



REFLECTIONS

May 15, 2011, Refreshed from August 13, 2006

**There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven**

Ecclesiastes 3:1

A Change of Season

The stranger sat unnoticed at the adjacent table. We were intent on our own meals and the daily matters confronting our own lives. But we did notice as he turned in his chair and prepared to leave. He looked at us with more than a glance and the length of his gaze prompted me to speak. That was all he needed.

We were to learn that his name was Jay, but that was not important at first. What was important was to allow him to talk. “I try to go to a different place every night,” he explained. “I lost my wife two months ago so I try to get out and go places.” After a few more words of explanation about himself, his face tensed and twisted. His voice quivered and he began to struggle to his feet as if to leave. But he quickly sat back down. “I try to laugh through these moments but I can’t,” he sobbed. “I’ll be all right in a few seconds.” As his emotions quieted, he moved from his table to ours saying, “Maybe you are just what I need.” So we listened attentively as he relived some of his past and struggled to envision his future.

Like most of us, Jay has faced many changes of season in his life. There was a season when he made a difference with his youthful energy. Then there was a season when he made a difference with his skill; and another when he made a difference by developing others to fill his role. These were seasons that were gratifying and productive. Even the season of caring for his ailing wife gave meaning to his life. But now Jay has entered a change of season where meaning is uncertain. This new season could be marked by exclusion or even rejection. The world has a tendency to dismiss the elderly.

Our time with Jay was far too short to serve his need. He was a man alone—a man starved for a friend—a man crying to share his grief. His hope was buried in yesterday. But the new season presents renewed hope if he chooses it.

Every change of season presents uncertainty. But every season of life also presents new opportunities. Some of them will call upon youthful energy; some will depend on developed skills. Some opportunities will involve the development of others; and some will call upon wisdom garnered through vast experiences of life—to ensure that traditions are not lost, to help people overcome adversity, or to encourage others as they face changes in seasons of their own.

Every season change comes with uncertainty. But with every change of season comes opportunity—opportunity for hope renewed.

“You are the light of the world.”

Richard +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.