

Change of Seasons

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We travelers, walking to the sun, can't see Ahead, but looking back the very light
That blinded us shows us the way we came, along which blessings now appear, risen
As if from sightlessness to sight, and we, by blessing brightly lit, keep going toward
That blessed light that yet to us is dark.

--Wendell Berry, *Given: New Poems*

I like to describe the movements of life with a metaphor: *Seasons*. The notion that life can be compared to the eternal cycle of the seasons does not deny the struggle and the joy, the loss or the gain, the darkness or the light. Calling these times of our lives *seasons* can help us see them as infinitely richer, more promising, more real. It encourages us, no matter what we are experiencing, to embrace all that is offered and to find the hidden opportunities for growth.

Two weeks ago, we welcomed my brother to the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. After patiently waiting for twenty-two long years for the immigrant petition to go through, he is finally here from the Philippines.

He's adjusting to his new life in a very unfamiliar place, doing unfamiliar things necessary to start anew in America. Watching him do this reminds me of my own season of adjustment, when I moved here nineteen years ago. All sorts of things we never thought about back home like social security numbers, driver's licenses, bus lines, stop signs, four-way stops (non-existent), and turns signals, now have to become part and parcel of the rhythm of daily living here in the US.

My brother just started a new job – unfortunately the new man on the block gets the graveyard shift, and this kind of schedule is a challenge for him, but he's so grateful to here with his supportive family – and to find employment so soon. He realizes this is a new exciting season, and the terror of not finding a job is dissipated by receiving an income, and ability to help support his loved ones.

With any new season in life, there is a whole range of potential emotions – grief, anticipation, excitement, and sometimes, even terror - that fear of the unfamiliar. For most of us, our human nature prefers the status quo. We want to stay where it felt safe. We don't like change. Unfortunately, we can't go back to the way things were. We can only go forward. We must face the disruptions and challenges head-on for denial will only lead to bigger problems later. When we enter a new season we must thoughtfully reflect, properly grieve, and let go of the old season. Turning from the past, we can come to an awareness of how things are and of the new possibilities, the new opportunities for renewal, growth, and reinvention that await.

As I meet with members of our congregation, I hear their stories of how they have moved from one season to the next. How they have weathered life's storms and have made transitions from the old to the new. Often their stories involve pain and suffering, heartbreak and loss. Others, like my newly immigrated brother, tell of the ambiguity and uncertainties, of great changes forcing an abrupt end of one season and the no-so-smooth beginning of another. Only in hindsight can they see all the good that came from these experiences, these opportunities that helped them grow.

When you find yourself resisting a change in seasons, when disruptions happen and you struggle or ache, I urge you to look back and see where you have come from. I trust you will discover that grace was there all along. And I hope you found that family and community are able to help you weather your change of seasons.