Welcoming a New Life **[1]**

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Earlier this year, the Lord blessed us with the birth of a beautiful baby girl. This changes my wife and I—our priorities, responsibilities and identities—in radical ways. While we adjusted to this new life, I reflected on a question: if the world is in such a distressing state at the moment, and bad and terrifying news abound, why even have children?

“Life is suffering.” So why bring a child into the world? There are many reasons for wanting to have a child; some of them more selfish than others. But, fundamentally, Christians do believe that life is suffering. However, the sentiment is different from what you may expect. What some people mean by this phrase, is that “living fundamentally causes suffering and despair”. It is inescapable and, on balance, we are worse off for having been born than not. (See Job 3.) But for the Christian, the phrase means that “there is actively suffering going on in the world”. The former is fatalistic. The latter leaves room for hope: where we recognise suffering, we have the opportunity to bring healing and hope. That was a major part of Jesus’s mission on earth; indeed, in it we find the Kingdom of God.

I have no illusion that my daughter, tiny, helpless and ignorant as she is now, will undergo suffering and pain in her life. (Indeed, she had already been vaccinated, and suffers regular, brutally cold stethoscopes and thermometers.) It is not my desire or will for her; merely a reality of this world. But if I work for the good of my community and my family—perhaps even my country and the world at large—I can bring healing. And if others (particularly my Christian community, but not excluding others) do the same, then this world is not merely suffering, but the beauty within it will shine all the more brightly. May, through doing so, she come to know that love is not passive (the experience of chemicals and feelings of euphoria), but active through acts of self-denial and service [2]. It is my prayer that her identity will not be found in herself, which leads to selfishness and entitlement, but in her Lord: that of a servant, through which the world, for all its brokenness, appears all the more beautiful and wonderful.

May the insatiable desire for the good things to be found in this world which lives within each of us (truth, beauty and goodness) never be taken away from this little one by the neglect which comes from ignoring suffering—either by her parents or those closest around her!

Why bring a child into this world? Because, "love creates". “Love brings forth more: more goodness, more beauty, more truth.” And what it true, good, and beautiful (ultimately) far outweighs whatever suffering this world can muster.

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