

November, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Sometimes life is really hard. Yesterday, at Lectionary, I shared my heart's concerns with the other ministers about how quiet my home is now that Essence has returned to her grandmother. And how there are some things that I am not ready to do yet like taking Essence's artwork off the refrigerator, or cleaning her fingerprints off the TV screen. My friends recognized my grieving process. They encouraged me with words like, "Peggy, you need to realize that your eight months with Essence was like our 18 years with our children! It is important to grant yourself some grace." That phrase, 'grant yourself some grace', has been resonating with me.

I've been thinking about how often I beat myself up over things that I could have or should have done or not done. It is easy for me to forgive others – easy for me to get past the hurts others have caused me but it not so easy for me to forgive myself. I often get stuck in "I wish I had" or "Why didn't I?" I believe that I am not alone in these feelings. I believe many of you experience this kind of guilt or shame. This morning in my prayers, I promised God that I would try to envision myself as God does. And, know that my contrite heart is sufficient for God's forgiveness. And knowing that I am forgiven by the God who created me, frees me to move on and love more deeply and, yes, grieve more deeply. Loving deeply, grieving deeply draws me closer to my Lord.

This morning I started singing *Sweet Hour of Prayer*. In the second verse are the words, "And since He bids me seek His face, Believe His word and trust His grace, I'll cast on Him my every care, And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer." What a great comfort these words are. The grief of no longer having a 6-yr. old in my home is not erased but I am comforted that God is very much aware of Essence and me; the great joys and struggles we shared these past eight months. But it is going to be ok because we dared to love deeply and for this I shall forever be blessed.

I have so much to be thankful for in this season of Thanksgiving. I have been and am now being sustained by each of your prayers for Essence and for me. I am beyond grateful; I am blessed.

I continue to pray for each of you. Some of you are facing monumental struggles. I can testify that God has been faithful to me and I know the Lord will be faithful to you.

I am Blessed to be your Pastor,

*Pastor Peggy*