

**“For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven...”**

**Our reading from Ecclesiastes has to be
one of the more famous readings in the Bible.
Even if you aren’t necessarily religious,
you have probably heard this one before....**

**This book is part of the Wisdom tradition of the Bible..
it belongs to the same section as the book of Job and the book of Proverbs...
the author, Qoheleth was considered a ‘sage’ ...a wise man.
From his own life experience
he came to understand wholeness of life...
that sadness and joy, celebration and mourning,
making love and making war
are all a part of one life....
Once again, I am stunned to see the wisdom of the ancients
once again, we modern folk can not claim to be always
wiser than our ancestors...**

**We all know that life is never only one way or the other...
Of course we only want the good times, the successful adventures,
the happiest of relationships...but life just isn’t like that...**

**Life has a way of including both sunshine and shadow....
dry spells and floods...
good times and bad...
Life is all of one piece...
and that is precisely what creates its richness and
its depth and its beauty!**

That is also, precisely, what makes life so very difficult and confusing...
Often we find ourselves frustrated and anxious
because we think we've worked hard enough
or we think we've been good enough,
that we shouldn't be experiencing struggles...

The beauty of life becomes visible
when we take the time to pause and see the big picture.
When we take some time to step back and out of the day to day grind,
when we make the effort to get our head above the fray of day to day living
and often then we can see all the gifts that we had not noticed,
all the blessings,
all the people who were there for us
And Life all of sudden appears much more precious and much more lovely.

Life is kind of life this scarf, metaphorically speaking....
I can say: boy!
I love the green yarn that Nettie used
(by the way, Nettie is our weaving teacher)
oh dear...., I do not love the purple yarn so much...
and if Nettie had used only the green yarn,
it would have been a pretty scarf...
but weaving both yarns together,
plus some other colors...
a scarf of true beauty and richness is woven...
the color and depth of its vibrancy is so much more
because of the variety of colors woven into it....
and such is life...

As much as we usually don't want the pain and struggles in our lives,
it is those times of life, when seen with the joys and successes of our lives,
help us to know, to see our lives as rich and beautiful....
because it is true that most of our growth happens in times of struggle...
Why? Some people say that God sends the struggles so that we might learn...I don't
necessarily agree with that:

I don't believe that God sends the Tsunami, the cancer,
the Hurricane to teach us a lesson....
but I do know that whatever is happening in our lives,
the Holy One is there with us helping us to grow and
to find the gift in each situation: the easy and the hard...

Now all that being said,
seeing the gift in the struggles of our lives so much easier said than done...
Sometimes, or perhaps most of the time,
we don't take the time to pause and reflect upon our lives
until we are forced to either by illness or tragedy...
But does it really have to be that way?
I think not...

There is way of living... of being, so that we can see the gift and beauty
of our whole life...even as we are living it!

For me, that way of living includes the art of paying attention,
the practice of actually being where ever I am...
the practice of being present to the present...
and that my friends, is simple, but not easy!

What I have found, from my own experience,
is that no matter how wonderful my experience is at that present moment....

that when I really pay attention, really see what is going on at that moment...
even at that wonderful moment,
there is always at least a little bit of pain:
something isn't quite right or someone isn't there, for instance...

AND, on the other hand.....no matter how difficult
the current experience might be....
if I am honest and really present...
there is always, always a bright spot, a sweet note,
a glimpse of goodness, beauty and joy....

The most difficult part of the practice of paying attention
which is the practice of mindfulness...
is to remember to be there!
So, so often we-I- get caught up in our own story lines,
our own thoughts, opinions and our own angsting...

That's why we need each other...
that's why we need the wisdom of the ages
that's why we need the companionship of our friends,
family and acquaintances...
we need each other to help each other to be there,
to show up for life, to see what is really here..
really there....

That is truth....
That is life....
That is the way the Holy One created the Cosmos...
That is why "For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven"

That is why we should never forget to say, “Thank you!”

Amen...