and read the Bible schedule we had been doing for the past couple of months. Jenn was in our room, on the bed reading and praying. I was with Caleb and Carly on the couch. Hannah Grace was down for the night. We read Mark 13 where Jesus was telling the disciples what to expect at the end of the times. Verse 20 jumped out at me. "If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive." I really felt the Lord was trying to tell us something here. Maybe it was just my desperation in trying to figure things out like guys always try to do. But it really did stir me deeply. I went to tell Jenn. I told her that maybe this is happening in order to save you. She even commented, "Do you think I am going to die?" I found out later that in the beginning Jennifer had a dream of dying in childbirth. She dismissed the thought. I let it go quickly.

"Faith of a Child"

Time for bed. Caleb and Carly got their sleeping bags and stayed in our room for the night. I turned off the lights and got ready to say our prayers. Carly asked if she could pray. Then, Caleb asked if he could pray. I said ok. Carly you pray, then you Caleb. I will close. Carly begins to pray: God, Please make the baby's heart start beating again. Thank you God. Amen. Then Caleb prayed: God, if this baby lives or if this baby dies. I know it's ok, because you know what's best. Well, needless to say, I had a hard time trying to pray after those sweet words. I muttered through and then "amen". Caleb began to pray one more time. He said. God, if we begin to get worried, help us to remember John 3:16. That night, between Jenn and me, I believe we broke the world record of the most consecutive times John 3:16 was quoted. It was a long night, but my heart knew so well that God loved us so much that He gave us His son. We were ready to give him ours.

“Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing”

Know your ground and take your stand at the beginning, then you won't fall as you move forward. That's my motto. Jennifer and I chose from the beginning that when we got ready to leave the hospital that we were going to bring home the “life”. We were going to bring home the “blessing”. Someone once told me don't just bring the problem. Bring the hope that lies within it. We were going to bring the “hope”. I firmly believe that everyone has a choice to make when it comes to the challenges of life.

“The Calm Before”

We made it into the labor and delivery room around 11:30. As Jennifer undressed she began to cry. Reality sat in. I walked into the restroom. I began to cry. I looked up and said, “God, you had better be real in this!” I was angry.

We were told that there was no way of knowing how long the delivery could take; anywhere from a few hours to a couple of days. (Family would come and stay throughout the afternoon. That was a tremendous blessing to have all of them. They have helped out so much.) As we waited I could see the storm approaching, the reality of it all coming to its fullness. It was as if we were being prepared. We had several pastor friends visit us that afternoon: Chad Slotta (aka Chad Snyder), Craig Luper, and Shelby Harbour. It was touching for both Craig and Shelby to pray portions of Psalm 23 over us.

“The Tough Questions”

I never thought that I would ever have to look through a price sheet for “Infant Burial Costs”. Nor did Jennifer and I think that we would be asked, “Do you want to see the baby? Do you want to hold the baby? Will you want to spend some time alone with the baby?” Our initial response was no. But my mom, in her wisdom, having been through this before, advised us and we decided that we would. I felt a drop of rain.

“The Rain Begins”

Fast forward to 7:30pm; I had just gotten back from picking up a little food. I walked back into the room. Everyone had left. It was just Jenn and me. Jennifer tells me that she felt a little “warm down there”. I did a quick check and saw quite a bit of blood. I called the nurse. She came in and checked. She said, “You delivered the baby.” Do you want to see?” As I glanced over one of the nurses said, “He's perfect!” Jennifer asks, “So, it was a boy? We knew it!” His name is Joshua. I looked Jenn in the eyes and we both began to cry. I looked at him and his tiny mouth opened. He was perfect. Tiny fingers, tiny toes, tiny ears, tiny nose. He had a little spot of blood below his left eye that looked like a tear drop. The nurse said let me wrap him up and you can hold him. Jenn held him first. It seemed awkward for her because he was so tiny. Jennifer told me that she never really felt that attached to the baby throughout the pregnancy, but she felt so connected to him now! Then they let me hold him. I knew this was going to be the hardest part for me (so I thought). I couldn't believe how warm he felt. I felt his warmth through the blanket. There were only a couple of words that I wanted to say. I always call Caleb my

“buddy” (I call Carly my “princess”). That’s kind of become our code words for I love you. So I just whispered, “Hey buddy.” Then Jennifer held him a little more. They asked if we wanted some quiet time with the baby. They left. I put my hand over Jennifer and began to pray. Lord, I don’t understand why you do what you do sometimes, but I trust you. We trust you. You know what is best. Blessed be your name. You gave your son to us. We now give our son to you. We know you can take care of him far better than we ever could. Thank you for our children. May we love them more. May we love each other more. May we bring blessing and life home with us. In Jesus name, Amen. It was hard for us to let him go. I texted two words to my sister, “he came.”

“The Storm”

Through Jenn’s Eyes

I was told it could take anywhere between 4-6 hours for the afterbirth. What happened next came so fast and details tend to get a bit sketchy from my point of view. I remember the nurse checking and seeing that I had a bit more bleeding than I should. She called the doctor back and she made the decision that the placenta was far back and she was going to go in and use forceps to get it out. The procedure was to take about 15-20 minutes. The anesthesiologist came in to give another epidural. I began to get very lightheaded and nauseated and began vomiting. My blood pressure had dropped to 70/30 and I remember the anesthesiologist saying we don’t have time to give an epidural to take effect. We need to put her to sleep. I remember him telling me they were going to put me to sleep and I wasn’t too sure about that. I don’t like trying to wake up from being put under like that. But as I looked to Randy who had been given the baby to hold, I saw concern in his eyes, but I felt peace. I knew everything was going to be OK and I think I even whispered to him that everything would be okay. He kissed me and they rolled me out. As they were rolling me out, I just prayed and told Jesus that I trusted him. As I got further down the hall to the operating room, I began to take back my words. I remember praying something like Lord, I trust you, but I am going to be selfish. I want to be here with my family. I don’t want to go. But as they placed me on the table and my arms were spread out I thought of Jesus’ when he hung on the cross. All I could do was smile and say “God just enjoy me. I want to spend time with you.” I remember waking up thinking 20 minutes had passed only to learn that hours had passed by. I didn’t understand. My eyes felt so puffy like they were almost shut and my mouth was so parched I could barely speak to ask for a sip of water. I remember Dr. B explaining what happened but I was so groggy I didn’t understand. Little did I know how much I would come to value life and death over the next hour when I was told what had happened.

Through Randy’s Eyes

The room was empty. I sat there holding Joshua. I prayed, “God, what are you doing?” I don’t want to lose Jenn too. Please help. The nurse came back in, I told Joshua goodbye and I gave him to her. Sister came back for a while and Bruce dropped in. Being told that it would only take 15-20 minutes, I decided that I wouldn’t call the rest of the family, even though the anesthesiologist and his sense of urgency wasn’t that reassuring. About 10 minutes later a nurse walks in and says that they are still trying to

get the bleeding stopped. Another 15 minutes passed and the nurse walked in and said that they were having trouble getting the placenta out and were having to give Jennifer blood. Another 15 minutes; Now they have to cut her open in order to see what's going on. Ok, now it's time to call everyone. By 11:15pm the Doctor had finally came back. She said that she had gotten the bleeding stopped and that she had not seen anything like this in 19 years. It was a condition known as placenta percreta. I asked the doctor if the pregnancy had continued would it have killed her. She said quite possible. I felt that there was more to be said about it, but she was not going to go into detail just yet. Later I would find out how serious this condition was. The verse from Wednesday night, Mark 13:20, began to be even more special to me: "If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive."

"Waiting For Peace, Be Still"

With this I will close. I cannot say that the storm is over. In fact, the storm is all around us. Things are up and down, but Jenn and I have found rest in the boat while the storm is stirring around. We have found that the winds and waves obey His voice, so there's no need to fear. This whole chapter in our lives has been laced by the prayers of others. If you are reading this, you have probably prayed for us. God has shown Himself real through our family and friends in such amazing ways. Thank you all.

I didn't forget to tell you what Joshua's name means. I searched it on the internet. It means "God is my salvation". "The LORD rescues." And that is exactly what He did!

Pastor Harbour called and left a voicemail with these verses. Pastor Jay closes each service the same way. May you receive it as well.

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Numbers 6:24-26