

"This was the thing about Christmas," he thought. "With all the joy and hope and laughter, there's always, somewhere, the sorrow...just as there was in the manger that pointed to the cross."

Father Tim, from *To Be Where You Are*
By Jan Karon

Christmas, 2019

Dear Family and Friends,

Once, our long-ago pastor, the benevolent and eloquent shepherd Bob Harvey, uttered a simple phrase in one of his sermons. "In all of our life here on earth, there will always be *things that lurk*." That concept has resonated with me ever since, on days when I feel "off," when anxiety creeps in, often with no name. Is it the sorrow, as the above quote by Father Tim, an Episcopal priest of the cloth, points out in Jan Karon's novel? Is it because somewhere there is war, and poverty, and desperation, a recent death so profound it affects us all? Is it because nothing will ever be the same again with Bob residing in heaven and me going it alone here on earth? Is it when a silent snowfall on a Saturday morning, magical, reminiscent, brings me to lonely tears? Is it because we are a vulnerable lot, prone to losses of every kind—to sickness and aging, and transitions that loom?

But the lurking is not the main event, I've found! The hope and the joy can minimize, supersede, overcome at times the "lurking"—even extinguish for a time the fears. And God only knows we are grateful for those events which cause our hearts to sing. Yesterday when Dawn texted that the scans were clear, and three months of reprieve lay ahead, Joy and Hope won the day, won the night, flooded early morning first-thoughts with thanksgiving.



So much grace to reflect upon this year, vulnerability not withstanding. Tessa's and Luke's wedding. The loveliness of the historic church, the meaningful ceremony, the fact of Dawn even able to be there, beautiful and brave. The fantastic band Tessa and Luke chose for the reception, dancing to Darius Rucker's rendition of Wagon Wheel, Kathleen pulling me out on the dance floor, "Hey Mama rock me." Family and friends singing in unison, feet flying, small great grandchildren and everyone else rockin' on that dance floor until the band called it quits at midnight.

This Christmas I ask myself the question: is joy on earth heightened somehow by the things that lurk, that point us, even in their sorrow from the manger to the cross and ultimately to the resurrection? Do the things that lurk deepen us, give us a sensibility for what shall be ultimately, the "Better Place," heaven, if you will?

I wish with all my heart this Christmas, in our humanness, our vulnerability, even when things that lurk seem to take precedence for a time, I wish for us Incarnation Joy and Hope.

With love,



*So teach us to number our days that we may
get a heart of wisdom.*

Psalm 90:12 