

▼ Evil, Suffering and the Death of Precious Children: Maranatha!

▼ Introduction

- You might not know Windle. You will know death and suffering.
- Butterflies, I know. Our church has, for quite some time, been praying for Windle Viars. This past Sunday afternoon, Windle passed into eternity. That is to say, he died. I don't like that word, and don't use it a lot. I was angry, sad, disappointed, convinced I should have done more (praying? Fasting? Hands laying?) and cried when I told Janet, and cried/shook when she hugged me. YUCK!
- Two nights later, I was about to fall asleep at a decent hour for once when coughing and noises from JCs room. I suspected asthma or something, and bounded in there with a joke to lighten the possible tension, and he was crying about Windle. So we just sat and talked about it, and I gave the best possible answers I could give to his questions. (Why did God allow that to happen? Why didn't God heal Windle? What is cancer?) and most of my answers stunk, at best.

▼ When did we start praying for him? Here's a timeline:

- August 8, 2010: Since we have been traveling, a thank you note through the mail has not been sent yet, but I thought it important to send our thanks to your body from us regarding our time last week. We are very thankful for the hospitality shown to us and the gift that you gave us. Your gift completely covered the visas for all the family! We are very appreciative to the Lord for providing for our needs. Please keep us informed on how to pray for you guys. If you have a prayer email please add us. We hope to see you again soon. Thanks
Michael, Tara, and Family
- December, 2010: It was a different kind of Christmas for us, a very deliberate one. There were no outside "props" to help you get in the mood. We shared Christmas Eve with three single gals from abroad that live here. Miriam wrote a little Christmas play and Martha and Windle helped her act it out for our guests. Christmas Day we had our Pakistan family over for another meal and

the kids did their play again. I so wanted it to be a catalyst for questions about the birth of the Messiah, but no questions came. I was reminded of the need to ask the Holy Spirit to remove the veil and cause their hearts to hunger for truth.

December brought cold, and most of our time has been spent learning to deal with all the difficulties of life here in the winter. We have been sick a lot of the month with coughs and fever, especially the week Michael was gone. We heat one room, the rest of the house is about 40 degrees. We are becoming experts in which wood lights easily, which burns longer, which makes a lot of smoke. Water is scarce and electricity is rare. So the real challenge is how to remain in His Joy when times are not so "happy". We have had lots of reminders of how blessed we are. We celebrated Miriam's 9th birthday, Martha's 5th and Havah Grace's 2nd in December. They continue to find fun wherever they are. The small yard where my laundry water drains is now a skating rink so they are testing their falling skills....There has been a mass exodus of foreigners here this month. We went from about 30 to our family and one single gal. Most people travel in Jan to get out of the cold and because schools are closed from mid January to March because of the cold. But with some workers absent, Michael has been able to step in and lead two groups a week that meet to discuss the truth. Some are seeking truth and some know it. They come with difficult but honest questions and it is exciting to see how the Lord is moving and working.

- October 21, 2011: Last Thursday was special as we were going to get my mom from the airport as she was coming to meet James and have a two week visit. it was all planned. As we were leaving for the airport, Windle was playing in the bedroom on a slide and fell hard and hit his side on the slide. A few minutes later he was passing a lot of blood in his urine, so Michael went on to the hospital, and I went on to my get my mom. Catscans there revealed a large tumor on his kidney. So many other things happened but since the tumor was suspicious on a wilm's tumor which is malignant, we made quick arrangements to get home...I feel literally carried by the Lord right now. We are carried by your prayers. We trust our Master completely....Windle is doing awesome again, so brave and truly a most amazing gift in our life. That very next Sunday, October 23, 2011 Our church prayed publicly for Windle for the first time I believe that David led that prayer. And we have prayed for him the majority of each Sunday since then. Maybe not every Sunday, but many/most.

- Shooting Straight with you: This is a difficult one to swallow. Not because I knew Windle so well. (I only met him a couple of times.) And not even because I knew Michael and Tara so well. But because it didn't make any sense. But here's the thing: Such is the World we live in. And the Bible promises us that it would be so. That there would be plenty of tribulation... that we would walk through the fire and the flood. There would be financial troubles, relationship troubles, pain, sickness, loneliness and rejection... That we would all die, and that tomorrow is NEVER guaranteed. Again: You might not know Windle. You will know death and suffering. How can we live in light of that? Let's wrestle together.

▼ 2nd Kings 5 and Habakkuk 3:

▼ Habakkuk 3:1

The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

Habakkuk's First Prayer

2 How long, LORD, must I call for help and You do not listen or cry out to You about violence and You do not save?

How can we

3 Why do You force me to look at injustice?

Why do You tolerate wrongdoing?.....God's Answer: LOOK at the nations and observe—

be utterly astounded!

For something is taking place in your days

that you will not believe

when you hear about it....I'M RAISING UP THE CHALDEANS they are fast and awesome and a really amazing army.

- ***Huh? What kind of an answer is that?!***

▼ 2nd Prayer:

Are You not from eternity, Yahweh my God?

My Holy One, You will not die.

LORD, You appointed them to execute judgment;

my Rock, You destined them to punish us.

13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil,
and You cannot tolerate wrongdoing.

So why do You tolerate those who are treacherous? Why are You silent
while one who is wicked swallows up...

2 I (HABAKKUK) will stand at my guard post
and station myself on the lookout tower.

I will watch to see what He will say to me and what I should reply about my
complaint.

God's Second Answer 2 The LORD answered me:

Write down this vision;
clearly inscribe it on tablets
so one may easily read it.

3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it testifies about the end and will
not lie. Though it delays, wait for it,
since it will certainly come and not be late.

4 Look, his ego is inflated;
he is without integrity.

But the righteous one will live by his faith.

5 Moreover, wine betrays;
an arrogant man is never at rest.

He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and like Death he is never satisfied. He
gathers all the nations to himself; he collects all the peoples for himself.

- ***Takeaway: LIVE BY FAITH Don't trust in painkillers/wine/drugs to save you and don't trust in yourself to save you. BUT WHY IS IT HAPPENING??***

▼ THIRD PRAYER!

3 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. According to Shigionoth.

2 LORD, I have heard the report about You;

LORD, I stand in awe of Your deeds.

Revive Your work in these years; make it known in these years.

In Your wrath remember mercy!

- Summarizing the rest of the prayer: GOD YOU ARE SCARING EVERYBODY!!
- God DOES NOT ANSWER. WOW. SELAH. Habakkuk responds anyway, and listen to this:

▼ Habakkuk's Confidence in God Expressed

16 I heard, and I trembled within; my lips quivered at the sound. Rottenness
entered my bones;

I trembled where I stood.

Now I must quietly wait for the day of distress to come against the people invading us.

17 Though the fig tree does not bud
and there is no fruit on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

18 yet I will triumph in Yahweh;

I will rejoice in the God of my salvation! 19 Yahweh my Lord is my strength;
He makes my feet like those of a deer
and enables me to walk on mountain heights!

- ***Meditate on this...***

- ▼ Questions this week and the importance of honesty void of candy coating -
“Do you like my new hair cut?”

- I will struggle to be honest with you about it. If you ask me a biblical question, or to defend God I might be overly honest.

- **By the way: there is NO “WHY” answer in the Bible on this issue beyond the Genesis 3 fall, which ushered in sickness and suffering and death.**

- ▼ **Conclusion**

- **As I get older, I begin to understand why so much of the music of older people is Heaven focused... but the hope that the Bible gives us is the return of the King...**

- ▼ **I want to briefly address the “death is no big deal since we are Christians” Camp and the “Suffering for Jesus is delightful” Camp.**

- YES, we count it all joy when trials come (James 1:2).

- Yes we rejoice as we share in the sufferings of the messiah (1 Peter 4:13)

- ▼ But we do it in a genuine way not in a creepy sunshine pumping way.

- **Jesus on the Cross: Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani CRIED IN A LOUD VOICE!!**

- ▼ **In 1 Corinthians 15 NOTICE WE ARE NOT in the stingless death period!!!!**

- 52 in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet.
For the trumpet will sound,
and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed.
53 For this corruptible must be clothed with incorruptibility,

and this mortal must be clothed
with immortality.

54 When this corruptible is clothed with incorruptibility,
and this mortal is clothed
with immortality,

then (WHENTHEN!) the saying that is written will take place:

Death has been swallowed up in victory. 55 Death, where is your victory?
Death, where is your sting?

56 Now the sting of death is sin,
and the power of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ!

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always
excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in
vain.

▼ **How do we deal with suffering? We're going to look to Jesus in two very specific ways.**

▼ #1 We are going to look to Jesus on the CROSS!

- Fill in the blank: Jesus was a man of _____
Keller - "Towering over all the central figure of the whole of Scripture, Jesus Christ, is a man of sorrows. The Bible is about suffering as much as it is about anything....Suffering is actually at the heart of the Christian story. Suffering is the result of our turn away from God, and therefore it was the way through which God Himself in Jesus Christ came and rescued us for himself."
- Jesus suffered immensely for us and did so for a future hope. Have you ever heard a rich person complain? I've heard more than one rich person complain this week about money problems. In fact, many times, since I grew up in a very nice part of town, I've heard various financial complaints of rich people. Listening to them, I sometimes shake my head, and think, "you really don't know what it's like to suffer real financial problems anymore." People from third world countries probably think similar about any of us in America. Bottom line, we have this kind of innate understanding that the very powerful, the very rich, the very gifted can't understand what we're going through. The incredibly beautiful girl or the incredibly handsome guy can't understand rejection as well as some of us can; the massively rich person can't understand real poverty the way some of us can. The person who has never lost somebody close to them to death cannot understand loss the way that some of us can BUT Jesus, as high and lofty as He is HE CAN understand suffering and pain in pretty much EVERY way that we experience it. That's somehow massively comforting! BONUS: Comfort in

suffering is such a big deal to God that His Spirit, sent to live in His people after Jesus went back to Heaven...His nickname? The Comforter! SO Look to Jesus on the cross. Believe in faith that He paid the price for all that you have done. Believe in He alone to save you from sin AND SUFFERING. HE WENT THROUGH IT!

▼ #2 We are going to look to Jesus on the HORSE.

- When we look to Jesus on the cross, we KNOW He has been through a greater hell than we can fathom. Thus, he understands our pain. When we look to Jesus on the HORSE, on the other hand it is TOTALLY DIFFERENT. Let's read the end of the book...like one of my good friends always does...:

- Revelation 19-22

6 Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying:

Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, has begun to reign!

7 Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself...

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and He judges and makes war in righteousness. 12 His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on His head. He had a name written that no one knows except Himself. 13 He wore a robe stained with blood, and His name is the Word of God. 14 The armies that were in heaven followed Him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. 15 A sharp sword came from His mouth, so that He might strike the nations with it. He will shepherd them with an iron scepter. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty. 16 And He has a name written on His robe and on His thigh:

KING OF KINGS

AND LORD OF LORDS.

[...]

19 Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and against His army. 20

But the beast was taken prisoner, and along with him the false prophet, who had performed the signs in his presence. He deceived those who accepted the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image with these signs. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21

The rest were killed with the sword that came from the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

[...]

REVELATION 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and One seated on it.

Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. 12 I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and

books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books.

13 Then the sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead; all were judged according to their works. 14 Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. FRONT ROW SEATS!! This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

[...]

REVELATION 21: 21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea no longer existed. 2 I also saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

3 Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look! God's dwelling is with humanity, and He will live with them.

They will be His people,

and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will no longer exist; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away.

5 Then the One seated on the throne said, "Look! I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, because these words are faithful and true." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give water as a gift to the

thirsty from the spring of life [...]

22 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His slaves will serve Him. 4 They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 Night will no longer exist, and people will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever....20 He who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly."

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.