

A Blessed Birthday

This week I spent a very pleasant and memorable two days with my niece in Frankenmuth. We had been going every year to celebrate my birthday until Covid and then our schedules didn't work out and so we had missed a couple years. We had our chicken dinner and she surprised me with a cake. I told her how much that meant to me. To some a cake may seem routine but to me it is a precious gift and one I never received after the death of my brother on my 12th birthday. I told her the story of my friends in Nurses Training making me stay awake on my birthday after working a midnight shift, attending 4 hours of classes, laying on the tarred roof of the nurses' home to get some sun, eating supper all while my friends kept saying, "You can't sleep, it's your birthday!" and going to a movie which I slept through. Then going to my room and surprising me with a cake, at that time the first birthday cake I had received in nine years. After I was married my husband made sure I had a birthday cake every year, I no longer feel sad for that young girl who felt so guilty she declined the simple gift of a birthday cake (although being asked, "You don't want a birthday cake do you?" does beg for a negative answer. Especially when the person who asks lost a son on that date). It seemed the whole two days were a celebration of my birthday. There were flowers for me in the room we had in a very nice hotel with such friendly people it was like home. We laughed together and told stories to each other. I drove back home on Friday and then celebrated again on Saturday with more love given to me by my family and friends as more cards, gifts and flowers came. And then on Sunday the birthday greetings continued, and my Son and Daughter-in-law provided me with lunch and beautiful flowers. I was at first reminded of the saying, "God gave us memories so we might have roses in December." And I decided it doesn't apply to me yet because I am still receiving the roses of a life well lived, a life still being enjoyed, still making memories, a life that still contributes just in different ways. 88 is just a number and I am so happy that I have lived it, I never expected to, and I have the joy and comfort of looking back on it and seeing where God was in it. From the time he called me to a church, for the times I thought he had deserted me, for the times I felt his love in my life, for the times that faith was tested until I finally gave it up to God and he was there lifting me up and giving me what I needed for the day and the task, making that faith stronger and more resilient. God is in the good days and the bad days that make up a lifetime. He knows our joys and our sorrows, our celebrations, and our regrets, he knows the days we have failed him and the days we have pleased him, he has known us since we were in our Mother's wombs and has loved us even before we were formed. To God be the glory and gratitude.

Acts 17:27-28 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."

Dear Lord, we thank you for this day and for all the days we are given. Be with us and guide us in all we do. Be with those who are ill, those recovering from surgery and those who are grieving. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry. We thank you for the gift of his presence in our lives. Be with our staff and leaders to guide and direct them and strengthen them for the tasks before them. Be with our church Lord, may we be your beacon in our homes, in our neighborhoods, and may we go where you would lead us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson