“Show me your hands. Do they have scars from giving? Show me your feet. Are they wounded in service? Show me your heart. Have you left a place for divine love?”

-Fulton J. Sheen

In my short twenty-one years on this earth, I have been able to travel to several countries. For me, all foreign countries invoke similar emotions—wonder, curiosity, and appreciation. My journey in Nepal is the exact opposite. In my reflection, I wish to share with you a small portion of my journey in this country. This is a nation of paradoxes. There are very few places in the world that can make a person feel such a juxtaposition of emotions.

I have seen nature at its most beautiful and most ugly.

The mountains here stand tall and proud—giants with their peaks high above the clouds. Their unbending strength takes your breath away as you stand in awe of the genius of the Creator.

While just below the idyllic wispy clouds, some of the greatest poverty on the entire planet has its home. Where piercing sunlight and no rain leads to dust that coats everything in its path in a depressing beige. It leads to coughing and the burning of your lungs. It robs you of the simple joy of a deep breath and the rainbow of colors our God incorporated into creation.

I have seen the peaceful beauty of rural farming terraces which paint mountainsides with the soothing colors of harvest and bounty.

I have also seen the filth of hills covered in trash—plastic choking back the wildflowers that desperately wish to grow.

I have seen the most pure love the human heart can offer and seen the disturbing extent of its cruelty.

I have looked into the eyes of courageous mothers who have walked for days to bring a sick child to a doctor because vehicle transportation was too expensive. I have heard the screams of determined mothers, as all alone they bring their children into the world in crude, isolated birthing rooms. I have laughed with children who have the brightest eyes and most hopeful smiles, unfazed by whatever illnesses they are suffering from.
I have also seen kicks delivered to the exposed ribs of starving dogs. I have witnessed the cruelty of the caste system and the brutality of Hindu animal sacrifices. I watched the modern parting of the Red Sea, with cars making way for meandering cows, while abandoned children begging on sidewalks are not even acknowledged by passing people.

I have stood in awe of the tenacity of Christian doctors, who are spending their lives giving more love than they will ever receive back. They treat every patient with dignity regardless of background or level of education even when they can see up to 50 patients in a couple hours.

I have shaken my head in wonder at Christians passionately pursuing better education for children they will never meet. I have seen Nepalis fearlessly create resources for new churches to thrive in a country where the spread of Christianity has been made illegal.

This country makes your blood boil when the efficient American culture clashes with lackadaisical Nepali culture. It then in turn brings you emotionally to your knees when you are at the receiving end of hope and generosity that your culture teaches that you don’t need. This intense emotional cycle makes you fall into bed at the end of each day, utterly exhausted from the weight of being open to experiencing these polarizing emotions.

My prayer time here has been defined by two questions that I keep asking the Father:
Why, why does a place of such differing extremes exist? And why Father must I experience each extreme and feel them both so strongly?
His kind and compassionate answer came to me on the bus ride from Tansen to Pokhara:

“My child is this not what I felt when I wept over Jerusalem? Every day I see the pinnacle of my creation damaged as a consequence of sin. To feel so strongly is to draw yourself closer to me- and to my purpose for your life.”

To be in the presence of individuals who, when faced with a vocation of witnessing these extremes every day, said yes to the Lord’s call is an immeasurable privilege. They are the humble servants who make the love of an invisible God visible every
day. To say my life has been changed by this trip sounds simple and meaningless. Rather, I would like to say that this trip is the tangible experience of being a metaphorical piece of clay in the hand of the Father. I have been pulled and stretched beyond my comfort level. My imperfections, feelings of prejudice and first world shortcomings, have been softened to nothing. I have groaned as the Lord has shaped me into a vessel worthy of sharing His truth. I have witnessed the Lord’s love for His Nepali children and it is one of the most magnetic forces in the universe. I have fallen more in love with medicine and its potential to bring physical, emotional and spiritual healing. To the question: “Will I be back?” My answer is a resounding yes.

“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

Ephesians 4:1-2