

REFLECTIONS

August 13, 2006

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

A Change of Season

We really didn't notice the stranger sitting 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 preparing to leave. He looked at me with more than a glance and the length of his gaze prompted me to speak. That was all he needed.

We were to learn later that his name was Jay, but that was not important at first. What was important was allowing this man 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, a twisted expression gripped his face. His voice quivered and he began to struggle to his feet as if to leave. But he sat back down quickly. "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 more 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 through his youthful energy. Then there was a season when he made a difference through his skill; and still another when he made a difference by developing others to fill his role. These were seasons that were fulfilling and productive. Even the season of caring for his ailing wife gave him purpose. But now Jay is entering a change of season where purpose is uncertain. This 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 for him if he chooses it.

Jay and many others in his age group face a frightening change of season. But at this stage of life, there is a special opportunity. It is the opportunity to use the wisdom garnered from the vast experience of life to ensure that traditions are not lost, to help people avoid adversity, and to lead others from darkness into light.

Jay must make a choice. He can retreat to the safety of his surroundings or seize the opportunity to make a difference. We all have that choice to make as our seasons change. The choice we make is important. It is the difference between darkness and light.

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

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