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I grew up in Sioux City in a rock solid two-parent home, the youngest of four children. On the wall of my parent's den was a simple plaque that read: "Please God, be good to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small." I don't know its origin but that little plaque has been my mantra for as many years as I can remember.

It is very humbling to be standing in this venue today, talking about who I am, what has inspired me in my faith, and basically, how I have lived my life, all within a few minutes. It is quite unnerving, too, for that matter, since so much of my life, before my marriage and after, can be centered about the word "*storms*." Remember please that I'm saying storms, not stormy!

We all have storms in our lives. They are not always bad ones. The storms I refer to today are ones that were quite dark at the time, and ones that ended up being rainbows.

Mine was a middle class upbringing for my three siblings and me. We went to Mass as a family; there was prayer at home. Dad worked for the Postal Service, mom was a stay-at-home parent until I grew up. Mom and Dad were the children of Polish and Lithuanian immigrants.

College years at Creighton University brought growth and discovery all tucked into a wonderful cocoon that kept the reality of adulthood and my future at bay. That thought worked well until the fall of my senior year when I met someone while covering a political event for a radio station where I interned. He was really nice and really good looking. We started dating and I was in a dilemma. I was falling in love. However, I couldn't possibly imagine a future with him. After all, he was a farmer. I had no desire to marry a farmer, no interest to live on a farm, no yearning to become a farmer. I wanted a career. In my way of thinking, you couldn't possibly find a career on a farm in Harlan, Iowa. And that was that. I broke the relationship off.

For a couple of years after that breakup the clouds of doubt and angst followed me. I truly regretted the decision. I experienced a period of storms, of uncertainty. Again, here was another dilemma for me. I got the job I wanted, and then returned to Creighton University this time as an employee for their public relations staff. My career goals seemed to be on track; my life was good. But, the prayer of the vast seas and my little boat remained atop my list. I wasn't truly happy.

Long story short, that angst and regret became pretty powerful because three years later, out of the clear blue, and really, by the grace of God, we met by chance again. Within six months we were engaged and recently celebrated 33 years of marriage and three sons together.

So, what has sustained me all these years? Kept me shielded from storms and their aftereffects? Mostly, it is the various treasures found in the psalms, most notably, Psalm 62: 6-9. *Only in God, be at rest, my soul, for from him comes my hope. He only is my rock and my salvation; my stronghold, I shall not be disturbed.*

For those of you here today who are parents, think back to that time when your children were younger. Like your households, our little boats seemed to get smaller and smaller and the waves bigger and bigger as the kids made it through farm accidents, stitches, puberty, friendships, high school and college. Helping them find their places in life while trying to do it with thinner and thinner apron strings was my challenge.

My journey too as a wife, mother and business partner has brought me closer to God. Some of that, actually a lot of it, came with maturity and acceptance of life's offerings. The career I wanted so passionately to create after my marriage was put on hold, by my choice to be a stay-at-home mom and full contributor to the farm and its needs. Back then, did I ever feel fulfilled "professionally" from a career perspective? Admittedly, not. That "storm" did bring rainbows. Continuing my efforts as a marketer of our own meat and popcorn line, we are in the process of building a retail store, of all places, on our farm. I can't wait!

Along the way though, I did the unthinkable, at least in my mind. I became a farmer. With my husband's patience and example, I discovered that the way of life I initially turned my back on was a life filled with blessings. The work in between sunrise and sunset is long, arduous and all dependent on the weather, all dependent on the hand of God. If you own your own business, you can relate to the hours, but that's the way it is.

There's a bonus to living in rural America in that we see life expressed in many forms: the minute oat or barley seeds sprouting in the spring, the birth of a calf or of a litter of baby pigs, baby chicks chirping their little hearts out, the fragrance of newly mown hay, the rigors of bringing in a harvest, a quiet sunrise, an inspiring sunset, a harvest moon. Here in rural America, is the opportunity to witness first-hand God's creation and magnificence. Here, in rural America, is the honor of singing God's praises every day. If you have a farming background, you can relate to what I say.

In this journey on our little boat we've seen tornadoes, drought, hail, heavy winds and crop and building destruction. However our little boats found that another day brought calmer seas or at least the strength to navigate through them.

*"You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, Say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

It is proof positive that God has been good to me, and that God knows where my little boat is located in the very wide sea of life.

