

Patterns of Grace and Gratitude Week 6

Thursday, May 20



Photo Credit: Tim Kreps "Moonlight on the water"

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:5

Thoughts from one who knows: I live with mental illness. That is to say that I live in a home where a loved one struggles daily, minute-by-minute, with the often crippling effects of mental illness. The need to protect that person is overpowering and relentless, even as it is futile and exhausting. In a word, the whole experience is terrifying.

In the beginning stages, the need to "fix" the problem consumed my existence. Day and night I obsessed on how to correct the mistake I must have, somehow, inadvertently, made. During long and often harsh therapy, therapy for all of us, I was made to understand that I cannot fix this. It is not my illness and I need to let that go.

Instead, I began to learn how to be supportive, how to listen, how to resist the urge to throw sunshine at a dark place. Eventually, I began to learn acceptance. I am learning this every day. It's easy to say, "I support all of those with mental illness." It is a very different thing to live it, to practice that support every minute of every day. But, of course, I do. And I will. Always. I've also had to forgive myself for not being able to fix the one I hold so dear. Daily, I strive to let go of my guilt. To appreciate the good days and to look for the abundant beauty that is there for the taking, here on God's glorious Earth and in His vast heavens. Sometimes, I can share that beauty. Other times, I know to appreciate it silently, to harvest it into my heart to bring out to enjoy on the dark days."