

I would like to take a moment to say a few words in honor of our daughter, Elodie Mason. But, before I forget...Michelle and I would first like to say, that in this moment, we know that we serve a God of immeasurable goodness and as such we submit ourselves, our family and our hearts to him in this time. Second, I would like to thank all of you... family, friends, Dave, Jimmy and all our Church at Charlotte Family for all the love and support you have shown us in this time. We ask that you continue to remember us in your prayers as we continue to grieve the loss of our baby girl.

Elodie lived for 44 brief minutes. And we praise and thank God for the moments we had with her. I will forever remember the look of peace and tranquility on her face...as if she was graciously telling us she is with the Lord in perfection and not to fear for her. Her brief time on this earth has taught us much about the sanctity and mysteries of life. While these few short moments we spent with our daughter brought much confusion, hurt, anger, sadness and grief...God has graciously provided a clarity of things I've never experienced before.

During this time of loss, we've been experiencing a remarkable number of contradictions. Confusion and clarity, sadness and joy, anger and thankfulness, simplicity and complexity. So many simple truths of which God has reminded us, have become remarkably profound... where these simple truths previously seemed like minimally useful platitudes. To be quite honest, I've been humbled in my arrogant assumptions that b/c I knew a concept/truth in my mind, I also knew the concept/truth in my heart...the two types of "knowing" have proven distinctly different from the other. In all this, we know this to be true...that Loss, pain and death were not and have never been the intention of God. He is a God

of life and redemption and not destruction and death. A favorite author of mine wrote:

“There’s a secret set within each of our hearts. It often goes unnoticed, we rarely can put words to it, and yet it guides us throughout the days of our lives. This secret remains hidden for the most part in our deepest selves. It is simply the desire for life as it was meant to be. You may not always be aware of your search, and there are times when you seem to have abandoned looking altogether. But again and again it returns to us, this yearning that cries out for the life we prize. It is elusive, to be sure. It seems to come and go at will. Seasons may pass until it surfaces again. And though it seems to taunt us, and may at times cause us great pain, we know when it returns that it is priceless.”

What “it” is, is the complete and final restoration of God’s people and creation. We know that when God created earth, creatures and mankind, he intended on perfect union with him. He made all things and said it was good. Most clearly, God made us to experience his goodness. Every good and perfect gift was at our fingertips in the Garden of Eden. Then we rebelled and fell...and in our fall, we experience both the goodness of God and the utter destruction of the evil one. However, we as followers of Christ know, despite the efforts of the evil one who desires to destroy all that is good, God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose. I believe I am experiencing this first hand in the light of the loss of our beautiful daughter. And I’d like to highlight the Goodness of God...

You see, in some ways I believe God is used and is using Elodie's life to save me. Prior to her life, I found myself becoming increasingly complacent in caring for my heart. I was being hardened by life in corporate america. I was becoming embittered by the never-ending grind of, wake-up, go to work, come home, dinner, bath for Finn, decompress from the day, go to bed, rinse and repeat. But, in the grieving my heart has been jolted back from its slumber...I have felt and experienced life in a way I haven't felt or experienced in a long time. I'm ashamed that it took the passing of our baby girl to shock me back to life, but I'm thankful to God for this re-awakening. Understand that I grieve for this loss...I've grieved the thought that I will not be able to ever see her look at me, dance with me while standing on my feet, twirl in a dress and look to us to see us delight in her beauty. I grieve the loss of never getting to see her grow through all the things we dreamt for our. I wept over the thought that I will never be able to walk her down the isle and give her away to a worthy young man. I will grieve the loss of all these dreams for a long time...and while grief sounds like a negative, it *also* demonstrates the goodness of our God. Through our grief, we experience the hope we have in Christ...the hope of redemption of all that is wrong as well as the reunion of those we have lost and so deeply miss. It may sound strange, but without the grieving process, the loss of Elodie would be too much to bear...it is God's way of causing all things to work together for the good of those who love Him.

I also want to say one more thing about the ironic goodness of God...Very dear friends of ours have experienced their fair share of pain and struggle during their tenure as parents. They had spent much time in Levine's Children's Hospital with their son and when Finn was born, the father said something to me that has proven profoundly true... He said, through Finn's time in the hospital, while it is

difficult and you will feel helpless at times, you will come out of this loving your wife and son more than you could have imagined. I tell you now...He could not have been more correct...Just as I experienced through Finn's first year, this experience has amplified and enshrined my love for my family in a way I could have never imagined.

I am so proud to say I am Finn's father and everyday I am amazed at the little boy he is and am just amazed at the person that continues to be revealed. He is a gentle spirit for certain, yet he demonstrates a curiosity, tenacity, intelligence and joy for life that I wish we adults could somehow bottle up and consume. As for Michelle, and all the mothers in this room, I need to repent...I've GROSSLY underestimated you women... I witnessed Michelle demonstrate Christ in a way that only a woman and a mother can. Like Christ, she was and is vulnerable, she was and is gracious, she was and is strong, she was and is courageous, generous and willingly sacrificial. I can say with all the confidence in the world, I am married to a woman who is a woman as God intended and who I love with all my heart. My friend was right, I love her and Finn more now than ever before.

As you can see, Elodie's life, regardless of how brief her life, mattered in immense ways and her life will continue to matter immensely for many years to come. I am thankful for our daughter and I am thankful for the Goodness God has bestowed upon us. Elodie, we will carry you inside our hearts for the rest of our days and we look forward with relentless anticipation of the day we get to be with you again. May we forever be witnesses of the goodness and glory of God our father.