

### **Faith Beyond Death and Sovereignty Over Evil (Genesis 50)**

On the first Sunday of June Redeemer Presbyterian Church Virginia Beach didn't have a beloved young worship leader on stage as they met to worship, because one of their team, Mark, was shot 36 hours earlier. His dad is pastor at that PCA church and Mark was a part of the local Christian high school. Mark was coming back from a friend's graduation party, when someone he didn't know began shooting at people, taking Mark's life, a police officer's life, and eventually the shooter lost his life as he tried to kill another officer. Law enforcement described it as an apparent senseless shooting spree. It's hard to imagine what it would be like for that church family, school family, and for his family, after such an evil act took what all called such a good kid

The news story says 'Mark Rodriguez, 17, was shot and killed in his vehicle by 29-year-old James Brown ... Police say Brown was shooting randomly ... around 11 p.m. One of the bullets hit Rodriguez ... Chief Goldsmith says Rodriguez was "in the wrong place at the wrong time." ... "We express our grief and gratitude for the service of Officer Jones and certainly express our condolences to his wife and children and his family," Mayor Fraim said. "We are deeply concerned for the loss of this young man, Mark Rodriguez ..." there are "a lot of unanswered questions and not enough answers ... We will begin to digest and understand what happened." Mayor Fraim said.<sup>1</sup>

How are God's people to digest and understand evil events? Another article quotes Pat McCarty head of the school: 'What we expected to be an evening of happy memories has taken a turn none of us could have prepared for and only our Sovereign God can understand' ... When school officials learned the name of the police officer, they were struck with sorrow a second time, McCarty said. Jones had interviewed with Norfolk Christian [grade school] principal about potentially enrolling his children. McCarty said the principal had been crushed to learn what happened to a member of a sweet family ...

[days before he died, young Mark] Rodriguez scheduled a half-hour meeting with McCarty just to see how he was doing. "He sat there for 30 minutes, this 17-year-old to a 57-year-old head of school, wanting to check up on me," McCarty said. "How are you?" he said Rodriguez asked him. "How are you doing? How can I be of encouragement to you?"... Last summer, [Mark] spent a month at a Nicaraguan orphanage, volunteering and ministering. He helped build a greenhouse and sell bikes to raise money ... [He wrote on his blog after his trip] "It's incredible to be home, but it'll be tough not to just go back into the motions. I want to remember what I learned (there's a lot!) and I want to live it, not just talk about it ..."<sup>2</sup>

How are we to think about events like that on the news in focus of God's Word? Where is God as bullets are flying? How can bad things happen to good kids like Mark? We can talk about God being big and providence or sovereignty controlling everything, but how does it work for 'random evil' shooting sprees? At Presbyterian reformed churches in the PCA, doctrine is taught, as we seek to also, and sometimes some wonder if doctrines of grace and God's sovereignty are practical. Does that faith really work in real life? Some people resent the idea of predestination ... this family was rooted in it. It's one thing to talk it from pulpits, but let's listen to it from Mark's parents.

<PLAY AUDIO CLIP><sup>3</sup>

That interview was from June 2nd, just 3 1/2 days after their son was killed. Where does that come from? It comes from our next text, the last chapter of Genesis. Our church family is looking at Gen 50 month, another family is living in it this month. The culmination of Joseph's life story ends with no malice to those who'd tried to kill him. Mark was 17 years old when he was murdered. Joseph was also 17 years old during the attempted murder on his life. Many years later Joseph looked in the eyes of those who'd left him for dead and said in Gen 50:20: *You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good*

You just heard the father say of the killer of his son: 'I don't have any malice toward James Brown, because what he intended for evil, God intended for good, and He's using it.' I also heard his mom say in another interview that when they saw their son's car, they started praying for him and the medical personnel, and when they heard their son was shot, they began praying for the shooter. How can people have compassion on one who killed a beloved son? After all Joseph went through how can he say what Gen 50:20 says? I want to come back to both of those questions a little later. For now, I want us to notice that type of response isn't just possible in the distant past like Joseph, it can happen in the present in our real world of real evil, real pain.

[forgiving, trusting providence, looking beyond this life]

2 realities really stand out to me in their story and testimony and also in the story and testimony of another father and son at the end of Genesis: faith beyond death and sovereignty over evil. That's the title of today's message and 2 main points that stand out from the text: we'll see faith beyond death and sovereignty over evil. God is bigger than and beyond the evil people do, working good to all who love Him *including eternal good beyond the grave*. The doctrine of the afterlife and God's sovereignty over life is so practical. Theology matters as people die, as you prepare to die, as you live. I didn't get to know our son Mark before he died...I may not know what this Mark's family is going through or what you are/will, but we need to know this God.

Like the Rodriguez family and like Jacob and Joseph's family, we need faith beyond death (that will be our 1st point) and faith in God's sovereignty over evil. To say it another way, our faith looks beyond this life to a sovereignty over all life. Look at 50:20: *You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.*

### **Notice with me first ... FAITH BEYOND DEATH**

At the end of Gen 49, Jacob was ready for death and looked beyond in faith: **49:29** *Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,<sup>30</sup> in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.<sup>31</sup> There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah—<sup>32</sup> the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites."<sup>33</sup> When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people*

### **1st lesson: believers who die go to be with God and His people instantly**

A Jewish scholar says "*'gathered to my people'* in v. 29 is Hebrew for 'faith in the afterlife. Then came the request: *Bury me with my fathers*; again, the chronology is that he was first to be *gathered unto* his own *people*, but then his body was to be taken to be with the *fathers*. The distinction shows that being gathered to his people is distinct from being buried with the fathers."<sup>4</sup>

You can also see it at the end of v. 33, at the moment he stops breathing he *'was gathered to his people'* (a phrase only used of believers who die). Then in chapter 50 he is buried many weeks later. Dying believers are gathered to their people, the people of Abraham's family of faith. God told Moses "*I Am the God of...Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.*" Not *'I was their God but now they're dead,*" but *'I Am their God now,'* He's saying, *'they're in a living relationship with me now, I AM their God and they're my people'*

[Paul says Christians absent from the body are present with the Lord]

Jesus proved this point in Luke 20:37: *'that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.'*<sup>38</sup> *Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living'* [it says the scribes recognized He said it well]. A few chapters earlier Jesus tells of a poor man who dies and is gathered by angels to Abraham's side in Luke 16, a NT equivalent of *being gathered to his people* with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. And a few chapters before that He speaks of many in the future kingdom gathered to dine with the same names

## **2nd lesson: believers are ready to die and know this world is not home**

Jacob knew this world was not his home, he was just passing through. Jacob knew the future of his people was not in Egypt, it was in the promised land, and beyond that, it was a heavenly place that Canaan pictured or pointed to. Hebrews 11 says his father Abraham believed in resurrection (v. 19), and: *"all died in faith [in context Abraham and the family of faith], not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth [Jacob called himself that in 47:9]* <sup>14</sup> *For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.* <sup>15</sup> *If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.* <sup>16</sup> *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one ...*

Most of us don't know when we will die like Jacob did, but the key is for us to be ready. Mark Rodriguez died much earlier, but he was ready like Jacob. The month before he died Mark wrote on his blog: 'I've been meditating on heaven a lot lately, and I must say, it wells my eyes with tears of joy every now and then. What a beautiful thought that one day, I will be completely in the presence of God and will actually be able to feel the magnitude of all his love and peace with no earthly fears or worries to distract me. The joy that I feel now, the serenity I feel now, will finally be made perfect.

The presence of God here on earth is enough to make me shudder in wonder. I've had some incredible moments in life that can only be explained as miracles where I see my Abba, my Father move in love for me so powerfully; it brings me to my knees in amazement. To think that one day I will be perfectly and totally in his presence....I'm definitely going to need a heavenly body because the joy he fills me with now sometimes makes me feel like I'm about to explode! [remember, he's a 17-year-old!]

I love the image of Heaven because it is perfect, perfect peace. Every quarrel, every hurt, it's all gonna be resolved. All of God's children will be together and we won't hurt each other anymore; we'll finally understand how to love perfectly. And the fact that we'll all be worshiping the Lord together in one place, forever....that amazes me. It makes me so excited to think of the wedding feast awaiting us when we go to be with the Lord. I imagine streets filled with rejoicing, loud trumpets, wedding bells....I'm sure it'll be far more incredible than I can comprehend now, and I love that. God is super good. I can't wait to be with him forever.<sup>15</sup>

He was ready and is experiencing it now. Are you ready today if you died? A way to know is you look forward to worship then because you love God.

His mom said at a chapel Mark's where he wanted to be, worshipping God. She also said there "The hole in our hearts is unfillable."<sup>6</sup> There's grief here. And here in Gen 50 is a testimony of living faith along with grief in death:

<sup>1</sup> Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. <sup>2</sup> And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. <sup>3</sup> Forty days were required for it, for that is how many are required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days. <sup>4</sup> And when the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, <sup>5</sup> 'My father made me swear, saying, "I am about to die: in my tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me." Now therefore, let me please go up and bury my father. Then I will return.' " <sup>6</sup> And Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear."

<sup>7</sup> So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, <sup>8</sup> as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's household. Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. <sup>9</sup> And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company. <sup>10</sup> When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and grievous lamentation, and he made a mourning for his father seven days. <sup>11</sup> When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning by the Egyptians." Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the Jordan. <sup>12</sup> Thus his sons did for him as he had commanded them, <sup>13</sup> for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.

### **3rd lesson: believers grieve, but not without hope like the world**

- Joseph grieved, but he wasn't like the world around him in hopeless rituals. Egypt was famous for magicians who would mummify a VIP to preserve him for the afterlife, but in v. 2 Joseph makes physicians prepare dad for burial, embalming by physicians not magicians. He wanted a proper burial, not as the pagans, but as the patriarchs did
- in v. 1 Joseph collapses on his father, weeps on him and kisses him, and it's normal and healthy that believers weep, even loudly at times like the family does in v. 10. Let out your sorrows like in the psalms, don't hold them in like some in our culture think you're supposed to!

- there is a time to grieve and weep, Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3:4
- even after 70 days of mourning, v. 10 says Joseph did another 7 days
- there is also a time to stop weeping, v. 4, to move on/continue, v. 14
- in those times it's important for others to show their support, even if they may not have known the one who died, to support the living, as Egypt honored this man it barely knew in v. 7 by coming with Israel, a period of months of mourning plus travel. If Egypt's leaders came, and members of Pharaoh's household came, should believers, elders, deacons, members of a church family do less? We have memorials here and maybe the one who died you didn't know well, but if you're thinking biblically, believers are your family who need your support. These pagans gave up months to support, can believers give a day?
- you don't have to say anything, your presence at the service speaks
- death is a time believers can testify to a watching world; v. 11 says Canaanites took note of how these foreigners supported this family

Imagine if you were in Sacramento and suddenly police escort show up and shut down the streets, and you see a huge procession with a hearse, and as you watch who's coming by you notice people from the British government and parliament, ministers of the crown, the secretary of state, members of the royal family, Prince Charles, William, etc. Leading the way is Prime Minister David Cameron with the British royal guard leading the rear. You ask what's going on, and someone tells you the Prime Minister's father had roots and family here and will be buried here, that's why all the commotion. That's essentially what's going on in v. 11 and the procession started in v. 7:

<sup>7</sup> *So Joseph went up to bury his father [Joseph was prime minister of Egypt]. With him went up **all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt** ... <sup>9</sup> *And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company.**

#### **4th lesson: Gen 50 looks forward to a future redemption and procession**

As Moses writes this, I think he wants the readers to connect this with the future redemption procession in the exodus, just a few chapters forward. In the Jewish Torah this is all part of one scroll and story, and Moses writes it as one who led the exodus and is highlighting how this points forward to it:

- in v. 4, Jacob's family seeks *favor in Egypt's sight*, God tells Moses He'll give them *favor in Egypt's sight* again (Ex 3:21-same words)
- at the end of v. 5 he asks permission from Pharaoh: *please let me go up...* same Heb words Moses asked him in Ex 5:3: *please let us go up*

- the end of v. 8 here mentions *children and flocks and herds* stayed in Egypt. In Ex 10 all the same words are repeated as a later Pharaoh tries to convince Moses to leave behind their *children, flocks, herds*
- the mention of taking a route beyond the Jordan in v. 10 may also be mentioned because it's the same indirect route Israel's exodus took?
- in v. 7 the people of Israel went with Pharaoh's *servants*, v. 9 adds *chariots and horsemen*...In Ex 14 the same come, but all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't bring 'em back to Egypt again

It's no stretch to think of this chapter as Israel's first Exodus. It's like a teaser trailer for the big screen production 400+ years later, a preview of coming attractions, a scene greater than Charlton Heston could pull off. Gen 50 is a dress rehearsal for a drama of redemption to come, a practice run, a picture of a future divine visitation and procession. Joseph knows he'll do this again and in v. 24 he says: *I am about to die, but **God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.***"<sup>25</sup> *Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."*<sup>26</sup> *So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt* [not in a pyramid as other VIPs, but a portable movable sarcophagus]

The last words in Genesis are "in Egypt." But Joseph knew death would not have the last word. God would visit Israel to redeem them and when He did, Joseph asks they carry his bones with them in a mobile coffin in the exodus. He said in v. 25 he's *sure* God will *surely* visit them. God later tells Moses to tell Israel: *I have **surely visited** you and seen what is done to you in Egypt* (Ex 3:16 NKJV). Exodus 13:19 says: *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here."* Joshua 24 says they buried Joseph in Jacob's land in faith beyond the grave.

Heb 11:22 says: *By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*<sup>23</sup> *By faith Moses...*[it says he chose to identify with God's people, not Egypt's treasure]

[NT writers saw beyond Exodus a future 'visit' of redemption, Lk 1:68]

Moses was looking forward to Christ, Heb 11:26 says. Acts 7 also connects Joseph and Moses to Christ, a greater Deliverer and redemption procession Genesis-Exodus points to. Like Israel's Passover, 1 Corinthians calls Christ '*our Passover*' (5:7), our '*redemption*' (1:30), and says we're put '*on display at the end of the procession...a spectacle to the whole universe...*' (4:9 NIV).

Like Israel experienced redemption from slavery, Paul says in Romans 8 we also long for our future redemption, as does all of creation from its bondage. The NT begins with another Joseph carrying Jacob's descendant from Egypt back to Israel, baby Jesus, Jacob's greater descendant, same journey (Mt. 2). A greater procession is still to come as we exit this land to meet King Jesus. Jacob, Joseph, Moses and all believers have A FAITH BEYOND DEATH...

**AND #2. A GOD SOVEREIGN OVER EVIL** (2nd main point, repeat)

<sup>14</sup> *After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father [memories stirred from 1<sup>st</sup> trip to Egypt when they sold him as a slave?]* <sup>15</sup> *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him."* <sup>16</sup> *So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: <sup>17</sup> 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you." ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. <sup>18</sup> His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. <sup>21</sup> So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

This is my favorite scene in Joseph's life that I've been calling multi-color grace. I was blessed when a mom here recently baked me a multicolor cake! I find Gen 50 to be the sweetest part of Joseph's colorful memorable story. Several have told me what a blessing this story is of the boy with the coat of many colors. But most of it didn't feel like a blessing to him in Gen 37-41!

Sinclair Ferguson calls it Joseph's Multicolor Puzzle.<sup>7</sup> He talks about when you put a puzzle together, if you don't have the box that shows you the big picture, it's very difficult to piece together. But you can start with 4 corners, and then as you begin to work your way in from the corners with colors that match and pieces that fit together, over time you can sit back and start to see the big picture. It was designed as a beautiful picture but takes time to see it.

**1<sup>st</sup> corner piece that helps us with puzzling providence: I'm not God**

Being unable to see it all reminds me I'm not God. Joseph knew he wasn't in v. 19: *Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?"*



Joseph had come to grips with the fact that he wasn't God, and for him that freed him from being enslaved by the why questions or by fear. It also freed him from a burden no one can bear, trying to be God in the lives of others. Kent Hughes writes: 'How much of our relational trouble comes from our attempting to be God...Oh, if we were only God for a day--we would set so many evils right! In our bad moments we imagine that we know what God ought to do with others. And at our very worst moments, we take correction into our own hands—because God apparently has not had the wisdom to...'<sup>8</sup>

Not trying to be God freed Joseph from bonds of bitterness/un-forgiveness. Voddie Baucham says like Joseph you don't 'forget the evil things men do. However, that does not mean you can't or haven't forgiven. You can still [as biblical forgiveness is defined] cancel the debt and refuse to punish. If we refuse to forgive, we...put ourselves in the place of God, as though vengeance were our prerogative, not his...For the unbeliever, we are saying that an eternity in hell is not enough; they need our slap in the face or cold shoulder...For the believer, we're saying that Christ's humiliation and death are not enough. In other words, we shake our fists at God and say, "Your standards may have been satisfied [at Calvary], but my standard is higher!" ...Forgiveness...frees you from the unbearable weight of holding on to an offense...When we refuse to forgive others, we give them a level of control over us. Some of us are being controlled by a person who is no longer alive as a direct result of our unwillingness to forgive. We hold the debt close... like a...possession, not realizing we are in fact the one being possessed. Let it go, friend. If you take nothing else from the story of Joseph...*forgive!*<sup>9</sup>

## **2<sup>nd</sup> corner piece: Sin is evil and hurtful**

<sup>20</sup> *As for you, you meant evil against me ...* [he doesn't say 'it's all good']

It wasn't all good. Their sin was evil and hurtful and they were responsible. In v. 15 they admit their evil to each other, in v. 17 they confess it as evil to Joseph, and in v. 20 Joseph calls it evil, no downplaying or minimizing it. , Iain Duguid says: 'There is no shallow denial of wrongdoing or pretending that evil has not been done...they all acknowledged...evil deserves to be judged. When Joseph said "Am I in the place of God?"...he acknowledged that it is God's place to judge evil ... Joseph chose not to judge them, not because their evil wasn't really so bad, but because there is an ultimate judge who will judge all things righteously. Joseph also reminds us ... even though these things were truly evil and evil truly deserves to be judged, God can also turn evil to good and forgive sinners instead of judging them.'<sup>10</sup>

### 3<sup>rd</sup> edge piece: God is sovereign over evil

v. 20 says in one version: '*You intended to harm me, but God intended it...*' not 'God had nothing to do with it, but *used it,*' no, 'God *meant/intended it*'

Joseph didn't just chock it up to fate or free will, He trusted God's will in it. Not just God's ability to try to do something with it, His sovereignty over it. Eph 1:11 says God '*works all things according to the counsel of His will...*' (not 'all things, except evil things'). Joseph had the same faith as Job who lived in the timeframe of Genesis and said even after the evil of theft to his property and tragedy in his family, '*the Lord gave, and the Lord **has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord***' (Job 1:21, the next verse says Job wasn't blaming God or sinning in saying that). Men are responsible and accountable for their sin, God is sovereign in it and over it, and ultimately it is appointed by God for us to die (Heb 9), all our days are written in a book before they come to be (Ps 139), and ultimately the Lord takes away (Job 1) and we can bless His name, His character/attributes when we lack answers.

Our forefathers defined providence as how God 'upholds, (Heb. 1:3) directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions, and things, (Dan. 4:34–35, Ps. 135:6, Acts 17:25–26,28)...even to...sins of angels and men; (Rom. 11:32–34, 2 Sam. 24:1, 1 Chron. 21:1, 1 Kings 22:22–23, 1 Chron. 10:4, 13–14, 2 Sam. 16:10, Acts 2:23) and that not by a bare permission, (Acts 14:16) but ... ordering, and governing...to His own holy ends; (**Gen 50:20**, Isa. 10:6–7, 12) yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin. (James 1:13–14, 17, 1 John 2:16, Ps. 50:21)<sup>11</sup>

I don't know any more on that point...our last piece: **God intends good in it**  
<sup>20</sup> *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it [or 'God intended it' (the it=the evil sin of others)] for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.* <sup>21</sup> *So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones."* Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

'kindly' in Hebrew is literally '*to their heart.*' May this speak to your heart as well and comfort us to not fear, but to trust God's providence and provision. God's sovereignty over all things, including man's sinful will and evil deeds, is our comfort, because He controls *in compassion*, He's sovereign *and good*

If we put these pieces together (I'm not good, sin is evil and hurtful, God is sovereign over evil, God intends good in it), we see the picture of Rom 8:28

Acts 2:23 says: *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men [evil was meant in that but God meant good].<sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*

I promised earlier I would come back to this question of Carlos Rodriguez: how can a person have compassion on one who killed a beloved son? You heard Carlos mention God who also has compassion on those who killed His beloved Son Jesus, and who has control over all for our good. It's only possible through that God and the gospel, not just in the distant past like with Joseph, but in the present in the real world of real evil and pain. This is what Carlos explained in the memorial, in the media, sharing the good news

Mark's girlfriend shared at the memorial how she's trusting God's goodness: 'I don't have any answers, and I am reeling with deep, awful grief, but even more real than the pain is the hope I have in Jesus Christ. I don't know why this happened, but I know beyond a shadow of a doubt, God is good.'

Let's let Mark have the last word. Mark's mother read from his journal, an entry from 2011 when Mark was only 14-years-old: "Out of the chaos in this fallen world you [God] make beautiful things out of sickness, out of pain ... even through death you make beautiful things. Hope is springing up from darkness. Father, thank you for your redemption. Thanks you for your rebirth. Thank you for the release from the bonds ... I love you, Mark."<sup>12</sup>

The news report said: 'It is that...remarkable faith, that keeps the ... family moving forward in love instead of resentment and bitterness.' May we, too.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wvec.com/news/Three-dead-261368181.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://hamptonroads.com/2014/05/teen-killed-shooting-pondered-heaven-spring>

<sup>3</sup> <http://wtkr.com/2014/06/02/mark-rodriguez-parents-interview-part-3/>

<sup>4</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis*, p. 653.

<sup>5</sup> <http://theaquilareport.com/pca-pastors-son-killed-in-shooting-in-norfolk-va/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://wtkr.com/2014/06/01/virginia-beach-pastor-speaks-at-memorial-for-son-killed-in-norfolk-shooting-rampage/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=101131912349>

<sup>8</sup> Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 573.

<sup>9</sup> Voddie Baucham, *Joseph and the Gospel of Many Colors*, p. 156.

<sup>10</sup> Iain Duguid, *Living in the Light of Inextinguishable Hope*, p. 191.

<sup>11</sup> *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 5.1, 5.4, 5.7 (verbs updated to modern grammar).

<sup>12</sup> <http://wavy.com/2014/06/04/memorial-service-celebrates-life-of-slain-teen/>

