

**Ann (Healing) *How God Showed His Faithfulness to Me***

Cancer...one of the scariest words we hear. It strikes fear in every heart. It's even worse when you hear the word used for you, not somebody else.

In my lifetime I have heard that word used to explain to me a diagnosis several times. This last time was a little over a year ago and the fourth time that I heard that dreaded word "malignant". I have seen the concern in the doctors' eyes and have learned to recognize their fear of cancer and the inevitable horrors that they think it brings.

NOT SO! For me it has always been a case of God showing His love for me and that He would be there for me! I may have been scared but have never felt abandoned. For me, hearing the words "You have cancer" again... and again...and again...has always meant you have the opportunity to share His faithfulness...again.

Of course I cried, contemplated whether or not I would be taking the final journey, and then asked why, but each time the Holy Spirit has spoken to me and told me "Be not afraid."

The last time I heard "Be not afraid" came in a phone call from a woman that I had met only once while on a trip to North Carolina. It was the day before I was to receive biopsy results and although the doctors had all told me they felt the results were benign, I was still very concerned and, yes, afraid. I had a time of prayer and cried out, "I can't do this again...I just don't have any more strength for another battle." At the very same time my very dear friend Darlene was in the final stages of her battle with breast cancer and I needed to minister to her, not myself. I never told her what was going on with me.

When I called this woman back she told me that since June, the Holy Spirit had placed me in her heart and told her to pray. That was the same time the tell tale sign of fatigue had started with me. Here it was, the end of July, and she said that she was in the shower and felt herself being scooped right out of the shower and straight to the phone to call me. I started crying because God's faithfulness to me again was so overwhelming and I was so undeserving. She told me the Holy Spirit instructed her to tell me "Be not afraid". I started to cry because I immediately knew what the results were going to be. I thanked her, sister to sister, for her faithfulness and told her why it meant so much to me.

I had seen a new surgeon in January and had a perfect mammogram. After looking at my history, he informed me that should I develop breast cancer again I would have to have a mastectomy. Seven months and a 2.5cm mass later I had to face losing a breast. Not only that but I had to tell Darlene what I was now facing. My dear, sweet, wonderful dying sister and I cried and prayed and hugged, and I knew which path God wanted me to place my feet. I had another lumpectomy and the results were even worse so I had an appointment to go see the surgeon to make all the arrangements. While I was going through all this, Darlene was getting worse and hospice had been called in. I had to say goodbye to her before her final stay in Shadyside while she could still understand and feel my love for her. God had given her such peace and He allowed me the strength to let go of her.

My breasts were a symbol to me of motherhood. They had meant nourishment and love for my babies, so I had a deep emotional attachment to them and for many years I fought to keep them through a deep, deep need. All of a sudden, the night before the appointment with the surgeon, I no longer had the desperate feelings of needing to keep my breasts. I also knew that the other one was a constant symbol of danger to my health and God prepared me to tell the surgeon take both. Dr. Faulk came in the room, head down, obviously so concerned. I sat on the table smiling and very happy, and he looked so confused. (He later told me that he thought I was medically assisted in my joy.) He started to speak seriously and I totally interrupted him and said, "You know what, we need to take them both." His jaw dropped and he said that's what he had come in to tell me and he was afraid of what my reaction could be and here I sat saying let's do it. I also told him that Jim, my best friend in the world, Karen and I had all been in prayer about it and I wanted reconstruction surgery as well. He said that could be arranged. We told him to find the perfect plastic surgeon and we would trust in who he picked because, quite frankly,

God would be guiding him. He left, came back, and said that I had an appointment with a new plastic surgeon to the hospital that brought with her new techniques for reconstruction surgery. There was also an appointment with an oncologist, etc. Well, Dr. Carolyn De La Cruz had never met a group like ours. She said we have a very serious situation here, I think because she was a bit taken aback by our rather joyful attitude. We assured her that we were all well aware of how serious this was, however we knew she was there to take care of me by God's choosing, this was all His way to give me a healing so we were all actually very relieved. She said she had never met anyone who faced this with the faith that we all had and kindly told us that she was pretty much an agnostic. Praise God - here was our challenge! Jim told her we were facing this as a family of faith, which gave us all peace for what we had to face. After many visits, many tests, the surgeries were set for December 9th. On December 5, Darlene went home to be with our Father in Heaven. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, I went to the funeral home to pay respects to her family. And on December 9<sup>th</sup>, my surgery started.

A funny thing happened on the way to the healing, there were some complications so the 7-9 hour surgery turned into 20 ½ hours. It didn't bother me at all, I was sleeping, but poor Jim and Karen were waiting all that time. I awoke in ICU, seeing a lot of concerned looks on all the doctors and nurses and of course I was pretty uncomfortable but for the most part I was on my way, I thought. Considering the seriousness of the surgery and more than 600 stitches in just my stomach, God showed his sense of humor. Out of all that surgery and all that reconstruction the only problem turned out to be my brand new navel. She pronounced it dead after a couple of days as did every other doctor that came in. I told them not to worry; we would let all our prayer partners know we needed prayer for my navel. She looked at me and said that I couldn't possibly be serious. I said, "God performs all sorts of really big miracles all the time, do you believe that?" She said, "Well, kind of." I looked at her and said if my God can perform these really big miracles then why couldn't He perform a little one like bringing my navel back to life. She said again, "Are you really going to ask for people to actually pray for your navel?" and I said "Of course!" Three weeks later she was saying she couldn't believe what she saw and called others in who had been involved in my care and said I see it but can't explain it. My brand new navel was of course perfect! She looked at me and knowing that I give things names, she said "Can I name your navel?" and I said "Sure." She said we would call it Lazarus because God really did bring it back from the dead. I of course reminded her that it was reborn, as we all could be - all that it took was to acknowledge Jesus as our Savior. She looked at us and said "Well, at this point, I will go back to church."

Since that time many people who have known me or heard about this have re-examined their relationship with Jesus. They have seen living, tangible proof that God is alive and divine healing is true.

A cancer survivor can choose to either live in fear of a reoccurrence or celebrate in the victory of healing. I will falter and have faltered, but every time I do He brings His Peace to me and that is what I wish for all His church.