

WSS Part 13
Saturday

Precious Moments
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Today's Treasure

Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.

Psalm 90:12 TLB

I was ambushed in a parking lot recently. Don't worry, it wasn't a carjacking! My granddaughters and I had almost reached our destination, the dance studio where they take classes each week. As I rounded the last corner, I saw three men gathered around an eye-popping teal-blue Maserati. I had no chance of fending off the tear-producing reaction that overtook me. I recognized a scene Dad had experienced countless times as admiring people approached him, requesting an up-close look at his GT-R. Observing the men's interaction around the sportscar wasn't the problem. The fact I couldn't tell Dad about it was.

One of my friends has described me as a grief veteran. Having been widowed since age 38, I know you never stop missing departed loved ones. I also know it's the little things that can sneak up on you. Birthdays, anniversaries, and the like – you know they're coming and can prepare for the attendant feelings. My husband Ray managed the indoor gardening department at a local Home Depot. There are still times, over 26 years since his passing, that a wave of emotions will sweep over me when I'm strolling the aisles and see all the associates in their orange aprons.

Having grown accustomed to such occurrences, I acknowledged in Mom's eulogy several years ago that my unique connections with her would most likely get to me. Even now, three years after her passing, haircut days are still the hardest. For nearly a decade, I scheduled our appointments back-to-back, and then we'd go to Starbucks to chat while we enjoyed our favorite beverages. Now, when I drive to the salon, the empty passenger seat mocks me. I went to Starbucks after my first appointment without Mom, but I haven't since – no need to have another vacant seat glaring at me. I knew it would be the same when Dad passed. We always talked about sports, mostly golf, and college football, with a bit of baseball thrown in. Sunday afternoons would find me pulling up the leaderboard for the week's golf tournament and, during the

season, the latest football rankings. I still check the rankings, but oh, how I miss having Dad to mull them over with.

And then there are the stealth attacks, like seeing the guys talking to the owner of the Maserati. I'll be going along fine when Bam! The enormity of the loss hits all over again, fueled by the knowledge that I can no longer share the experience with Dad. A similar situation arose when I finished reading a novel by John Grisham, one of Dad's favorite authors. I'd barely closed the book when tears started to flow. I'll admit the satisfying ending would have provoked tears in all-occasion crier me, but others streamed down my cheeks because I wanted to discuss the details with Dad, confident he would have remembered the storyline even though he read the book several years ago. But there would be no such discussion.

I suppose we could look at these emotional ambushes in a negative light, but I've come to appreciate them as enduring ties to my loved ones, each a distinct link in a tender fetter that binds us together. Sure, our lives occasionally contain highly anticipated events, dream vacations, and the like, but the little moments, woven together over time, make up the essence of our lives. Remembering that encourages and comforts me since simple moments are more attainable than expensive events, at least for most of us.

The moments – and memories – become priceless when we share them with those we love.

One recent afternoon, grandson Joshua and I worked together to divide and repot some of Mom's aloe vera plants. Seeing we had two dozen baby plants, I commented, "If these little guys make it, we'll have plenty to share!"

Joshua added, "We can give them to people who loved Mama and love succulents." Then, after the briefest of pauses, he exclaimed, "Wait! Everyone loved Mama, so we'll just figure out who loves succulents."

His statement began a pleasant reminiscence between us as we talked about Mom's beautiful spirit and her kindness and love toward everyone she knew. What a blessing that Joshua got to experience her love. Our conversation reminded me of my tender feelings toward my dear PaPa, my maternal grandfather, whose love I still feel even though he's been gone nearly 60 years.

I pray I'm forging similar links with my grandchildren – playing in the dirt (gardening), drinking tea, taking leisurely strolls through their neighborhood – and making sure they know how much God and I love them!

LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

Dear reader, I don't know who you may be missing today, but I pray you'll find comfort in remembering sweet connections that bind you and your loved ones together while we await a joyful reunion when Jesus calls us Home (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In closing, I offer one of my favorite Dietrich Bonhoeffer quotes concerning grief:

*“There is nothing that can replace the absence of someone dear to us, and one should not even attempt to do so. One must simply hold out and endure it. At first that sounds very hard, but at the same time it is also a great comfort. For to the extent the emptiness truly remains unfilled one remains connected to the other person through it. It is wrong to say that God fills the emptiness. God in no way fills it but much more leaves it precisely unfilled and thus helps us preserve—even in pain—the authentic relationship. Furthermore, the more beautiful and full the remembrances, the more difficult the separation. But gratitude transforms the torment of memory into silent joy. **One bears what was lovely in the past not as a thorn but as a precious gift deep within, a hidden treasure of which one can always be certain.**” (Emphasis added.)*