

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, October 21, 2020. Thank you so much for tuning in and for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

So, happy Oct-snow-ber everyone! My goodness that snow yesterday came as a huge surprise and was super unexpected this early on in the year. 6 weeks from now, I think this would have been very welcome, but wow, yesterday was certainly something.

This year has been filled with a host of unexpected things for many of us - the pandemic being a huge one, of course, on top of so many other things that require our attention and action and understanding. And oftentimes dealing with things that are both unexpected and life-altering can be really stressful, or the things that come up can be considered quite negative.

But I listened to an episode of one of my favorite podcasts recently - it's called "Everything Happens" with Kate Bowler, do check it out if you are a podcast listener, it's fantastic - and Kate and her guest were discussing how reality shifts when we deal with big and traumatic and unexpected things. One of the most helpful reminders of that conversation is that even though the unexpected change may be difficult and entirely change what your day to day reality is, part of that new reality also includes the small pockets of joy that are very real. While the majority of the unexpected thing may be difficult and you may have complicated feelings about experiencing joy in the midst of heartbreak or grief or a difficult medical treatment or financial struggles, those moments of joy are still real. They are important. And these glimmers of joy in the midst of what's difficult are some of the powerful ways we continue to have hope, and know that life itself is a gift from God.

As I think about yesterday's snow storm, a temporary if very unexpected thing, yes, I was terrified about Mike driving home when I knew the plows weren't out yet and it was super dark outside by the time he left Minneapolis. I prayed fervently for the people who don't have a warm or safe place to be, and perhaps their arrangements weren't made early enough to account for this snow. There was fear and overwhelm in the midst of it. But I also got to light my fireplace for the first time. I got to have a Zoom book club meeting with some dear friends from seminary. And I got to wear my favorite warm, snuggly sweater and socks for the first time this season. Each of these moments may not take away the challenge and the difficulty of the unexpected on this small level, but the little joys still kept me going. And for those pockets of joy, I give God unending thanks.

As we move forward in lots of unknowns - we have no idea how the weather is going to be, how long this pandemic is going to last, what things will look like on Election Day coming up, how we can move on with such challenging grief - I pray that you can accept and enjoy the small joys that come up each day. These moments that make you smile or laugh or simply warm your heart are absolutely part of your reality, and it does not mean you aren't in the midst of something difficult, it doesn't discount what you're going through, but it does make it a little easier to bear. And we can always remember God's goodness throughout creation, surprising us and lifting us up even when we don't expect it.

So for today's psalm, I want to encourage us to remember that God is with us in the struggles, and God is in the moments of joy that lift us up too. There is language about floods that particularly captured my attention in the psalm - the snows outside by window rather look like waves, going up and down, and couldn't the snows be like a flood? A flood of the wintery climate in which we find ourselves? A flood of the water so needed by our crops and plants? Could we not find joy in floods of things too?

I hope this psalm encourages you and lifts you through your day. This is Psalm 93:

The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty;
the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength.
He has established the world; it shall never be moved;
your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.

The floods have lifted up, O Lord,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.
More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters,
more majestic than the waves of the sea,
majestic on high is the Lord!

Your decrees are very sure;
holiness befits your house,
O Lord, forevermore.

Please join me in a word of prayer:

Lord God, creator of all things, help us to see your goodness in moments of joy throughout our days. We lift up the burdens and challenges we bear to you, that you may hold us tenderly in the midst of things we can't control and really need support with. God, thank you for the people and things that bring us joy and nourishment. As we encounter unexpected seasons, situations, and moments, help us to know that joy can still be part of that reality too. In your Son Jesus we are given new life every day - help us to know joy is part of that new life too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Go in peace, dear friends, have a beautiful day. Amen.