

## Gratitude For the Past and the Here and Now

I was rereading one of my older devotionals and found that when I was writing it, I yearned for the quiet of a home where I could be alone from time to time. Where I could have some time to do those things I so enjoyed, like reading, knitting, watching old movies (not necessarily ones with old cars), and just contemplating life. Well, I now have that time and realize that I miss the chores, the presence of another person, the busy day-to-day chores. I treasured those times when I could just relax and enjoy the quiet. When I was young with children, I wrote a poem about the calls from small children of “Watch me Momma, watch me swing, watch me ride a bike, watch me climb, watch me swim” and the poem ended with “Watch me play, watch me go away” because I knew their cries of “Watch me” would end and I would miss the sound of my children playing. When they were teens and the house was filled with phone calls, and gatherings and chatter I knew they were growing up and I knew they would leave. I missed my son and his friends gathering at the table and talking and I would turn to my husband and say, “everybody talks, and nobody listens.” I missed the days of my daughter complaining about, “Every other girl in Junior High gets to (insert wear makeup, date boys who drive cars, or go out late, or anything else I deemed inappropriate). Then they brought me grandchildren and I watched them grow up. They were and are so much fun and then they married and moved and/or are busy, but two have brought me Great Grandchildren. Then there was taking care of a husband with Alzheimer’s. Now there are no more cries of “watch me,” no more chores of “take care of me.” No more trips to the Zoo or the park for picnics or fishing at the Trout Farm, no more singing silly songs in the car, no more watching grandchildren grow up, no more doctor visits with cognitive tests. My children and grandchildren haven’t “left me” and I know that, but they all have their own lives and I miss those days when being needed brought me joy. When we were going to the Memorial Garden at Church to scatter my husband’s ashes my granddaughter held my arm and guided me across the uneven ground, and I remembered holding her hands as she took her first steps and walking her as an infant when she didn’t want to go to sleep, and I realized how we had changed places except I go to sleep a lot easier than she did. I am learning to accept this time in my life. I can stay up all night watching movies and reading if I choose and have been known to do so. But now I complain that I need to have a schedule because I have found that staying up all night is a real drag the next day and I’m not 20 anymore. I often am reminded of my children, my grandchildren, and now my great grandchildren and my husband with memories that bring me smiles and laughter and occasionally tears. But if I’m truthful a quiet house isn’t as great as we think it will be. But through our busy days and our quiet days God is with us. He gives us patience for our lives with young children and teenagers. He gives us patience for the care of loved ones who are ill. He gives us all things so we might find joy in all things even the quiet house that we yearned for as we miss the busyness of a life well lived and loved.

God gave us memory so that we might have roses in December. By J.M. Barrie

Give me patience when wee hands tug at me with their small demands. Give me gentle and smiling ways and keep my lips from hasty replies. And let not weariness confusion or noise obscure my vision of life's fleeting joys. So, when in years to come my house is still. No bitter memories its rooms may fill. Anonymous

John 10:10 I have come so they might have life and have it to the full. Jeremiah 31:3 I have loved you with everlasting love.

Lord, we thank you for this day and for all the days you gave us. We thank you for the memories of times past and the joy we had with loved ones. May we be grateful people. Be with those who are ill and those who mourn, may they be comforted. Be with those who are lonely, may we reach out to them. Be with our Pastor and his family, bless his ministry. Be with our staff and leaders, bless them and guide them. Be with our church lead us as we seek to be the hands and feet of Christ. May we be God’s people in our homes and our communities and in our church and in our hearts. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson