Challenge 32 of 40

Reflection by Carmelo Mercado – Berrien Springs, MI

Isaiah 45:15 “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”

For over 10 years my wife and I have been overseeing the physical and financial care for my mother-in-law due to her having Alzheimer’s disease. She was diagnosed with the disease in 2004 and the disease gradually diminished her capacity to care for herself, so we moved her to an assisted living facility. She stayed there for 7 years and then after observing a significant decline in her mobility we moved her last year to a nursing home facility near our home. She is now at the point where her speech is mostly unintelligible and she can no longer walk on her own or feed herself.

When we visit her my wife is very attentive to her mother’s needs, making sure she is eating well, that she is kept clean and is well dressed. Despite her inability to remember anything and maintain a conversation, my wife is also always trying to talk to her and coaching her to reply. For awhile, the one question that I would often ask myself is “does she know who we are and the care she is receiving?” I got my answer one day after seeing my wife gently put her to bed and kiss her goodnight. I then saw her mom respond with no words, but only a smile. It then dawned on me that it doesn’t matter if my mother-in-law knows us - what’s really important is that we know her, we care for her and that we love her. And that is enough.
The story of Jesus raising the son of the widow of Nain found in Luke 7 is an interesting story that speaks to the idea that God cares for us, no matter how we respond to Him. The story makes the point that Jesus saw this widow and knew of her great need. Her only son, who also was her only source of support, was dead. She had already lost her husband and never remarried. So her future seemed so very bleak.

As she is following the open coffin to the already familiar rocky tombs outside of the city she notices that the people in the funeral train have stopped. She is approached by a man she does not know and who does not even introduce Himself. He simply looks at her and says – “Don’t cry.” The New King James version of the Bible explains His response by saying that He had “compassion on her.” The NIV translates the comment “His heart went out to her.” What the verse is really saying is that God loved her and in His love He reaches out to help her. Notice that she did not ask for His help but nevertheless He provided in reality a double miracle – a miracle of not only giving back her son but also letting her know that she was not forgotten or abandoned.

When I think about God and His care for this planet I can’t help but think how much God loves us and cares for us. He sees that many people in the world have a type of spiritual Alzheimers who do not recognize that God cares or that He even exists. However, their response to Him does not stop God from loving them. Isaiah 49:15-16 states God’s commitment and love in such a beautiful way:

15 “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget, I will not forget you!
16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, only a relatively small group of people knew that the long-awaited Messiah was finally here. Most Jews had long since forgotten the promise of a future redeemer. But regardless of the lack of response, God showed His compassion by not forgetting His people. Instead God was with us! And He is still with us. We are not at all forgotten – we are deeply loved! Praise God for His amazing grace!

Recalibrate

1) Have you recently felt like God has abandoned or forgotten you? Or has the busyness of your life led you to slowly abandon God?

2) Make a list of at least three incidents that happened to you in 2014 that testify of how God personally cared for you and your family and share them with a friend.
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