

Series: LIFE 2.0

November 13, 2016

Title: Abba!

[Slide 1]

Text: Romans 8:12-17

New Life

Juvenile Diabetes:

The children lay on the beds in large wards, 50 or more patients to a ward. They were mostly comatose, surrounded in many cases by their grieving families. One by one they would soon die.

What each of these children shared was a disease called diabetes. In the early years of the 20th century, diabetes was a death sentence. The most a patient could hope for was perhaps a year or so on a starvation diet, hoping to keep sugar entirely out of the body. But in the end, inevitably, came coma and death.

Leonard Thompson was a 14 year old diabetic, living in Canada. Like hundreds of other young people, his disease had progressed to the point that he lay near death in one of those hospital wards. Elizabeth Hughes was an American teenager, born to a prominent New York family. She had contracted diabetes in 1918 at the age of 11. Just 4'11", she had weighed 80 pounds when she became ill. Now, after following a starvation diet for over 3 years, she was – incredibly – still alive. She weighed 45 pounds. It was just a matter of time.

Dr. Frederick Banting:

[Slide 2]

Enter a rough-hewn, impoverished physician named Frederick Banting. Dr. Banting had served heroically in WWI, receiving the Military Cross in 1919 for his efforts. Upon returning to Canada, he became obsessed with finding a way to extract insulin from animal pancreases as a treatment for diabetes.

[Slide 3]

After much trial and error, he had several colleagues figured out how to obtain insulin. The first person to receive an injection was Leonard Thompson. He received his first injection on January 11, 1922, but suffered an allergic reaction. Banting and his team rectified the problem and gave him a second injection on January 23rd. It was a spectacular success: all signs of elevated glucose were gone and Thompson quickly regained his health.

Banting and his team brought their miracle drug to the diabetic ward:

In one of medicine's more dramatic moments, Banting, Best, and Collip went from bed to bed, injecting an entire ward with the new purified extract. Before they had reached the last dying child, the first few were awakening from their coma, to the joyous exclamations of their families."
(www.diabetes.org.uk)

[Slide 4]

The very first American to receive insulin was Elizabeth Hughes. Banting first administered insulin to her on August 15, 1922, just days before her 15th birthday. Within two weeks she had gone from 800 calories to 2200-2400 calories a day. She went home to New York on Thanksgiving Day.

New Life:

[Slide 5]

Elizabeth Hughes went on to live a long and fruitful life, dying in 1981 at the age of 73. For 58 years she gave herself insulin injections – 43,000 of them. Every day was an adventure in the new life afforded her by Dr. Banting's discovery of insulin. Every day she owed to his tenacity and determination to conquer the disease that almost conquered her.

Paul tells the Christians in Rome that they are likewise indebted to the One who came to give New Life:

[Slide 6]

Romans 8:12-13 NIV

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will

die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Just as there was – and is – no cure for diabetes, there is no cure for the malware of Sin that has taken root in our souls. It can't be starved into submission. It can't be legislated out of existence. It can't be wished away. The only cure is the one Jesus gives through His gift of His Holy Spirit.

Turning back to our old life is a death sentence, just as much as it would be for a diabetic to refuse to take any more insulin. But choosing to allow the Holy Spirit to enable us to put to death our old Sin-filled practices brings life each and every day.

Abba

Exodus:

Leonard Thompson and Elizabeth Hughes were some of the very first diabetics to embark on a new journey – a journey from death to life. It was, and is, a journey that requires the traveler to keep moving forward. It has been said that diabetes never takes a vacation; it is there every second of every day. To live means to stay forever faithful to a strict protocol of testing for glucose and administering insulin.

Paul says that the new life we have in Jesus is just as much a journey: it is our own New Exodus journey from death to eternal life. Here's how he puts it:

[Slide 7]

Romans 8:14-15 NIV

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

New Exodus:

- A journey *led* by the Spirit, just as Israel was led by God's Presence in the cloud and fire.
- A journey out of the slavery of Sin, and into God's glorious freedom; no more fear of oppression and death.

- A journey from being controlled by the false gods of this world into a whole new identity as God's children.

Abba:

Nothing announces this new identity more powerfully than the little word, "Abba." It is perhaps the very first word Jesus ever spoke as a child; in His native Aramaic it means "father," or even "Daddy!"

When the Holy Spirit lives in us and guides us on our own New Exodus journey, we are empowered to pray *the same prayer* as Jesus Himself. And it is a prayer that embodies the same intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father that Jesus has as God's Son. No barriers between us and God. No fear of rejection. No need to earn God's approval or favor. We are in the very center of His love.

Paul sums it all up by saying:

[Slide 8]

Romans 8:16 NIV

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Shared Suffering and Shared Glory

T1's:

[Slide 9]

People with Type 1 diabetes are often referred to as T1s. And T1s and their caregivers are some of the bravest and pluckiest people I have ever met. My 10 year old grandson is a T1 and my daughter is his primary caregiver.

Every day T1s wake up knowing that they have an – as yet – incurable disease that will kill them in short order if left untreated. Every day they inject themselves, by syringe or pump, with a substance that will kill them in even shorter order, if they get the dosage wrong. And every night they go to bed knowing that if they don't get the calculations right, they could end up as another "dead in bed" statistic. Every day. Every night.

But I watched as an 8 year old who was terrified of shots transformed into an expert in poking his finger and testing his glucose level. I watched as he

settled into the daily routine of multiple injections. I saw him transition to an insulin pump: "Just one injection every two days!" as he put it. And I have never heard a whimper of self-pity. He's the bravest person I know.

Shared Suffering:

A T1 knows that the only way to be healthy is to accept the suffering that comes with being a T1. There's no room for denial. You aren't going to wake up tomorrow morning and find out it was all a bad dream. You have to embrace the brokenness – accept it in all of its yuckiness – so that you can take your life-giving journey to good health.

Paul says that in our New Exodus journey we must do much the same thing:

[Slide 10]

Romans 8:17 NIV

*Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if in deed we share in his sufferings** in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Jesus healed God's broken world by entering into it and "sharing in its sufferings." We are called to do the same. The victory of God is ever and only in the Cross.

We are called to share in the suffering of our world, not run from it or whimper in self-pity. We're called to go *into* the places that need fixing, so that God's Spirit can bring new life not only to us, but to those around us.

And that means doing what those brave and plucky T1s do every day. You keep your eyes wide open to the brokenness in you and in your world. You remember that you are not going to heal yourself. You take the new journey all over each and every day! And when you do, you inspire others to dare to do the same.

Glory:

Paul says that the end of the journey is the inheritance that God has prepared and saved for us. On the Exodus Journey the inheritance was the Promised Land: a land "flowing with milk and honey." For us the new Promised Land is nothing less than living in God's New Creation with Him. It means being fully restored human beings who perfectly reflect the God who

made us. This is what Paul means when he says that we will “share in his glory.” It means that the journey was worth it all.

And that means that right now we have work to do. It means:

- Remembering the debt we owe to the God who rescued us from the malware of Sin.
- It means choosing to take the New Exodus journey every day – led by the Spirit of God.
- It means praying Jesus’ prayer of sonship: “Abba!”
- It means sharing in Jesus’ path of joining in the hurting and suffering of our world.
- It means never forgetting the journey’s end: God’s glory in us shining into all of His wide world!

And it all begins when we turn to our loving Father and say, “Abba!”

“Abba!” Group Notes:

Getting Started:

- Greet group members and thank them for coming.
- Open with prayer.

Ice Breaker:

- Think about something important – even life-changing – that you learned from a very difficult experience.
- How did suffering through that time in your life change things for the better?

Suffering:

- Suffering is something that we do our best to avoid. And yet suffering is a part of the broken world in which we live. It is unavoidable.
- Some Christians have come up with an escapist notion that if you really have enough faith, you will never need to suffer. Paul would not agree. He writes to the Christians in Rome:
 - *Romans 8:17 NIV*
 - *Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we **share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.***
- He says much the same thing to the Christians in the city of Philippi:
 - *Philippians 3:10-11 NIV*
 - *I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and **participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.***
- To truly *know Christ* means not avoiding the brokenness and suffering of the world. Instead, it means entering into that brokenness and suffering so that we can bring Jesus’ love, forgiveness and new life to others.
 - Paul is *not* saying that we should make ourselves miserable with self-inflicted suffering. He is not saying that we have no right to enjoy life.
 - He is saying that God meets us at the “bottom of the U” in our life journey. We have to be willing to be there.

- And more than that, we have to be willing to do what Jesus did for us: be there for others.
- We are called to walking proof that Jesus has already conquered the malware of Sin and all of its disastrous effects on God's creation.

Glory:

- Paul says to the Romans that we share in Christ's sufferings so that we "may also share in his glory."
- The earthly path to glory, victory, wealth and power is just the opposite of what Paul is describing. In this world, people fight to get to the top. They attack their enemies. They hoard wealth. And in the end it all slips away.
- In writing to the Philippians, Paul recited all of his earthly accomplishments. Then he said:
 - *Philippians 3:7-8 NIV*
 - *But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ...*
- Remember what we read just a moment ago about Paul's goal of knowing Christ:
 - *Philippians 3:10-11*
 - *I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:10)*
- The path to glory always goes through the Cross. This is the only way that the brokenness of the world can be made right. The old must die; then the new can spring to life.

Life-changing troubles:

- So what about that difficult, or even devastating experience that turned out to be part of a life-changing experience for the better?
 - *Have group members reflect on how suffering led to "glory" in that experience.*
- What about right now in your life? Or what about something that you might see on the horizon that you don't want to go through?

- Is there some way in which present suffering might be a part of God's bigger plan to bring you from the "bottom of the U"?

Prayer time:

- Take time to pray for those who are suffering or who have friends or loved ones who are suffering at this time.
- Remember: no easy answers! Just stand beside them where they are and welcome God's Spirit into the conversation!!!
- Thank you!