



REFLECTIONS

February 10, 2019

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

New Seasons

Intent on our own meal and daily matters confronting our lives, we scarcely noticed the stranger at an adjacent table. But he aroused our attention as he prepared to leave. My eyes met his with more than a glance, and the length of the gaze prompted me to break the silence. That modest acknowledgement was all he needed.

“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 about himself, his face twisted, his voice quivered, and he struggled to his feet. But then he sank back into his chair. “I try to laugh through these moments,” he sobbed. “But I can’t. I’ll be all right in a few seconds.”

We came to learn his name was Jay, but that was not important at first. What was important was allowing this man to talk. He did; then as his emotions quieted a bit, he moved from his table to ours. “Maybe you are just what I need.” So for a while we listened intently as he relived some of his past and struggled to envision his future.

Advancing technology, growing intellect, and improving skills sometimes seamlessly erode past practices into new seasons of life. Other events, though, shock us into new realities with no warning at all. With the loss of a loved one, a dear friend, or physical abilities, our lives fall into a state of darkness.

Darkness leaves next steps unsure, and direction unguided. The course of life changes in mid-step with no place to land it; but neither can the step remain suspended. Darkness is the state Jay seemed to be the day we met him. Our time with him fell short of the amount needed for him to adequately share his grief. His hope rested in yesterday’s grave. His purpose completed. Any reason for tomorrow uncertain.

We all go through such times when our lives face a change of seasons. New seasons are masked with uncertainty, unsatisfied by looking back. But until our final breath, one thing never changes. God has purpose for our lives even as seasons end and new ones come along.

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil — this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it.

God does it so that men will revere him. (Ecclesiastes 3:9-14)

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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