

July 13, 2006: Whitewater, Wisconsin

The kids have been on edge, to say the least. “On edge” includes Phoebe throwing tantrums over everything from the doll’s name to sand in her shoes, and Zeke crying for a record two hours wailing at nap time. Phoebe asked for my attention one too many times while I tried to make a phone call, and I stormed out of the house. Sometimes we need a good cry—time to say “I can’t do this Lord.”

That phrase reminds me of childbirth. Hours before Ezekiel entered the world, I told my husband and midwife earnestly, “I can’t do this.” They promised I could. They were right in that the baby was born, but I don’t believe they were right I could do it. I believe God stepped in, by a strength surpassing my limited abilities.

Reflecting later on this, I realized the appropriateness of that baby’s name: Ezekiel, meaning in Hebrew, “The Strength of the Lord.” It’s a name that speaks to those times we run out, and God comes in. We are born in times like these, and I imagine we die in times like these.

This time in Africa, then, enters appropriately like a birth and a death. We often forget that suffering marks our beginnings and endings. It stands to reason that it will have much to do with our time here in between. I chose to go to Africa because I’m willing to meet that suffering.

The next few days include nearly forty hours of airports, airplanes, and cars. Our children will throw more tantrums, I will lose more sleep, and we will hit the end of our human abilities.

Still we go, in the name of the One who walked toward a cross, carried it, and died on it as a means to rebirth.