

## **A Tiny Treasure in Heaven**

One December I spent two weeks within walking distance of my daughter Valerie's home in Mission Viejo, California. This gave me the chance to have uninterrupted writing time for mornings and early afternoons, then spend the rest of the day with her family. Four of the children thought it a wonderful lark to spend a night in the hotel with me (one of the six is too young, one too old). What pleasure for me to watch and listen and savor the marvel of each dear unfolding personality.

Early on the morning of December 4, as six-year-old Jim and four-year-old Colleen were still sleeping the sleep of the carefree and innocent (how utterly relaxed little children can be!), I was going over various matters with the Lord. Finding myself a bit anxious about a few of them, I turned to Philippians 4:5-7: 'The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Copying the words into my journal helps me to obey them on the spot, so that's what I did. At seven o'clock Val called. Could I come over as soon as possible? She needed to see her doctor. We lost no time.

Later that morning when she and Walt came home I saw that she was crying. The baby she was carrying (perhaps in her fourth month) had died. Two days later, following the agonies of induced labor (much worse than I had imagined), she gave birth to a tiny girl whom they named Joy. I held her in my hand – perfectly formed, the fingers and toes about the size of hyphens. I could not help but think of the millions of babies this size who have been purposefully destroyed and cast out as 'hospital waste'.

The Shepard family grieved. There was no question that Joy was one of God's little lambs. The children hung a tiny stocking on the mantelpiece along with theirs. They now have a new treasure in heaven, known and loved and cared for by the Lord. Someday they will know her too. 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be.' Walt and Valerie found peace in the only place it is to be found –

acceptance – and were greatly comforted by the words of Philippians 3:10: 'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death' (NIV).

Those last six words embody, I think, what Jesus meant when He said His followers must take up the cross. Other translations: 'growing conformity with his death', 'reproducing the pattern of his death', 'even to die as he died'. How did He die? In utter self-abandonment to the Father's will. Valerie was also comforted, she told me, by the reading for that day, December 5, in *Joy and Strength* (World Wide Publications, Minneapolis, 1986):

*Whatever thy grief or trouble be, take every drop in thy cup from the hand of Almighty God. He with whom 'the hairs of thy head are all numbered', knoweth every throb of thy brow, each hardly drawn breath, each shoot of pain, each beating of the fevered pulse, each sinking of the aching heart. Receive, then, what are trials to thee, not in the main only, but one by one, from His all-loving hands; thank His love for each; unite each with the sufferings of thy Redeemer; pray that He will thereby hallow them to thee. Thou wilt not know now what He thereby will work in thee; yet, day by day, shalt thou receive the impress of the likeness of the ever-blessed Son, and in thee, too, while thou knowest it not, God shall be glorified.*

E B Pusey

Elisabeth Elliot

<http://www.elisabethelliot.org>

The Author is Elisabeth Elliot. Used by kind permission.