

Reflection & Prayertime: A Time for Everything under the Heavens

October 26, 2020

In the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible it says in the New International Version

There is a time for everything,

and a season for every activity under the heavens:

² a time to be born and a time to die,

a time to plant and a time to uproot,

³ a time to kill and a time to heal,

a time to tear down and a time to build,

⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,

a time to mourn and a time to dance,

⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

⁶ a time to search and a time to give up,

a time to keep and a time to throw away,

⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,

a time to be silent and a time to speak,

⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,

a time for war and a time for peace.

⁹ What do workers gain from their toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. ¹¹ God has made everything beautiful in its time and has also set eternity in the human heart; yet^[a] no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. ¹² I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. ¹³ That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it.

Well, we have certainly been living in a time to refrain from embracing, haven't we?! And how very difficult and challenging that has been! I was discussing very tentative Thanksgiving holiday plans with family and it's not looking good and after becoming teary-eyed and somber I announced to my husband that I'm just going to buy one of those big plastic bubbles and go anyway.

Sometimes it helps me get through challenging times to think of life in terms of chapters or seasons if you will and we know there will be an end to the pandemic, It's just looking like it will be a protracted time and so we brace and lick our wounds and acknowledge our losses and try to keep things in perspective that this is still a relatively short period of our lives. When I think of POW's and of Nelson

Mandela being in prison for decades I'm a little ashamed and embarrassed at being whiny over a long period of pandemic. We try to shift into a different more resilient gear and find our spiritual grit; after all, what's being asked of us is not nearly as dramatic as what has been asked of many to do.

I find that the change of seasons which we see happening before our eyes in the sporadic drop of leaves provides an opportunity for reflection and taking stock in our lives. It was on this day 13 years ago that my father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and on this day 12 years ago and I drove my son to a YMCA youth leadership retreat in rural Kentucky and the incredible swirl of autumn leaves made me think of my tap dancing dad and how he remains close in many ways to me even after passing. There are things to see even now more clearly.

Marcus Borg talks in his book *The Heart of Christianity* about the "thin places" as being anywhere our hearts are opened. It can be a geographical location or it can be an activity. A thin place is any moment in time in which the boundary between the mundane and the divine for an individual is so thin as to be porous.

I believe we can position ourselves to be in the thin places to encourage communion with God and to revel in God's spiritual sustenance. Sometimes it takes some intentional tuning out of some things, finding a quiet spot, creating the time to make it happen. I'm going to help with that today for you and for me by taking some of our time together today to stop, breathe, reflect, and pray if you want to while you listen to some music and watch some images of fall leaves, geese flying, and bonfire sparks. Rest and enjoy...(insert youtube video here)

As I watch the geese in the video, I'm reminded that it is the culture and built in instinct of geese to support each other when times are tough. When a goose gets injured or sick, two other geese will fall out of formation to stay with the weaker goose until it is able to fly again. When they head back out they work together to catch up with the rest of the flock. And the geese take turns leading. Due to the lift in the V formation, there is no one creating any lift for the goose in front. This leadership position can get tiring and exhaust even the strongest lead goose. To help avoid fatigue, the position of lead goose rotates between all members of the flock. Geese are loyal to their purpose and they honk to each other to encourage each other on the long flights. Geese fly further together and perhaps we could take note and learn from this. So let's take time to reflect in this change of seasons and not be loosey goosey with this pandemic; let's be geese for one another. Thanks be to God for the gift of community and caring for one another.