WHEN A CITY GIRL goes country

By Annette Bridges

Nothing to be Thankful For?

When life seems filled to the brim with loss, uncertainty, and unwanted or unexpected change, it can be difficult to find a reason for gratitude—much less joy.

I came across a blogger who asked the question, "Can we be thankful for the things we don't want?" I would ask instead, "How can we be thankful for the things we don't want?" Or even, "Why should we?"

No one wants to deal with the loss of a calf, drought conditions, endless equipment breakdowns, or any other kind of catastrophe. Where is gratitude to be found in the midst of disappointment, sorrow, and worry? As Thomas Paine wrote, referring to difficulties and hardships, "These are the times that try men's souls."

My dear mamma did her best to instill in my heart the belief that the only way out of disappointment, sorrow, and worry is to count my blessings. And she has been right. No matter how dire my situation was, there has always been something—or someone—to be grateful for.

Annette is thankful for every moment and hug she was blessed to have with her mamma who passed away in 2018 at 92 years old. (Photo courtesy of Annette Bridges)

Time and again, gratitude truly did have the power to shift my focus from what I didn't have to what I did. And inevitably, with that more hopeful perspective, I saw the value of what was truly important. I could expect good, and I could appreciate my progress. That vantage point led to new horizons and new opportunities.

So perhaps what we most need in times of trouble is thankfulness.

Whenever I pause to consider what I'm thankful for, I find myself also answering the question, "What matters most to me?" And it turns out, how much money I have in the bank doesn't even make the list. What matters most are the people (and cows, dogs, and cats) that I love. What matters most to me are not material possessions, but those near and dear—along with the intangibles of experiences, feelings, and the living of life itself.

I admit, though, that when I've been faced with hardships and tragedies, gratitude has not often been my first response.

Yet, my mamma would admonish me never to let anything or anyone steal my joy. She urged me to look for the good in people and to focus on everything I had to be thankful for.

Even on my worst days, she encouraged me to name at least one thing I was thankful for. And I've often been amazed: when I began to think about anything and everything I was grateful for, my darkest days became brighter. The weight I carried began to lift.

Try it!

Fill your mind with everything you're thankful for, and see how much better your world feels—right now.

I suspect you'll find more to be thankful for than you realize.

I always do.