

January 2020

Happy New Year!

Since we're about to begin a new decade, I've been taking some time to look back over the last ten years. For me and my family it was like being on a roller coaster ... and not always in a good way. At times I would have given just about anything to get off the ride! Along with all of the bumps in the road, however, have come times I've clearly felt the presence of God. I am amazed when things line up just right, and I've pretty well decided that coincidence isn't the driving force. I think every moment is an opportunity for God to work with us, to call us into position, so to speak, so that miraculous things occur. Let me give you an example:

A friend of mine told me of an experience she had when she was in middle school. In 7th grade, she had a strict taskmaster of a teacher who never seemed satisfied. It was a horrible class – or so she thought at the time. Yet a year later my friend recognized the value of her teacher's high expectations and understood that she had, in fact, learned more in that class than she would have in a less arduous one. After school one day, my friend was running late and while most everyone had left the school, she noticed her former teacher. Rather than heading for the door, she made a U-turn and took the opportunity to tell her teacher how much she appreciated her. The teacher threw her arms around my friend and gave her a huge hug – quite out of character – and said, "You have no idea how much I needed to hear that. I have had a terrible day!"

Look at how many things had to line up. My friend had to be running late on her teacher's terrible day, her locker had to be in just the right place so she would see her teacher, she had to be thinking about how grateful she was for all she'd learned the year before, and she had to take notice of her teacher when she walked by. All those things could have been a coincidence, it's true, but one thing wasn't: the urge my friend had to share her appreciation and – more importantly – *her willingness to do it*.

At any moment, certain events and people come into contact and there is a chance for what one of my favorite author's calls a "God-incidence". An instant in time when all the pieces are in place to reveal God's love and a slice of the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are always times like this: when you go to Walmart, when you take a walk, when you go to work, when you walk into a restaurant – each of these moments brings you in contact with others. The pieces are all there; the picture is waiting to be put together, but there's one thing missing. Someone needs to move or speak or do something to reveal the miracle waiting to happen. This is where God comes in. I believe God whispers into our minds and calls our faith to action.

If we open ourselves to God's influence and practice following the nudges of the Holy Spirit, we make room for God to be revealed. My friends, we *need* to experience God today more than ever, and 2020 will be filled with moments of possibility. What I pray is for all of us to notice, to listen, and to do what we are called to do. Each time we are able and willing to follow through, miracles happen, hope returns, and love is shared.

May you have a blessed new year. May you hear the voice of the Lord. May you have the bravery and strength to reveal God to the people of this world.

With love,
Michelle