

## **Merciful Blessings**

**3/25/2022**

I can't tell you how glad I am to be posting a new blog this week. The fact that I feel inspired to write is a victory for me. Just over a week ago, I underwent surgery for a full knee replacement. I'm still very much on the mend, as I write this with my leg elevated and an icepack on my knee, but I feel so incredibly grateful and blessed.

Since I just had rotator cuff surgery last September, it sounds like my ole body is just falling apart, but I don't feel that way. When I was visiting my dear friend in California to bring in the New Year, I was filled with a sense that God wanted my goal for 2022 to 'get healthy'. I don't believe in resolutions, as such, but I have come so far from where I was this time last year. I have been praying for direction for my life, asking God to lead me where he wants me to go. Taking care of myself was the answer I came home with. I already knew this surgery was in my future when I left for that trip, so I feel like I've accomplished a particularly important task and I'm ready to begin working on his plans for me.

I'm thankful to say that as with my shoulder surgery, I seem to be healing very well. I have returned to work, probably earlier than I should have, but I'm still a working Grandma, taking care of two little boys. I have been blessed with a kind boss who puts family first and has allowed me to arrange my workday around the boy's school schedule, and who understands when I need to leave for doctor and physical therapy appointments. What an amazing blessing my new position and workplace have become.

I can't even begin to tell you how thankful I am for the outpouring of care from my family and friends. My sons changed their schedules to come help care for me as they were able, and my two grandsons have risen to the challenge of being helpful in caring for their grandma. From doing their homework without being asked to taking out the trash and getting the mail, I am so proud of these two little guys. I have had friends prepare or bring us dinner during this past week, and they will never realize how grateful I was not to have to stand up to cook.

My dearest friend Lori was with me from day one. She was with me for my shoulder surgery and again for my knee surgery. She drove me to the hospital for both procedures and waited patiently during my recovery. She stayed with me at home to make sure I had icepacks ready and to make sure I stayed on my pain meds. She cleaned my house and did homework with my youngest grandson. Lori gives an entirely different meaning to the word, 'friend.' She has been my rock and my comfort here on earth, and if ever there was a person that lives out her faith and love for God, it's Lori. And God knew I needed her.

Finally, as I drove in to work this morning, I was listening to who I now think of as my friend, Pastor Rick Warren. His podcasts are inspiring in their simplicity, yet they are so powerful. If you never listen to another podcast, you really need to listen to 'Pastor Rick's Daily Hope' podcasts. Mr. Warren is the author of one of my favorite books, "A Purpose Driven Life," and I believe he has been blessed by God in his effectiveness for sharing God's word. I am also proud to know he is my brother in Christ.

Today's message hit me personally today for assorted reasons, but one thing I want to share with you is how Pastor Rick gave a beautiful example of how Jesus was so merciful to Peter. If anyone ever made a huge mistake and had a reason to beat himself up over it, it was Peter. After living with Jesus for three and a half years and saying numerous times that he would never deny him, Peter did just that. During their last supper together, Jesus told Peter that before the

cock crowed, Peter would deny him three times. Of course, Peter defended himself and said he would die first.

Later that evening, after Jesus was arrested and the disciples scattered, Peter stayed close by to catch news about what was happening to Jesus. Walking in the shadows, he was approached three separate times by random strangers that proclaimed he was one of Jesus' followers. Each time Peter vehemently denied it and after the third time, the cock crowed. Immediately Peter was reminded of what Jesus told him would happen, and he ran away and wept bitterly. He had failed himself and his Lord miserably. I know how I feel when I have failed...I can't imagine the pain in which Peter found himself, and the depression that followed.

Pastor Rick went on to share the events that occurred after the resurrection, including the moment when the disciples had been out in a boat fishing at night, and then from a distance they saw a man on the seashore cooking fish and bread over a fire. When Peter realized it was Jesus, he jumped out of the boat and swam to him as fast as he could. After their meal and when Jesus had Peter to himself, he asked Peter three separate times, "Peter, do you love me?" And each time Peter said, "Lord, you know I love you." Jesus told Peter, "Feed my sheep." By the third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved him, Peter was a little confused or frustrated, and said, "Lord, you know all about me. You know I love you."

For years, I thought I was just a little dense, because I really wasn't sure why Jesus asked Peter the same question three times. Perhaps there was a hidden meaning? Perhaps Jesus was just trying to drive home his point about the mission at hand? Pastor Rick explained that Jesus was showing Peter the ultimate example of mercy. When Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" three separate times, it was as if with each answer, Peter was freed from the failure and guilt for denying his Lord, all three times. Even though Peter failed Jesus, miserably, Jesus knew the man so well, and yet he still showed him complete and unconditional mercy.

What a loving and merciful God we serve. With all my faults and my mistakes, he has seen me through the toughest of times. He has heard the nasty and evil thoughts in my head and has seen the evil in my heart, yet he knows how much I love him and how truly sorry I am for when I have failed him. He knows me better than I know myself, and still calls me his own. That, my friend, is mercy.

My apologies for being a bit long winded this time. Making up for a week lost, I suppose. I hope you will find something useful in this week's blog. I hope you can see the blessings that God wants to do in your life. He doesn't promise it will always be easy, but he does promise you will never be alone. He is always there.

