



← *Yeah-this was me*

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.

And that was before COVID-19, the shutdown, riots, murder hornets (where'd *they* go anyway?) and meat and toilet paper shortages (really People?).

These past 12 months have been rough ones for the Wolf household beginning with two accidents with two fractured vertebrae for Joe. One while working in June and one while riding with me in December. An accident that sent our little Civic to Honda heaven. Then the shutdown and no work for me. Threaded through this was wondering if OddDuck Ministries was a lame duck that was on its last leg.

I don't care for lists but it keeps my thoughts straight so you can follow my rambling tendencies and I've spent some time trying to write this so I don't sound like I'm whining (or worse - sappy!). I'm not. I simply want to show how God and His goodness went ahead of us and the lessons we learned from it. Next month I will tie this into apologetics. Promise.

- 1) We have friends. Ok I knew that, but there's something about having a hard year and being reminded of this. We have a Moody friend who lives in Des Moines, who, if we had been closer, would have come and sat with me in the hospital in Clarinda, IA. A church friend hoped to hook us up with people he knew in that direction. Then, later, friends brought us a couple boxes stuffed full of groceries at a time when shopping just *sounded* impossible. These boxes provided ingredients for Christmas dinners, everyday dinners and even Joe's birthday pie at a time when we were just functioning at a coping level. They got us through until we could get our act together a little better. There's the friend who sat with me in the second emergency room and brought me home at 11:00 pm in December. Combined with all of the prayers, visits, calls, texts and practical help, we have been brought back around to June feeling so very blessed and rich indeed.
- 2) I despise Christianese. Flat out don't get it. I found the people who had "been there done that" didn't even try to use it, instead let me be the surprisingly angry me I found myself to be. God provided women who could talk me out of a snit without one mention of "Let go and let God". I trust if I stayed angry though I would have had a thorough talking to.
- 3) Marriage isn't the fluffy feel goods of Valentine's Day. It's the patient day to day stuff of living. It's the driving seven hours one way to a stranded hurting husband, helping put on socks when he can't bend, sitting and listening in both of our doctor appointments so everything necessary can be heard, holding my hand while I get my first of probably many cortisone shots in my bum left knee, and letting me grumble through my hurt pride from getting older. It's the plotting and planning dinners out of the cupboard to avoid going into town during the shut down. Guiding our baby ministry through growing pains. You get the picture. Joe and I have always talked best digging potatoes not over a romantic dinner in a fancy restaurant.
- 4) Put God in the middle of everything. EVERYTHING! We knew this one but it takes practice and patience to make it automatic. It helps to have folks around us that do the same. Our church's ladies are part way through the minor prophets. We study then come to the table with our insights and questions, learning from each other. This is with the intention of practicing biblically centered conversations which in turn keep us biblically/God centered.
- 5) Keep looking for ways to "do ministry". We had the privilege to teach at a young adult small group right before the shut down (and right when we were debating what to do with OddDuck). Later we heard one of the participants had been questioning her Catholic faith and said so at a pool party. After further discussion with the group, she placed her faith in Christ! Our friend thought our teaching is where the questions began. Woo Hoo!

There's so much more and maybe someday I'll write the book. We'll see. In the meantime-

Counting our blessings - including y'all-

Susan and Joe Wolf