

*For outlandish creatures like us, on our way to a heart, a brain and courage
Bethlehem is the not the end of our journey but only the beginning...not home but the place we must
pass if ever we want to reach Home at last.*

Frederich Buechner

Christmas, 2022

Dearest Family and Friends,

Today brilliant sun streaks across my living room enlivening Christmas reds and greens and bows and flaming poinsettias. I have favorite CDs playing, corn pudding bubbling in the oven, a pine-scented candle flickering fragrance upon the scene. Another year past, another Christmas to celebrate. I am entering the season I love best.

But there are years and there are years. 2022 was a hard year — a year when pain held court in my life. Physical pain and emotional pain. Pain from a fall and pain from loss. Pain and fear and sorrow, a convoluted mix, pain with no seeming resolution. Pain that conjured deep reflection, sadness, regret and memories too precious to ponder for very long. So much missing, so much longing. So much dependency, so much to learn about leaning on others, so much to pray for, to let go of, to give over to God.

Once I texted my son for a piece of wisdom. Barrett answered briefly, “Pray, breathe.” And that is what I am doing. Simply, in the middle of night time anxiety, I pray, and I breathe.

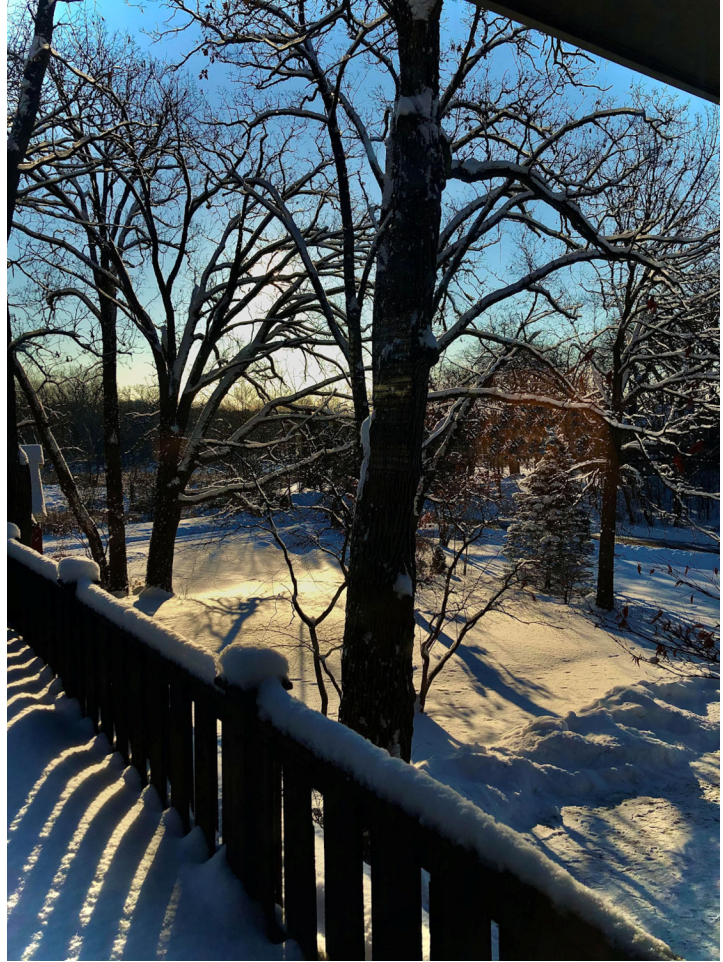
Specifically, I broke my femur just before Christmas last year. And then my youngest brother died at home in Colorado, surrounded by his family, and I was too unwell to travel to the funeral, to join in honoring him, to see his precious widow and children. I learned that all the will power in the world cannot short circuit a healing process. I learned that asking for more help than I have ever needed takes a humble spirit, a letting go of independence. Once our pastor visited me at Marionjoy rehab hospital and brought a book called *The Obstacle is the Way*. That hit home. The obstacle IS the way through to the other side. I learned that using a cane when I need one is another form of getting to the other side. That asking to hold an arm allows for brisk walking without fear of falling. That every arm offered and every arm I take is a gift.

Now, this Christmas I have so many prayers, so many to bring before our Father. Prayers for twin great grandsons, born prematurely at less than two pounds, angel-warriors both, newly home after months in the NICU. Prayers to hear positive words from docs regarding those most close. Prayers for others who ask to be remembered and prayers for those who are on my heart. Often I claim the words of Romans chapter 8 where the apostle Paul reminds us, “God’s spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don’t know how or what to pray, it doesn’t matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans.” Sounds a bit like Barrett’s admonishment, “Pray, breathe.”

It's dusk now as I write. I can see the way Natalio (new to outdoor decorating) wound Christmas lights round and round a huge oak in front of the family room window...not my cup of tea aesthetically. But now I love the way the lights beam into the house as skies darken. He offered his proverbial arm to help me this Christmas. And I imagine Bob, from his heavenly perch might say something like "Babe, we are not tweaking the lights. Let's be thankful Natalio put them on with his own brand of creativity...leave it!"

For all of us this Christmas, let's pray, let's breathe..."for unto us a Child is born..."

Blessings always,



Joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes...

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