

When my friend, Lauren, called and asked me to say a few words today I was truly honored. When I was thinking about what to say, I could only think of the dichotomy of life, the ups and downs: we have joy and grief, we have birth and death, we have beginnings and endings.

Ecclesiastes 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter begins with the line

*“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven”*  
Sometimes this is particularly hard to remember, because we want things to happen on our time, within our plans. It often doesn't make sense to us, and we wonder how some things could be part of any plan. Some seasons are cut short, and some never come at all.

I am very guilty of this, and had to remember this line during the long years before the birth of my daughter, who like most babies, especially first grandchildren, was much anticipated and celebrated. Everyone knew that this baby was coming; we were all on pins and needles until she arrived. I know it is an exaggeration, but I frequently felt like everyone in the whole hospital knew this baby was coming, because I was very easy to spot. Many an employee commented that there was no way I was going to make it another month.

What made Maura even more appreciated by all who knew us, was that she represented the end to a very long wait, and a time of sadness and frustration for our family. Maura was my 5<sup>th</sup> pregnancy, and the first one to produce a baby for our home. It was her time, and her season, and cause for much celebration.

M. Scott Peck, a well-known psychiatrist, wrote in his book, The Road Less Traveled, “Life is difficult.” I don't think many people would dispute this, but I think that a fitting next line would be, “but cause for so much celebration.” As a therapist, I frequently have the opportunity to talk to people who have forgotten what celebration feels like, who have lost their way, lost their joy, and see no reason to go on.

A frequent task I ask patients to complete is to think of all of the things in life that should be celebrated, but usually aren't, and even the most despondent usually have some fantastic answers. Some of my

favorite ones (and I have included some of my own): the smell of tea olives, a baby's smile, the smell of your child's hair, barbeque, chocolate, my husband's smile, your dog, the wonder of spring, the laughter of my friends, an unexpected gift, clean sheets on the bed, fresh baked cookies, fat rolls on a baby's leg. You get the idea; the list could go on and on. What are yours? Have you thought recently about the things that bring you joy? Ask your kids, your husband, wife, friends, the things they tell you will amaze you. This list doesn't take away suffering, it isn't the cure for depression, but it does help us to remember the power of the little things, and that everything has a time and a purpose.

We are here today to recognize the many seasons of life. We recognize life, marriage, service to others, birthdays, retirements, and the memory of those who are no longer with us. Each paver has a purpose, to remind us of the seasons of life, both the celebrations and the memorials, and to remind us that there is a time for every purpose under heaven.

*Alyssa McGrath*  
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