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## The Rest of the Story

*“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways,  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”  
Isaiah 55:9*

Recently many of us were stunned and saddened by the sudden death of Angel pitcher Nick Adenhardt. It seemed such a waste for this promising young man’s life to be cut off so suddenly. Now there’s no bright future ahead for him in baseball, no marriage or children, neither will he become seasoned by maturity and wisdom in old age. His young life shot up like a flare, burned bright and then flickered out in a flash with the careless act of a drunk driver.

The grief of his family must be overwhelming, something most of us can’t even begin to fathom. Yet though we don’t directly experience the heartbreak, many still wonder why God allowed it to happen. We certainly don’t understand its purpose in God’s Plan; this remains hidden to those of us left behind on the earth. Though the Bible is our path’s light, in many ways we still look through a glass darkly.

In January 1956 Elisabeth Elliot also had cause to ponder the mystery of God’s Plan. While a young wife of 30 with a baby daughter, Auca Indians in Ecuador speared and killed her missionary husband, Jim Elliot. Yet her trust in God’s integrity surpassed even this loss. Moreover, she later returned to Ecuador to continue the work of her husband and the other murdered missionaries. Though severely tested, Elisabeth’s hope endured; today she draws closer to meeting again not only her husband in Heaven, but also the former savages who became letters of Christ written on her heart.

This story is recounted in her book, *Through the Gates of Splendor*. From the outside looking in, we’re encouraged when God brings such good from such tragedy. Not only do we rejoice for the sake of those involved, but also for the sake of our own endurance in times of heartbreak. Our human stories may not be as dramatic as Elisabeth Elliot’s, but God is no less involved in them. In fact every redeemed life is spiritually remarkable because of the extraordinary actions of God in making it an heir of salvation, predestined, called and redeemed.

Therefore, for our benefit the Bible is fraught with examples of good wrought from tragedy. The Apostle Paul was imprisoned, yet rejoiced because the Gospel was preached all the more “because of my chains (Philippians 1:14).” And there are those in the Hall of Faith acknowledged by Hebrews 11. Some were snatched from death by God’s intervention, but others were martyred in order to obtain a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35). Divine council determined whether or not any were physically delivered; still, God was with each one in every trial, working from it good according to His purpose. Their confidence rested in God’s guaranteed and enduring spiritual good, rather than physical deliverance that’s not only unsecured, but also temporary.

As sharing the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, we’ve become partakers of the ultimate case of good wrought from tragedy. Here, the Perfect Savior of the world suffered an undeserved, gruesome crucifixion at the hands of evil men. Nothing more humanly unfair has ever happened, and His bewildered followers for a time wondered why (Luke 24:13-27). However, on the first resurrection Sunday He conquered the grave and sealed the work of our salvation. Then His enlightened followers knew and rejoiced. Likewise we, enlightened by the Spirit and Scriptures, also know and rejoice because through His Word we have access to the rest of the story missed by the rest of the world.

Knowing that the greatest good for us came from the greatest tragedy to Him, how can we not be assured that He harbors our best interest for everything in between? No, we don’t know the details of our future or the number of our days; neither can we ever expect to understand the things that happen to some and not to others.

But since He doesn’t reveal such things, we have no need to know them. Rather His revealed Word is where He meets our need to know. It’s the answer for every ultimate question and the context within which we understand the events of this world. In it we find the goodness of a Creator who cares for and provides for the needs of His creation. He feeds not only the birds of the air but also us; He knows not only every fallen sparrow but also every fallen person. So because He desires all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9), He gave His Perfect Son. And because He desires all to come to full knowledge of Truth (1 Timothy 2:4), He provides His infallible Word.

Though man naturally gropes to understand the meaning of life’s problems, God’s infinite kindness nonetheless solved our worst problem, spiritual separation from Him. So those cleansed by the Blood of Christ can further know that His intentions for them are good; He fashions all temporal events, whether good or bad, into eternal benefits that, unlike this life, will never end. Therefore, we can sincerely give thanks in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18) knowing that God’s purpose is to work all things together for good to us (Romans 8:28).

Elisabeth Elliot wrote, “I believe with all my heart that God’s story has a happy ending...and all manner of thing shall be well. But not yet, not necessarily yet.”

Though we’ve yet to finish the rest of our story, there can be no happier ending than to live in God’s presence, forever.

*By Mary Nixon*