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## TODAY: THRIVING VERSUS SURVIVING

Ashley, the health provider from our insurance company, showed up early for our yearly check-up. Poor girl! She received a ration of one of the side effects of our self-imposed quarantine. I think it might be labeled “COVID-19 Conversation Deprivation.” Before long, she was the recipient of our stories and our affinity for laughing at ourselves. A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE!

Life is good!

Surely, the peoples of the whole world have had their lives interrupted, disrupted and torn asunder in many, many cases. Just when I thought the pandemic was the major dilemma to address, life continued happening, right on schedule.

As I reflect on the ever unfolding of the changes that have occurred over this past year, my take-away is, it has been filled with challenges beyond what I certainly would have planned. It has been a roller coaster of emotions. Initially, consumed with the political environment, to the point, I was feeling physically and mentally drained. I might use the words fixated and obsessed. Not a place to put down roots if health is the desired place of residence for me.

Slowly, regaining my footing, some place on the spectrum of balance, there was no place to go except the present moment. Revisiting meditation, especially the practice of mindfulness, brought me at least a smattering of the peace and sanctuary I longed for, in the midst of a chaotic world.

Keeping an open mind and heart is still a struggle, especially when I see pain inflicted on those I love. Holding life lightly is one of the best postures I have learned to live. “Receive whatever arrives with NO expectations. And be grateful.” Easier said than done, for sure.

We met with our contractor in October. The bathroom remodel finally started in January. Six weeks to completion. If the guys are still here for Memorial Day, should we invite them to a cookout? Those that appear, sometimes when they say they will, are kind of feeling like family. The plumber may even buy a bus from our kids. The best gift is the five-year-old little boy of the

contractor. I spent 10 minutes with this sweet child and God pierced my heart with a love so deep, it hurt. Probably that would have happened without the pandemic. But maybe not! I would have missed something so very beautiful.

This past year has been a real-life school of learning. There has been loss, grief, and disappointment, even the diminishment of hope. And yet... it has been rich beyond anything I could have ever asked for, or even imaged.

Ashley gave us a clean bill of health. However, even though I told her I weigh 127 lbs. she still wrote down 130! Just like the scales registered. Taking off my shoes was not enough. The only way to achieve the “right” number might have traumatized her. So, I accepted her conclusion. Once again, an age-old truism has been revisited, challenged and finally reinforced:

*“The only thing I have any power over is how I choose to respond to what appears on my plate. From that recognition, I will either be a blessing or a curse in the lives I touch. If truth be told, it is a bit iffy at times.”*

~~ Abbot Karen Poidevin