

What Charlie Gard Has Taught Us

Isn't it remarkable that a tiny baby who cannot utter a word has spoken to the world? Isn't it remarkable that a handicapped child who, under normal circumstances, might have lived and died in obscurity, has become the focal point of a debate affecting millions? God has His ways of using the weak and the vulnerable, and He has done it again through Charlie Gard.

By now, most all of us have heard that his parents gave up the fight for his life, stating that the window of opportunity for special treatment was closed. This must be an extraordinarily bitter pill for them to swallow, since it is their country's health care system that refused to allow him to receive him any experimental treatment, thereby sealing his fate.

In the words of Charlie's mother Connie, "We are so sorry we couldn't save you. We had the chance, but we weren't allowed. Sweet dreams, baby. Sleep tight, our beautiful little boy."

What is Charlie saying to us?

First, Charlie reminds us that all human life is valuable, whether strong or weak, young or old, healthy or sick. As expressed in the mantra of the children's story *Horton Hears a Who*, "A person's a person, no matter how small." How true.

As we looked at the pictures and videos of Charlie, so helpless and dependent, we saw a person, a special person, a person worthy of love a person created in the image of God. And we saw this despite the fact that he could do nothing and say nothing.

His worth was not found in his great riches or his many accomplishments. His worth was simply found in being a person,

a fellow human being. And that is enough.

Ironically, Dr. Seuss, who wrote *Horton Hears a Who*, was reportedly not a pro-life advocate. It appears he failed to grasp the implications of his own story.

Second, Charlie reminds us of the tenacity of a parent's love. While we prayed and petitioned and cried from a distance, Charlie was his parents' jewel, their own flesh and blood, their little champion.

In these days when children are often an afterthought (if not an inconvenience), when leftists fight vigorously for the "right" to abort their babies, and while ethicists argue that infants suffering outside the womb should be euthanized, the devotion of Charlie's mom and dad reminds us of the depth of a parent's love.

No one can hold out hope like a mom and dad. No one can nurture like a mom and dad. No one can persevere like a mom and dad. There is no higher calling than being a mom and dad. God has placed a human life into our care.

Third, Charlie reminds us that the state cannot be the ultimate caregiver and the ultimate arbiter of life and death. (I'm not talking here about the courts sentencing criminals to their appropriate fate, whatever that may be. I'm talking about health care.)

To be perfectly clear, I'm the last person to offer in-depth analyses of the current health care debate or to enter into a detailed critique of Obamacare. And I'm certainly not the one to offer a better alternative to President Obama's Affordable Care Act.

I'm also aware of some positive sides to the socialized medicine found in Europe, as related to me by friends and colleagues over the years.

But what Charlie's case says to us—no, shouts to us—is that the courts and government cannot stand in the way of parents urgently seeking to provide treatment for their child or individuals seeking to get treatment for themselves.

It's one thing if the system refuses to pay the costs of a particular treatment. We can understand that, and we've gladly lived with it for years. On a regular basis, Americans seek out alternative treatments not recognized by the medical industry, and we're willing to pay for this out-of-pocket.

But it's another thing entirely when the system says, "We will not allow you to take your child for alternative treatment."

That's where we must respectfully say to the government, "I'm sorry, but you are not God."

Unfortunately, Charlie's parents had no choice but to comply with the courts, since they were powerless to remove him from the hospital and transport him to a place where he could be treated.

This, then, is an urgent lesson to all of us here on the other side of the pond: Whatever our lawmakers decide regarding health care, it can *never* come to something like this. The government must not play God.

Finally, one last thought about the value of Charlie Gard's life.

It's possible that by the time you read these words, he will have left this world without uttering a syllable. Yet his legacy will last for years, perhaps making an impact on nations, probably an impact far greater than if he had lived a normal, healthy life.

Here too we are reminded not to measure things as the world does but to measure things from God's perspective. In His sight, what is insignificant to people can be of massive,

eternal importance. And so Charlie, being dead, will speak for years to come.

May we honor his legacy in word and deed. {eo}