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We Are Thankful

- *Thank you, Father, for sending us Your Son.*
- *Thank you, Jesus, for being God with us.*
- *Thank you, Holy Spirit, for sustaining us.*
- *Thank you, Abba, Father, for your "unfailing, steadfast love is better than life itself."*
- *Thank you, Lord, that we are breathing today, for there are those whose breath stopped and did not wake up this morning...*

Living the Life in a Season of Dying

"Thank you Lord that we are breathing today, for there are those whose breath stopped and did not wake up this morning..." and such words we hear in the prayers of our African brethren. At first it was a novelty to hear, until it became too commonplace. We wondered why they kept praying such a prayer, and since it was repeated so often, do they really mean it at all?

This year, death crept into our reality. Many people we know died. Our house helper died. He was biking to our house until two weeks before he died of HIV/AIDS complications. Our next door neighbor also died of HIV/AIDS. Both parents of the RCZ- DD national coordinator died early this year. A good pastor, an RCZ-DD Board member who was very active and supportive for diaconal ministry and with whom Eli always enjoyed meeting, died, leaving a widow and five children. The longest-serving community development facilitator of RCZ-DD died less than a month ago. Evelyn had been conducting a workshop there just the day before he died. Almost every Sunday there is a death announcement in our church here, including a member who was just prayed for in the worship service commissioning the couple to an overseas post. Eli fondly remembered how this man's testimony really encouraged him to "be spent" for His kingdom. One partner's Community Health Worker volunteer died; Evelyn had just talked with her last May. And of course, most significant was the death of Kuya Joetique Lamigo,

CRWRC missionary for more than 20 years. A mentor, friend, colleague, counselor, big brother, and fellow servant in His Kingdom.

This year, when Evelyn heard that her dad wasn't eating, we thought that she should go back to the Philippines. And in the women's Bible study, a lady stood up and said that the Lord impressed on her to read the verse on Luke 9:60: "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Evelyn did not return to the Philippines. Her dad is eating and better now.

Whenever somebody we know celebrates his or her birthday Eli will always greet the celebrant by quoting these:

"Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished. If you're alive, it isn't."
-Richard Bach

"And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years." – Abraham Lincoln

With death becoming commonplace for us this year, these two simple quotes are leading us to reflect more on our own life and living here. Now we empathize with the prayers of our African brethren. And truly



we long for Rev 21:4 when "death shall be no more." As we celebrate the first coming of our Lord we are also reminded that Jesus, Himself and His message, is Life. Jesus is the Life. Jesus is the Living Rock. He is the Living Bread and the Bread of Life. He is the Living Water.

He assures us:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10, NIV)

He reassures us:

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mark 8:35, ESV)

We are about to finish our second term in Zambia in the middle of next year, and as we seek the Lord's will for our life decisions for the future, may we be a message and a life of Life in the midst of death.