When I can thank Him for “even this”, then even the ugly can become something beautiful.

So, as God often does, rather than give us what we ask for, He gives opportunities to practice the thing for which we ask. Personally, I am continually challenged to “give thanks in all things.” All things. So, here I am once again, and God has given me yet another opportunity to practice receiving the gift I ask for. With tragic news, my heart sinks, and I, as with many of you, am faced with huge disappointment, sadness, that hits far too close to home. I am having to ask God to help me see what to be thankful for in this. And how? How when people I love, who love so much, give so much, and, now, suffer so much, am I to be thankful? Thankful for THEM in my life, yes, but not for what they are suffering. Here is what I know so far:

Losses can infect every part of our life; we only see what isn’t, what was taken, what we fear will be. Or will never be. When I don’t trust God, I won’t open my hands to freely receive whatever He gives. Whatever He gives. Sometimes the most beautiful of gifts are wrapped in some pretty unlovely boxes. Sometimes the holes in our lives actually become the “seeing-through-to-God-places” that scatter light to every other dark place of our lives.

Satan’s message throughout all of human history is that God isn’t good. That God withholds from us, that He doesn’t fully love us or we would/wouldn’t… (fill in the blank). When we doubt His goodness, we mistrust Him and become discontent with what He gives. We want “more”, or at least “other”, than what He has given. Isn’t our fall, beginning with Adam and Eve, right on through till now, rooted in our dissatisfaction? Can I trust that He does? If I could, I have a suspicion that it just might. Sometimes the most beautiful of gifts are wrapped in some pretty unlovely boxes. Sometimes the holes in our lives actually become the “seeing-through-to-God-places” that scatter light to every other dark place of our lives.

Who am I, really, to receive, with thanks, only the good from His hand and nothing else. Can I really understand the ways and mysteries of an infinite God and reject what He has for me unless I, finite, sinful me, deem it “good”? Can I accept that there are things in this life that I simply don’t understand? Can I trust that He does? If I could, I have a suspicion that it just might.

change everything … And so it does. Circumstances haven’t changed, tragedies are no less tragic… but what changes is me. For every negative, complaining thought I replace with thankfulness, I am lighter, in moments, even joyful. A joy that is rooted in a RAISED HOPE that if God is truly good, and He knows all, even though I don’t, I can trust that this, too, will be redeemed for His glory and my good. Even if, in faith, it remains unseen in this life.

Can I thank Him, in all things, no matter what? Even in the darkest of times? Even in the huge disappointments? Or even the small inconveniences that I love to gripe and complain about? Is that the hissing of a serpent, I hear?

The Challenge: Can we exchange confusion for trust, negativity and fear for gratitude, deep hurt for even deeper joy, self-focused narcissism for God-focused intimacy? Can we, daily, give thanks generously and receive whatever He gives graciously? Make the most of moments, count blessings, number them. Name them. Look intently, search for even the smallest of things to be grateful for. This is RAISING HOPE, resurrecting it from the grip of death, … I dare you to try it. You just might find even the ugliest of life’s challenges becoming something beautiful.

Thank you, Mark and Rebecca, for showing us how to see the glory of God shine through holes in even the darkest of places. Your courage, hope and faith humble us all.