



'Till We Meet Again!

Week of November 21 and November 22, 2020



REFLECTION FOR TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2020

RAIN DOWN LIKE PENNIES

As I write this reflection, we are experiencing summer like weather and it is good. There are people making sure that every vote is counted, and it is good. Others are looking for ways to unite us and bridge the divide that has occurred in our country, and it is good. One of the large pharmaceutical companies has announced that their vaccine is approaching 90% effective in ongoing trials, and it is good.

When things look the darkest it amazes me how God shines through. God is good! All the time! Thanks to my brother's influence I am a big country music fan and there is currently a song playing that speaks volumes to me. It is a song by Mickey Guyton, and it is "Heaven Down Here." She wrote it during the pandemic, the riots, the political divide and all the other craziness going on in our world.

The first verse of the song and the chorus are below.

Heaven Down Here

***Hey God, it's me, I hate to be a bother,
but I could use a minute or two***

***Yeah, I'm just so heartbroken,
disappointed, in the way this world is***

coming unglued

***And I can't help but wonder
are you***

***If you got a little love left in
your back pocket rain it down
like pennies***

***In this wishing well of tears, I
know that you're busy, but if you hear
me talking***

***We could use a little more heav-
en down here, we could use a little more heav-
en down.....here***

I encourage you to listen to this song, it is beautiful and reminds us that God is always listening, always present, and always shining in our world. In the midst of the darkness there is always light that shines through. We are never alone, instead we are always wrapped in God's loving arms and care. I know that many are feeling the darkness of the shorter days, the darkness of social and physical isolation, and the lack of the ability to gather as we normally would for church, for holidays, and for other activities. Yet God is present and wiping our tears. In the midst of all the struggles and separation in our lives, God has promised to be present with us. There is good news, positive things are happening, not as fast as we would like, and still if we look, we find God. We find good, we find light, we find each other.

Know that I keep you in my prayers and I hope you keep all of us in your prayers. God is present, listening, and sending good things to us. Rejoice and be grateful and stay the course. God is Good, All the Time.

In Peace,

Pastor Suzanne



REFLECTION FOR THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020

⁴⁶*Mary responded,*

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷*How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!*

⁴⁸*For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.*

⁴⁹*For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.*

⁵⁰*He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.*

⁵¹*His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.*

⁵²*He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.*

⁵³*He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.*

⁵⁴*He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.*

⁵⁵*For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever.”*

Luke 1:46-55

Greetings my friends!

I wanted to remind everyone of Mary’s “Magnificat”. These words have touched many hearts over the years as they remind us of God’s continuing care and love for us all. Today, I share these words with you as I have witnessed a “siege” of Christmas decorations adorning homes. I share these words to remind us all how our Lord has promised to “leave no one behind.”

Yesterday our country remembered Veteran’s Day. I take a moment now to say,

“thank you!” to all our veterans. Thank you for your service and your willingness to defend our values and freedoms.

When I served in the Army, one of the very early instructions that I and all my colleagues were constantly reminded of was that in the Army we leave nobody behind on the battlefield. That regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the risks, that we would not be forgotten. I know all these years later what I am about to share may seem a little bit silly... But... These words and this thought truly inspired me. Those thoughts gave me a sense of security that regardless of what situation I might face in the future, I would not be left behind, and I pledged myself to leave nobody else behind.

Prisoners of War from past conflicts often commented in the aftermath of being taken prisoner that the one thing that inspired hope within them was that our country would not leave anyone behind on the battlefield. In other words, this simple and direct teaching inspired these prisoners of war to survive another day.

I think God works like this!

God leaves nobody behind! God never forgets us as individuals!

As God’s children we have the wonderful opportunity to emulate God’s desires. Friends and family from our past are not truly “left behind” we carry them in our memories and our hearts into our present remembering the wonderful ways in which they impacted our lives.

And in some cases, we get to more tangibly “leave nobody behind!” When we visit people, we love in rest facilities, when we participate in ministries that feed the poor, when we stand up for people within our midst who have been marginalized. In these and so many other ways we have opportunities to share with others that indeed they have not been left behind.

Today I share two such stories with you.

Our “Bringing it Home!” ministry is beginning within our community. Sisters and

brothers in Christ who don't have technology in their homes and have been unable to attend in person worship in some cases for over a decade, have suddenly had the opportunity to actively participate in our worship celebrations through the use of these cellular devices and our "Live streaming" worship. The joy, the happiness, the feelings of once again belonging, having not be forgotten, has been powerful to witness! God's mighty arm has done tremendous things! All our hearts should be filled with joy and praise!

In another story, a young man was in a tragic accident and doctors told his family that he was very near death and would more than likely not recover. The family began praying to God for healing and restoration and asked their friends, family, and churches to do the same. Today, this young man is on the road to recovery. While not all prayers are answered with almost miraculous results, you and I know that God hears all our prayers. In the aftermath of this event the family has a more definite vision of God not leaving anyone behind.

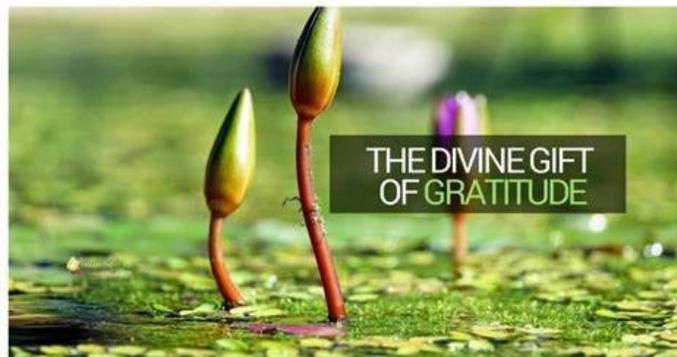
I share these reflections with all of you to remind us all that amid the chaos of this world. Amid anger, violence, and oppression. Amid changing times and changing seasons, our Lord has not forgotten us, and we will not be left behind!

As God's children living in the year of our Lord 2020 we would do well not only to remember that we as individuals will not be left behind, that we as a community will not be left behind, but also that we actively join God in sharing with others in the world that indeed they have not been left behind because we have a God who has always been there for Her/His children and remembered to be merciful. For God has made these promises to our ancestors, to us, and to future generations!

Until next time!

Trust God, keep washing those hands, and be at peace my friends!

PJ



REFLECTION FOR TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2020

TRUE GRATITUDE

Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.

Maya Angelou

I am in the middle of taking an online course about gratitude that is based on a book, Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks, by Diana Butler Bass. Given that we are a week away from the traditional American holiday that is focused, at least in theory, on giving thanks I thought it would help me be more grateful. It isn't that I am not grateful, but what was drilled into me by well-meaning parents and society is a debt-based gratitude.

My parents taught me to never show up empty handed to someone's house if you are invited over for a meal. Of course, that is a great philosophy to live by and one that is generally good. It can however be a negative if you feel uncomfortable going if you can't bring something or return the favor. It puts you in a situation where you need to pay back the person for their kindness or generosity. This creates a hierarchy that does not allow other people to simply share their generosity. If I invite you to my house, it is out of my gratitude for all that I have and my desire to share it with you. True generosity does not expect something in return. Gosh, that is so very hard to accept when you are conditioned to always pay people back for their generosity.

Another lesson that my parents taught me was to always write a thank you note when

someone gave me a gift. Again, a wonderful response to receiving a gift. I know that I have been miffed when I sent someone a gift and did not receive a thank you in some form. I expect to be thanked, that is the value that was instilled in me. Butler Bass says that that too is debt-based gratitude. If we expect something in return, then it is a gift with strings. The string being that I expect a thank you for the gift. I expect something in return. So, it is not a gift. Gratitude really is not as easy as we think.

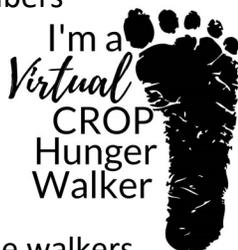
And I think that is why we have so much trouble accepting God's love and gifts. We think we need to earn God's love; we think we need to give something back for God's gifts. And those thoughts come from a good place, from well meaning parents and society that wants us to be respectful and gracious. We look at things from our perspective and that it natural. God's perspective is not ours. God's love is truly unconditional and freely given. All debts have been paid by Christ, there is nothing for us to do except accept God's love and forgiveness.

I am working to be more grateful and accepting. As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, I pray that you too would accept with gratitude the gifts that are given to you by God and by each other. My prayer is that we would join together in gratitude and love toward each other and with each other.

In Peace,
Pastor Suzanne

CROP WALK THANK YOU

A sincere thank you to the members of the UPG for their support of the 2020 Bethlehem Area CROP Hunger Walk. This was the 36th annual event and our members raised over \$1,400. A special thank you goes out to the walkers this year: Penny Weiss, Cindy Kemp, Karen Favinger, Donna Macaravitz, Bev Pizsel and Helga Rimonneau - it was one unusual year.
Matt Pizsel, BACHW Coordinator



CALLS OF COMPASSION & CARING "CCC" MINISTRY: MORE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Calls of Compassion and Caring "CCC" Ministry – This exciting ministry was formed during the

2020 pandemic. A faithful group of volunteers regularly call all members of the UPG/St. John's Windish congregations simply to "check in" with their sisters and brothers in Christ and to see if there is anyway that the community may be of assistance. If you would like to participate in this rewarding ministry, please call one of the church offices.

THIS WEEK IN THE UPG NOVEMBER 21—NOVEMBER 29

Saturday November 21

4:45 PM Worship
(LiveStream Facebook LoC)

Sunday November 22

Worship available on YouTube

Monday November 23

7:00 PM Coffee & Conversation (Zoom)

Tuesday November 24

9:00 AM Staff Meeting (Zoom)

Wednesday November 25

7:00 AM Fellowship Meeting

Thursday November 26

Thanksgiving Day
Church Offices Closed

Friday November 27

Church Offices Closed

Saturday November 28

4:45 PM Worship (Facebook)
(LiveStream Facebook St. JW)

Sunday November 29

Worship available on YouTube