

What a powerful testimony.

I just wanted to take a few moments to pick out some phrases and comments on their story.

Obedience does not equal Comfort

First, did you notice that their story didn't start with the trial, it began with their dating and marriage and the smooth sailing in life that they tied to their obedience. The Harms wanted us to see the full story that their obedience did not mean they were promised nor did they receive comfort or ease. God is not interested in simply rewarding the good with good things and the bad with bad things. Ultimately our world can seem like a wicked reversal of this.

Ecclesiastes, a book of wisdom, is a stark book of honesty about the bad conditions of our world. In chapter 8 verse 14, it says, **“There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.”** This is the key word and theme from the book of Ecclesiastes, **meaningless**. It is an admission that at first glance, from a human perspective, the unfair nature of our world makes it all seem meaningless. Chapter 1 focuses on everything under the sun is meaningless.

From the human perspective, for the wicked to prosper makes no sense. Without God the suffering in our world, the lack of connection between our behavior and the result is jarring. Even if you were to trivialize right and wrong to mean that right is what the majority do and wrong is what the minority do (which is as good as you can do in Atheism) you still have the problem of suffering. The just as dealt with unjustly. The most with it, most culturally correct morally person can still die in a car crash.

Only God can square that circle. Only God can layout a world, like we talked about this morning where sorrow gives way to joy. Where sorrow in the cross, where an innocent man is killed, can be viewed one minute as unjust and then next as the superior joy of joys and the crux of history. The Harms suffering, your suffering can only be made meaningful if there is someone, an all-powerful creator like we said in week 1, who is all good based on his own definition, last week, is doing something with your suffering. He is saving the elect for sanctification and ultimately glorification through your suffering, or he is hardening your heart so your rejection of him is beyond a doubt.

So, in spite of the problem of evil for Christians, it is a much bigger problem for non-believers who must simply accept the brute facts that the world is awful, there is no meaning. It is as the teacher of Ecclesiastes says, it is meaningless.

But what happens next to the faith of the Harms family in the face of seemingly meaningless suffering?

They are questioning God's goodness and they find it sufficient. The goodness we discussed last week, that he is loyal in his love, that it is God's character and God's character alone that provides the foundation for something to be good.

So, through the suffering in their life, from their first daughter's Turner syndrome, to the fatal disease of Ava, they persevered to see the beauty of God's provision and their joy in depending on God.

Connected to that:

Resurrection Hope

A second phrase that struck out to me is when the Mom, Sarah, said of her daughter Ava, what every Mom wants. She wanted to know her daughter. It just breaks your heart knowing that we have mothers, who are faithful in all the ways the Lord has called us, yet they will never know their sons or daughters who are miscarried or die young.

What I want to assure you of tonight, is that God in just justice and mercy, has prepared a place where those who are saved by his grace will be reunited. Sarah is longing for the hope of resurrection.

This is where we are going to spend time next week, but I want to read the text, a long section of Philippians 3. Paul is explaining that his goal in life is to attain to the resurrection even though he will have to abandon all his earthly or fleshly benefits, abandon all his earthly desires, but he wants to know Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.

Read Philippians 3:1-21