



Thankfulness in the Midst of Loss

November 19, 2015

Dear ,

I've been thinking about writing this letter for awhile now, but just couldn't figure out how to summarize the last 50 days.

Late on September 30 I got a call from an elder at my mom's church. Mom is 82, and was recovering from major surgery, so I assumed he was concerned for her. Instead, he told me that my brother was in serious condition, and had been moved from the local hospital to another one 90 miles away. I flew out early the next morning, and didn't return home for another 5 1/2 weeks.

My sister met me at the airport and we went immediately to the hospital. As we arrived, the staff hurried to tell us that my brother was crashing, and we had only one hour to decide on options regarding his treatment prior to death. It was not what I was expecting. Luke was with us for 5 more days and on Monday, October 5 he went home to be with the Lord. I wish I could say it ended there, but it didn't.

My mom was very fragile. At one point, while Luke was in the ICU, she was downstairs in the emergency room. We really worried that we may lose her too. After my brother passed we returned home to help Mom, but my sister Jamie was also battling serious pain and some other hidden symptoms. Jamie never seemed to rally. Twelve days after Luke passed she was rushed into emergency surgery. The doctors were "concerned." I asked them to define "concerned" as I had just lost my brother and my mother was very fragile. I learned that "concerned" meant she could die, but that they felt they had caught it in time. She had yet another surgery, and remained in the hospital for 2 more weeks. I am happy to say both Mom and Jamie are on the road to recovery now.

God's word says to give thanks in everything. Sometimes it is

hard to feel thankful when we experience the realities that come from living in a broken world, but even in the midst of those awful weeks, I can say I was thankful that:

1. I could sense God's presence every step of the way, giving me grace, strength, patience and mercy beyond what I know to be my own.
2. Luke lasted long enough for his children to fly in from Texas. The day after they arrived he rallied and even though he was limited in his ability to communicate, it was apparent that he could hear what each of us had to say and he made it apparent of his love for each of us. God gave us closure.
3. God provided overly and abundantly through a beautiful hospice center that not only took exceptional care of Luke, but cared for the 10 of us, his family, including a 6 week old baby. The first night there, the closest available hotel was over an hour away. They provided a place for us to sleep.
4. The body of Christ surrounded us with their love and prayers. Amazing prayers and answers just when we needed them. They also provided meals, household help, car care, errand running and hospital visits. As if all that was not enough, they added beautiful flowers and regular words of encouragement.
5. I have a God who holds me in the palm of His hand through the good times and the hard times. I am thankful that I never walk alone and that God has given us one another in that process.

For 31 years we, together as a team, have sought to share the Gospel message with others so that they, too, can experience a relationship with God as they walk through life. I am thankful for you – your generosity and faithfulness in this endeavor!

Yours in His service,