

First of all, THANK YOU to all of you for coming tonight. Thank you for what you have meant to my mom, to my dad, and to all of us in the family. Before we get too far, I want to take a minute to ask all of you to reflect on your own relationship with Anne - how she touched you, the mark she left on each of you....I would imagine that, listening to Jim's great stories may have inspired some of your own memories. Knowing how much mom enjoyed sharing, I would ask that we take a minute, turn to your neighbor and share a brief memory you have of how mom touched your live.

While mom was sick, she did a lot of writing and reflecting. We had heard that one of the things she had worked on was her own 'eulogy' with some ideas about what she wanted her service to be like. After she died, we spent quite a bit of time searching for the mythical eulogy....to no avail. All of us went on our ways, returning to our various homes and doing our own planning for tonight's service. We did our best to put something together that was reflective of mom and what she might have wanted. Fast forward two weeks and we all started arriving yesterday afternoon....lo and behold, Dad found mom's writings Thursday night - just before we arrived (do you think there might have been a little divine intervention???).....SO.....here goes....this is what mom wrote to all of us as she anticipated the inevitable outcome:

“God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform”

Have you ever felt completely alone? I can remember such moments. Here God had promised to walk the road with me - but, nothing. Time would pass and eventually the problem, whatever it was, got fixed and I had to admit that perhaps I was not alone after all. I just wasn't paying attention. I know that many times I even told God how to fix the problem. But He was busy working His own miracles.

And then - I became aware of another verse that continues to be my guiding light. “I will send my angels to watch over you”! How powerful

a picture is that?!?! All of these angels - wings flap - settling around me to see to any need I had. Once again - and then - this verse took on a whole new meaning as every one of you in this room (and many more) made your way into my community of angels! It became so clear that we are the hands and voice of God and it is through our actions that great things happen. here is just a snippet of what you did for me and my family:

- you prayed
- you called
- you sent cards
- you brought food
- you cried with us

...but we also shared some good laughs. You listened as we told of this extraordinary journey. You accepted our words and feelings and we felt honored.

I remember when Gene and I headed off to my first chemotherapy session, trying to take along whatever we would need. I got almost a smile on my lips as I pictured that small space with everyone of my angels trying to crowd around me to keep me safe. i pictured you breaking out in song and completely disrupting the quiet ambiance. how could i keep from singing?!?! Thank you for being there!

You were my emergency room doctor who had so much compassion that you kept in touch throughout my care. You were my cancer doctor who listened carefully to my symptoms and worked so hard to find the right drugs to help. You were my chemo nurses who eased me along and enjoyed the crazy socks I wore. You brought me wigs to try on and again gave me comfort and a few laughs. you were the man who helped me at a store and ended up with a big caring caress. You were my pastor always offering wisdom and love and comfort. IN other words, I could not stretch my arm away from my body without feeling your loving presence. You are my angels!!

(On a side note - mom continued to work her magic as she went through chemotherapy - she brought cinnamon rolls to those who worked in the center, and this is where the Loyal Order of the Silly Socks was born.)

One of my favorite Christian writers is Anne Lamott and I have gained so much from re-reading her book: "Help. Thanks. WOW". Anne Lamott grew up in a strictly unreligious home even though her grandfather had been a missionary. As she knew him only as a very young girl, she realized that he was the only one who ever prayed for her. And this is what she says about that knowledge:

"If there is ONE person praying for you....fasten your belt buckle because it could be quite a ride!!"

well - if you are sitting here today, I suggest you do just that....because I am praying for you and it could be quite a ride!!

Years ago, when Gene and I were still living in Sioux City, one of the feature writers for the newspaper devised a series of questions and then interviewed people around town as a weekly article. One of those questions really stuck with me and that was "What is your favorite word?" Loving words is what led me to be an English teacher so many years ago so I settled in on that question. I soon had my answer - HOME. For me it worked, and still does....such comfort. Shortly afterwards, I came across those letters printed on wooden boards and ordered them. They hung for quite a while in our Sioux City kitchen and now grace the walls of our Iowa City condo. Wherever those words are will be home to me. I have this crazy picture in my head of when it is time for me to go to my final resting place. I will pile up those boards, climb on them and zoom off to hang them on the clouds of heaven. So....when that time comes, look for me on my final rung!

Ann Lamott brings her wonderful book to conclusion by looking back at the bombing of Hiroshima. There lived a Jesuit named Pedro Arrupe

who witnessed and lived through that attack. Years later, he suffered a series of strokes and wrote in his journal:

“More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all of my life, from my youth. But now there is a difference....the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself to be totally in God’s hands.”

This journey I have been on is not one that anyone would choose to take. It is given to you and comes with a price tag. However, having been on it now for a bit, I can truly say that it comes with tremendous blessing. Another verse I always liked is “Not you know in part - then you shall know in full.” We mortals get antsy and want answers right now - especially now when answers are just a click away. However, God’s answers are revealed in his own way and own time. It is when we have the capacity to receive them. And sometimes that takes more than one click!

If you are all here today and I am not, it means that I have finished my time here but it also is a fact that some day you are going to join me in God’s paradise. So....when your day comes, I hope you will come looking for me. I will be happily ensconced in a cloud and you will see the wooden pieces, each hanging from a nearby star, spelling out the word “HOME”.