

Empty Nets and God's Abundance

Witness talk given on Sunday April 18th by Susan Wilson

My last year certainly sounds like it goes along with this reading from John but let me go back a little further. Ten years ago I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. I have had 13 surgeries, 5 months of Chemo, and seven weeks of radiation. I had reconstruction done but lost that in 2004 and in 2008 I started to think about having it done again. I prayed and prayed about it. The answer I got was nothing, just like those fishermen, nothing. I felt like this was something I needed to do to feel whole again. I kept praying, nothing. I went ahead and scheduled the surgery and was put on standby that means I didn't have a scheduled time for the surgery, they would call me when there was an opening that day. That should have been my first clue. Even the worst snowstorm of the year didn't change my mind. Still silence from my prayers. The first three weeks after the surgery went fine although there was about eight inches that was not healing as fast as the Doctor wanted. So she prescribed an antibiotic cream for me to use. I didn't realize that there was sulfa in it which I am allergic to. For two months I went two to three times a week to be resutured in that eight inch area. We watched as the tissue disintegrated and reopened. I prayed to be healed, threw that net in, but nothing. Finally I realized that both creams she had prescribed for me had sulfa in them, but by then there was not enough tissue to close and I once again lost the reconstruction. During this time my dear husband lost his job and in July just when we thought things couldn't get any worse I lost my job. But through all of this I kept praying, throwing out that net. There was only silence. I never felt so far away from God, but I kept praying. No jobs and two girls in college. What were we going to do? Little did I know our net

would soon be full. Because the school I was teaching at closed it forced me to think outside that box. Those of you that know me know how hard that was for me, but with two co-workers, who also happen to be really great friends, we opened First Friends Montessori. We were told there was no way we could open a school in seven weeks but we did! We had God moments every day, from Trudy's daughter near Muskegon, giving us free furniture, to Rob Temple doing the electrical work for us, to passing all the inspections, to Bob Henderson and his priceless information, to everyone who helped us put up the fire doors that didn't fit, to our husbands who worked endless hours. I could go on and on. Last year Paula made me take a class on writing policies with her, she was then my boss. I complained and complained, why did I need to take a class about writing discipline policies and parent handbooks. God works in wondrous ways. I had no idea we would be using this information so soon. On September 3 we received our license and on September 8 we opened with 14 students. We felt God's hand in everything we did but personally I still heard silence. I was still praying about my health issues, my girls who were going through hard times and for a job for Mike. It was a weird feeling to see God's work going on around you but have such silence on the inside. Toss the net, empty. February 1 Mike was called back to work. Praise God, more prayers but still that empty feeling. This last January I was advised to go and see another Doctor for another opinion about the reconstruction. I did and he told me that he could do the reconstruction again and it would heal. For the first time this made me really angry. You see I really like my Doctor and trusted her. I thought because I am a Christian I shouldn't be angry with her. I prayed for her, I prayed for me but I didn't want to be angry. But then I went to

Richard's class on miracles and someone said maybe it was a miracle to have cancer. I almost fell off my chair, cancer a miracle? The more I thought about it the more it made sense, the miracle wasn't the disease but everyone who helped me survive. It really made me think about everything that had happened to me. I read this in the book "Grace for the Moment": Room for Miracles. In our world of budgets, long-range planning and computers, don't we find it hard to trust in the unbelievable? Don't most of us tend to scrutinize life behind furrowed brows and walk with cautious steps? It's hard for us to imagine that God can surprise us. To make a little room for miracles today, well, it's not sound thinking. We make the same mistake that Thomas made: we forget that "impossible" is one of God's favorite words. How about you? How is your imagination these days? When was the last time you let some of your dreams elbow out your logic? When was the last time you imagined the unimaginable?... Has it been awhile since you claimed God's promise to do "more than we can ask or imagine?" More to think about. Then I went to Stacy's Lenten program and one of the things we talked about was its ok to be angry. Jesus even got angry at times, so when this doctor told me he could do the reconstruction again it made me realize there was no need for this last reconstruction to fail and it was ok for me to be angry with the Doctor who did this to me. It is wonderful to work at the place where you worship because when I came back to work after the doctor's appointment I was nowhere ready to go to work. Stacy was here and I asked her if I could talk with her. I had gone in and talked to her a couple of weeks earlier so she knew what I was going through. When I got there that day I told her how angry I was and what had happened. At the end of our conversation she prayed for me, I can't even tell you her exact words

but I can tell you, for the first time in over a year, a complete feeling of peace came over me. The hair on the back of my neck stood up and a chill went up my back and I felt God's presence and I knew everything was going to be ok. It was such a personal feeling I couldn't even tell Stacy but I knew God was always there and would always be there. My net is very full at this time. I have now accepted the way I am and I am at peace with it. Mike and I are both working. Megan is graduating from Western University in two weeks, and Sammi is moving home to attend college here. This last Christmas a student gave me this beautiful cross necklace but more than cross there was a saying with it. It says "Faith. Live by faith, not by sight. Believe in the sun even if it isn't shining. Believe in love even when alone. Believe in God even when He is silent." Let me say that again. "Faith. Live by faith, not by sight. Believe in the sun even if it isn't shining. Believe in love even when alone. Believe in God even when He is silent." I now keep that saying on my refrigerator to remind me that God will always be with me and I may have an empty net at times but I only have to pray and believe and God will fill the net for me and show me His way.

Susan Wilson