

Andreas Kuhs

Rafz-Switzerland, February 12, 2022

Dear family and friends,

this week we could go for a walk almost every afternoon in the surroundings of Rafz. The winter sun warms already very pleasantly in the 1st half of February, especially when it is windless. And already a whole group of crocuses stretch their purple petals towards the sun (the picture is not mine but gives you an impression how beautiful these colors are). Such walks in the sun are so good for our soul!



In the last few weeks, we have had some burdens, especially the death of my mother, who was called away by God into eternity on January 21 after a short period of suffering at the age of 84. It came as a very unexpected event. On Saturday, January 29, 2022, we as family, together with friends and acquaintances, said goodbye to her in a worthy and moving funeral service in Ettlingen.

Our thoughts are daily with the dear friend with the same disease, whose wife officially announced at the end of the year that he is now out of treatment and in

the palliative phase, and their children have already come to say goodbye or come regularly. This also reminds us, and especially my wife, of the scenarios of being alone in the future. And sometimes this costs more emotionally than we are aware of, and now and then also brings us physically to the limits of our strength.

So far, we have been spared infections and contagions, which is not a given. This makes us grateful. And we are eagerly awaiting the birth of the 7th grandchild.

In the Christian community, in which we are involved, there have been pleasing developments in recent weeks and months, especially in terms of growth; but that also means for us that we spend a lot of time for invitations and conversations. We realize that after more than 10 months of continuous therapies, appointments, doctor's appointments, and C-restrictions, we now need a "time off" with distance, rest, walks and talks as a couple. In our calendars, we have marked 2 ½ weeks in March for this with fat color 😊, and we keep these weeks free of other appointments and commitments!

About my personal situation:

Last week I started the second of two consolidation cycles with a 3-drug combination. The side effects are still within limits - now and then I have a little more water in my body or am wide awake in the middle of the night thanks to the cortisone; there was again an allergic skin reaction as after the first high-dose therapy, and one of the drugs now caused flu-like symptoms with aching limbs for 1-2 days, but these disappeared on their own. I am grateful that especially the nerve damage in the fingers and toes, which often accompanies the other remedy, has so far been largely absent; however, I sometimes feel an unpleasant tingling in the fingers and toes and slight sensory disturbances. This remedy will accompany me for a longer period in the maintenance, therefore this could possibly intensify. My thighs sometimes look like red marble after the frequent injections under the skin; they become warm as in the case of an inflammation, but it does not hurt or itch.

My blood values are still largely okay, only the red blood cells continue to be somewhat too low, and a liver value is slightly elevated. Overall, the oncologist describes the situation with me as "very much in the green zone"; while since January the harmful proteins are no longer

measurable as "M-gradient", they would still be detectable with the so-called immune fixation. Therefore, I have not achieved a complete remission, but with the "Very Good Partial Response" (VGPR) I would be very close to the state of a "Complete Response" (CR).

I am grateful to all who ask with us from God the miracle of a complete healing.

The maintenance therapy will then begin in March with administration of the chemo-remedy mentioned above, every two weeks. In addition, I will receive an infusion every four weeks for bone building.

Now, you are up to date again – as far as my illness and its course are concerned. And I would like to combine this as always with a big "Thank you!" to all of you who regularly think of Dietlind and of me and pray for us. We are grateful for all the encouraging news and greetings.

Warm greetings

Andreas

PS: For anyone interested – I'm attaching a few thoughts below from my current book reading.

Pain and Suffering

A good friend recommended the book "Walking with God through Pain and Suffering" written by author Timothy Keller – a very good recommendation! In case you want to read some of my thoughts, I'll write here what I take away from the first part (I'll write about the second part later, when I've read that one, too):

First two quotes:

«The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation. ... thousands of animals are being eaten alive, many others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear, others are slowly being devoured from within by rasping parasites, thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation, thirst, and disease. It must be so. If there ever is a time of plenty, this very fact will automatically lead to an increase in the population until the natural state of starvation and misery is restored. In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference. ... DNA neither cares nor knows. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.» (Richard Dawkins)¹

«Unlike fatalism, Christianity teaches that suffering is terrible; unlike Buddhism, that it is real; unlike the doctrine of karma, that it is often unjust – and unlike secularism, that it has meaning.» (Timothy Keller)²

It is one of the most difficult questions of mankind – the question of the meaning of suffering. But just as hardly as the existence of evil in the world we can deny the fact that unimaginable suffering constantly happens in this world and is being perpetrated by human beings on other human beings. If one follows the materialistic-deterministic answer of atheism, as R. Dawkins formulates it in the above quotation, then the question about the sense becomes superfluous, yes, actually forbidden;

and what is even worse, there dies every hope. No, this is not the answer!

In his little booklet entitled „Where is God in a Coronavirus World?“³ the emeritus mathematics professor and book author John C. Lennox makes a distinction between two fundamentally different causes of pain and suffering. On the one hand, there is suffering because of natural disasters and diseases for which man is not, or at least not directly, responsible. These include earthquakes, tsunamis, cancer and pandemics. On the other hand, there is suffering for which humans are directly responsible. These are actions motivated by hatred, for example, such as terror, violence, abuse and murder. There is, so to speak, natural "evil" (whereby natural disasters are not moral actors), and moral evil. And finding simple answers to the deep existential questions is very unlikely, he says. But then follows his criticism of R. Dawkins' attitude, and he writes that with the attitude expressed in the quote, the categories of good and evil seem to be replaced by blind, pitiless indifference in a fatalistic universe. Richard Dawkins does not deny that there is such a thing as morality; no, his point, and that of other atheists, is to demonstrate that there is no rational justification for the concepts of good and evil because there is no God. But, Lennox argues against this, if acts of terror and genocide were simply "dancing to the music of DNA", who would have any justification for calling that evil? Morality would be meaningless! Lennox writes that one simply cannot live according to this view, of which Richard Dawkins himself is proof. On the one hand, he denies the reality of God, and thus the reality of good and evil, but calls events like 9/11 and other atrocities evil. This is the great dilemma of atheistic faith.

In the first part of his book, Timothy Keller examines and compares different cultures - including the atheistic worldview - in terms of their response to the question of suffering and its meaning. And he comes to the not surprising conclusion that our secularized, Western society is the most ill-prepared for suffering and how to deal with it. Or, in other words, a society that has largely pushed aside suffering and death and made the pursuit

¹ Richard Dawkins, *River Out Of Eden: A Darwinian View Of Life*, German: *Und es entsprang ein Fluss in Eden. Das Uhrwerk der Evolution* (München: Goldmann, 1998), S. 150 f.; quote in: Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, German: *Gott im Leid begehnen* (Gießen: Brunnen Edition, 2021), p. 32

² T. Keller, *Gott im Leid ...*, p. 44

³ John C. Lennox, *Where is God in a Coronavirus World?*, German: *Wo ist Gott in dieser Welt? Und was ist mit Covid-19?* (Lychen: Daniel-Edition, 2020), p. 19

of personal happiness and well-being its highest motto has almost no answer to the intrusion of serious illness or other catastrophes into personal self-fulfillment. Suffering then becomes a disturbance, an accident, which must be met with experts in order to eliminate it, if possible, in a technical way, if unfortunately it could not be prevented beforehand.

Now you are certainly curious – as I am – what the answer of the Christian faith is according to Keller's book. This is what the author describes in the second part, which I will still read, as mentioned above; after that I can give you a summary in a later post.

On the other hand, I have known the Bible for a long time and have learned a lot about suffering from it, so that I can say even without Keller's book: The Christian faith does not claim to give simple answers to the most difficult questions of mankind. But to speak from my personal experience: I experience God's particular presence in the dark hours more than ever before; suffering opens my eyes more deeply to God's love in his Son Jesus Christ and to his compassion; and this leads to deep peace in my heart, because I realize that I am so loved and sustained; in the face of the reality of illness and death, the living hope of life after death, where there will be no more suffering, fills me with joy. All in all, it even makes me thank God for this illness – which he has allowed. Now I understand better why James, a letter writer in the New Testament, calls out to his letter recipients at the beginning:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds." (Jakobus 1:2)