Hello One & All!

I wanted to share my story briefly in hopes that someone reading this may find some peace and comfort in it.

In August 2017, I was in probably the best shape of my life; I was even contemplating a triathlon! I was married to my best friend, raising our three happy, healthy children ages 6, 5 and 2. Everything was "perfect", or so I thought, until I felt a lump under my left armpit.

Within a few short days, I was diagnosed with Triple Negative Breast Cancer. In the words of the Fresh Prince of Bel Air "...my life got flipped, turned upside down…"

A port (permanent IV in my chest) was quickly placed and 16 rounds of neoadjuvent chemotherapy began. I have undergone at least five surgeries, radiation that took me away from my family for about 8 weeks, multiple other chemos, three more treatments of radiation to a different part of the body, and so many other tests and scans that I have lost count. I have had to go to other medical modalities seeking help due to damage caused by treatment. To say that my body is not what it once was is an understatement indeed. Even the thought of a triathlon is now exhausting.

I have said many times, this is a diagnosis I would not wish upon anyone, but for me, I could not be more grateful. My relationship with the Lord has grown and strengthened tremendously. I know I cannot do this alone, and would not want to. I can see His mighty works in my life and am left in awe.

A local Bible study I am in (St Louis, MO) recently covered Luke. The story of Jesus healing the paralytic spoke volumes to me during this season of my life. Jesus cares about our whole being, but first and foremost is our spirituality which He initially addressed. The bigger problem in our lives is our sin, not the physical battle we may be facing. My spirituality was nothing to brag about before the diagnosis but now I am truly trying to please the Lord. To hear the words spoken in Matthew, " Well done good and faithful servant" is what I would most like to hear when my time comes to meet the Creator of this beautiful universe He has made for us. I am trying (but more so, want) to live out Psalm 63:1 "0 God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

The cancer metastasized to the brain in early 2019. I remember when I was being wheeled down the halls of the hospital to have brain surgery, a time that would most likely be filled with terror and fright for many, I was not fearful at all. I knew so many people were praying during that time and that I was not alone. I was filled with a sense of peace that could only come from God.

There was one occasion where I had to travel to Texas for an appointment alone. When I was waiting in the exam room to have the ultrasound, I felt such a strong presence with me, I turned around expecting to see the technician, but there was no one there....but there was. I know He was with me. Once again, I was not alone.

There is a poem towards the end of the Hiding Place entitled The Tapestry:

My life is but a weaving,

between my Lord and me;

I cannot chose the colors,

He worketh steadily.

Oft times he weaveth sorrow,

and I, in foolish pride,

Forget he sees the upper

And I the underside.

Not ‘til the loom is silent

And the shuttles cease to fly,

Shall God unroll the canvas

And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful

In the Weavers’s skillful hands,

as the threads of gold and silver

In the pattern He has planned.

Things seem messy from our perspective, but God's plan and work in our lives is a beautiful masterpiece that could only be created by Him.

Another poem I have found comfort in is Footprints. There have been many points along this journey where I know there have only been one set of footprints. Times where I have been unable to walk, but Jesus has been right there beside me, carrying me.

Some things I find comfort in are listening to worship music, finding daily devotionals or studies (usually on youtube or the app Right Now Media), and In Touch Ministry by Charles Stanley and his “Today on Radio” sermon. I used to go to my local church on Sunday and save the One & All sermon for Monday but things have changed due to restrictions caused by the Coronavirus so I find myself listening when I know there will be as few interruptions as possible. I like to do my daily tasks while listening to them. In Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 the Bible says we should be constantly thinking about the Lord. These activities have helped to keep me centered around the Lord and to keep my day going forward in the right direction.

Some of my favorite verses during this season are “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” Joshua 1:9 and “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11. I actually saw this verse hanging in a car detail shop the day before I had my mastectomy. How often do you see anything religious displayed in a public setting such as this? I know this was meant for me to read at that specific time in my life. I have since called them and told them how much seeing that verse meant to me. I have these verses on canvases hung as a constant reminder. The following are some of the scriptures I have written on paper and placed strategically throughout the house as further reminders of God’s love:

“For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” Philippians 2:13

“I am assured that God works all things together for good.” Romans 8:28

“I cannot be separated from the love of God.” Romans 8:35

“I am confident that God will finish the good work He started in me.” Philippians 1:6

“I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.” (1John 5:18)

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:18

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:10

“The Lord is my light and my salvation-whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life-of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like angels; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31

I once read something about the power of positive self talk. Some of these verses are great examples I use. I say them out loud for myself, but also because it makes the devil cringe and I love it! This may show a bit of my immaturity at times, but it makes me laugh to think I am making the devil uncomfortable with the comfort and strength that I have found in Our Father.

But the most important time of my day is spent reading the Bible and praying. I must admit, this is still difficult for me. I am easily distracted and think of all the tasks that lay in front of me that particular day. I pray that with continued practice this will become easier.

The love I have for my husband is so strong. It has always been strong but seeing him and all the love in his eyes, the tight hugs, the closeness, like he can palpably feel my pain strengthens the love even more. He has been a source of comfort, strength and encouragement for me throughout this. God purposely chose him to walk this path with me.

My husband and I have tried to keep life as normal for the kids as possible. There have been times throughout these past years where I have been unable to perform my tasks as a mother. This has been when friends and family have stepped in and helped out. The care they have shown has touched our family in ways that are hard to explain. I have always had the, " I can do it myself" attitude, but have learned that when I deny someone's help, I am denying them an opportunity to serve. I know the pleasure I get when I am able to do a random act of kindness for someone else, and I cannot wait for the day I can serve others but for now I am grateful for the people God has put in my life who have shown such love and been such amazing servants of our Lord.

I am so blessed by the people in my life. I try to surround myself with role models who help cultivate my relationship with the Lord. I have learned so much from these people and am forever grateful.

At the beginning of the year I started a gratitude journal. My first entry talked about being grateful to be a child of God. A God who is my Comforter in this time of my life. Who I can seek in times of challenge and knows everything I am experiencing, I will overcome. I have nothing to fear. Jesus has conquered this world. He is my Savior and through Him I will conquer cancer.

These are experiences I would not trade for anything. Unfortunately, it took cancer coming into my life, but I would take it every single day of my life, knowing that it would bring me to the point in my relationship I am at today with our Savior.

Any strength I have is from above. I try to find blessings in everything, because they are there. I try to see the good in every person and situation. I have met so many amazing people during this journey who I can see Christ in their actions. I try to live life to its fullest. I try not to let the tasks of daily life take a toll on me. I have learned to not let the menial things wear on me because in the end it is all menial. We are only here for a short time so make the most of it. Be filled with love and compassion for one another. Do not harbor ill feelings because it is not good for you. When I look at people I look for God in them. Knowing He made them helps me to see their strengths and the things I may not like are easier to overlook.

I pray that anyone reading this right now, knows our Father, our Abba, is right there beside you holding your hand every step of the way. You are SO loved!

Sincerely with the Grace of God,

Danielle Keninger