

GOD HAS A PLAN

I have a file called "Ideas for Devotionals" When I am stumped about what story to tell or what to write about, I go to that file. I went to it this week and it was blank. I had used up all my ideas for devotionals. I thought about what I could write about and not only was the page blank, but my mind followed along. For some reason the old TV program "The Naked City" came to mind. If you remember at the end of the program they would say, "There are eight million stories in the Naked City, this has been one of them." I would reply then why do we have to watch reruns. I assume that the implications of the figure of eight million meant that there were eight million residents in the city, and each had their own story and for each it was a different story. I was thinking about how we each have a story and recalled this story from a few years ago.

I was talking with a long-time friend and discovered that our lives had been similar. We both came from dysfunctional families with someone in the family who had been a strong presence in our lives. For her it had been her sister, for me it was my brother. For both of us those beloved people had taught us to stand up for ourselves and that we could be more than what others thought of us. My brother pushed me all the time about the importance of education and to not give up as he had done and to use it to better my life. Her sister told her she was better than the life that had been given her, to rise above those that belittled and shamed her. We both found our way out of the lives that had put us down and found our way to our faith. It was a journey that culminated in a church and a new purpose. I believe that journey started a long, long time ago even before our birth. God loved us before we knew him, before we were formed, and he had a plan for our lives. We may not like that plan, we may suffer in that plan, we may not follow that plan but then we get a second and even a third chance. Our strength is in knowing we are loved and held as precious by a loving, forgiving, and ever-present God, and in that plan, we can give hope and love and witness to others.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart.

Isaiah 55:6-8 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

Lord, we thank you for the times given to us, may we use it wisely. May our lives be worthy of your never-ending and forgiving love. We ask for your forgiveness for our misdeeds and our shortcomings, for all the times you call us, and we don't answer your call for all the chances we miss to pour out your love to each other. Lord be with those who are suffering and those who are sorrowful, ease their pain and may they feel you near them. Be with our Pastor and Laura as they transition into their new lives in retirement. Bless Pastor Albert and his wife as they make the move to come and be with us here. Bless this new ministry opportunity. Be with our staff and leaders in all they do and be with them. May we show gratitude for all they do. Be with our church, may we truly be the hands and feet of Jesus here in this time, in this place. In Jesus name, Amen

Grace Epperson