

FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Devotion | Week 2 Day 5

Foul Ball

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you. – Psalm 9:9-10

I did something tonight that I haven't done in a very long time: I took time to sit and watch a baseball game (okay, it was only the last three innings, but that's significant considering how busy life can be sometimes). Late in the game a foul ball was hit down the left field line. The ball boy easily fielded the ball as it caromed off the wall and immediately turned to the stands to present the ball to one of the several children standing there with their gloves (and their hopes) stretched out. I noticed that three of the five boys at the rail already had a ball in their gloves – undoubtedly from foul balls previously handed over. Recognizing this, the ball boy passed them by to give the ball to the next kid in line who didn't have a ball. Based on his reaction the boy was delighted with the good fortune of having been given the ultimate souvenir from a major league baseball game.

As the boy squeezed the ball in his glove, he turned his back to the camera to show the other boys what he had been given. What I saw was the look on the face of the other boy – the last one in line and the only one of the boys in that group who didn't have a ball. I was transfixed as I watched him turn to his father with a look of disappointment and despair. It was late in the game and he knew he was running out of chances. If nobody else in the group had a ball he probably would have been okay. However, it was evident that being the last one waiting was upsetting to him. The game continued and I admit I didn't give it much thought until the final out had been recorded. That's when it dawned on me: there hadn't been another ball hit down the third base line. No opportunities for the fifth boy to join in the happiness the others felt. I can only imagine what he must have been feeling. I don't have to imagine the way his dad felt.

As the father of two, I want what's best for my children. I may not always get things right. I might not give them everything I'd like, but I work as hard as I can to give my children the best of everything. I know what it's like to work hard to provide something special for my kids only to have circumstances beyond my control bring my plans and their hopes crashing down. It is a helpless feeling to watch your child experience hurt and to have no control over the outcome. I've observed promises that have gone unkept. I've seen them turn to me in search of an answer or an assurance that the injustice can be undone. What they usually find is the hug and promise of something better spoken in a way that tries to mask the hollowness of words they don't want to hear as much as I don't want to speak them.

This makes me wonder what God sees when He looks at His children. Many of us are living like the boy who never received the opportunity to get a ball. We do all we can: we try to get ahead, we work, we sacrifice, we budget and establish a financial plan but nothing seems to go right. We grow frustrated and impatient, and we make silly mistakes that can create bigger problems in our lives, our homes, our churches, and our communities. It's at times like this we are blessed to be able to turn to our Heavenly Father and know that we are loved and our needs are being met in the way that best suits us. Like the dad at the ball game, we will have our Father's full attention to help us. But unlike the earthly dad, He is not limited by what He is able to do. His response to our cries will be exactly what we need for that moment and for the rest of our lives. We may not always see it and we certainly won't always understand it, but through the faith built up in us by the Holy Spirit, we can trust God to give us what we need, when we need it in the right way and in the perfect amount.

May we always remember to turn to Him in good times and bad, relying upon His strength to guide us through everything life has to offer.