

## POOP AND CORN

We have friends who have horses. Horses are prolific manure producers. We have a large vegetable garden every summer, and every year our friends bring us a load of manure to fertilize our garden. Recently we gave them some of our sweet corn we grew this year. When she thanked me in an email, she said, "You know your friends are special when you give them poop and get sweet corn in return."

How amazing is it that God created the universe, or at least the earth, to operate on a system that takes decayed waste and uses it to produce beautiful, delicious, nutritious food! I believe He operates the same way in the spiritual realm. Romans 8:28 tells us that He causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him. He takes what our enemy means for evil and turns it into good. He takes the mistakes we make, the infirmities we suffer, the trials we face, the attitudes we harbor, and uses them to grow us up into the likeness of Christ, which is our greatest good.

When I read in Romans 5:3, "We also rejoice in our sufferings," I'm tempted to wonder if Paul is from some other planet. My experience of the few things I've suffered in this life has been notably devoid of rejoicing. My eight years of infertility were an emotional roller coaster with hopes rising monthly and then crashing in sorrow. My cancer experience was a pungent stew of terror, nausea, pain, and grotesque visage.

But in the midst of both of them, I saw God's faithfulness as He met me in His word and ministered His love to me through friends and family. When I came to the point of accepting the fact that I might never be a mother, God assured me that He would personally make up to me for the loss of the experience of motherhood. I knew my testimony would be from Psalm 84:11. "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." He would be to me better than children. And while I was not at all certain I would survive my cancer experience, He taught me through my grappling with my mortality that "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15). I became convinced that if the Lord took me, it would not be for lack of His considering how it would affect my parents, husband, children, and community.

I am so grateful that both of those experiences ended. My children have been and continue to be sources of great joy and blessing in my life. And my life has been unalterably changed through my cancer experience.

I rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. The things I suffered increased my perception of and appreciation for what lies ahead for me in Christ. Whether I had children or not, God would have been good to me. Whether I died or lived, God would have been glorified. I may not have rejoiced in the midst of the trials but, like the poop and the corn, I can see how they were used to make me more like Jesus. And I can certainly rejoice in that.

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