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Here's Hope

By Rev. Jerry Rea

"Her Name Was Patsy"

Her hair was thinning and red, really red, almost magenta. She attended our Bible study without a single word to anyone there. We all met at the Assisted Living every Thursday morning. Slowly, we'd all make our way round a long table with all the normal greetings and hellos. She never spoke. She never made eye contact, neither as she arrived, nor as we made our way back to our respective lives. This particular Thursday she sat right beside me, to my left. The subject morphed into the theological problem of "understanding God." We asked, "Why does God do some things but not others?" It was stated and readily understood that this is way beyond us. I asked if they'd ever had a time in their lives when they did not understand God. She spoke. "I remember when my daughter died," she said. "She was six years old. For days and days and days I cried and cried and cried. Her name was Patsy." The air left the room and all eyes focused on me. I think they expected me to say something "spiritual." Instead, the room was silent for a full 15 seconds. Once again, all eyes trained on me. Instinctively, I reached out and held her hand. She was that close. My mind raced and came up empty. I'm not a young man, nor an inexperienced minister. I've been at this for 40 years but my mind was empty. No theological words from a well-stocked grid of "spiritual explanations" made any sense. With all eyes trained on me, we sat in grieving silence together.

Here is a mother who's borne the grief of losing a child for years and years with no explanation. How often has she thought about that six year old child with her mother's love? I know people move on, but some things hurt for a lifetime. She was not whole; she was missing something very special. My heart cried for her. We all wanted with all our hearts to call her daughter back and present her to mom, but we couldn't. Our "thoughts and prayers" were weak and useless. Nothing I could do would heal her hurt. It was very awkward for us, and I can only imagine the agony for her. She carried this grief every day.

She carried something else every day, however. She carried the hope of reunion. One day she will be reunited with Patsy. I've not heard from her for years. She's probably left this world already. That hope of reunion was all she had. That hope carried her through days of sorrow and loneliness. She didn't carry hope; her hope carried her, year, after year, after year.

The hope of forever doesn't come from theological jargon; it comes from Jesus. We talk about life eternal; Jesus gives it. There is another life. Jesus said it, the Bible records it, and I believe it. Eternal life means something for me, but it means everything to moms like this one!

Looking Forward to Eternity and Meeting Patsy

Jerry Rea