



The second century bishop of what is now Lyon, France, Irenaeus, is reported to have written, “The glory of God is the living man (sic), and the life of man is the vision of God.” The text is often translated as “The glory of God is man fully alive.” However you translate it, the thrust is that God desires for us to live as fully into the lives we’ve been given as possible. This is God’s vision or God’s glory. Far from the guilt and shame that too often typifies the church’s message. Irenaeus reminds us of the passion and compassion of God that is central to the faith.

I travel this weekend to Ennis, MT. The occasion is to celebrate my nephew’s graduation from high school. If ever there was one who seems to be fully alive, my brother’s son, Emmett, must be one of them. The pictures above, from his Instagram feed (ell_ski) and pictures that he has taken express a scintilla of the energy, passion, and vision that he exudes. Garnering his pilot’s license, possessing the amazing eye that his photography confirms, building his own fly rods and

fishing some of the most amazing rivers in the world, kayaking the wonderful rivers of Montana, and skiing in some of the most beautiful mountains, he's, as we say in understated Minnesota, not doing too bad for a teenager.

Nevertheless, the celebration this weekend will be particularly poignant given the beginnings of little Emmett's life. He was born without his esophagus attached to his stomach. This meant that he and his mother, Alicia, were airlifted from Montana to Salt Lake City upon birth. Utah became their home for over a year as Emmett received care. And certainly that time underscored the precariousness of life as well as the preciousness of life. Thus, there is a great deal to give thanks for as we gather.

What amazes me is the life that Emmett has created for himself, while doing so in such a matter of fact and uncomplicated way. I know that a major part of this is due to his parents who have loved him beyond measure and encourage him in so many ways. I suspect that the awe-inspiring and natural beauty of the environs in which he was raised also shaped his being. Yet, I am also fascinated by those elusive elements that impact life, yet in ways that we can never bottle it or recreate it. Some call it grace. Others call it serendipity. However you know it, we recognize it by the fruits that it bears. And Emmett's life is fecund.

The beauty of such a life is the way that it informs the lives of those around it. Emmett is inspiring. And whether you believe in God or not, you certainly are compelled by his life and recognize that, all things being equal, Irenaeus was right: The glory of God is the living man (sic), and the life of man is the vision of God. It's the type of model that makes you want to live a little more as well. Which we should all do. And would that our lives also embody such grace and serendipity that others would also recognize the glory of God in our lives fully alive.