

On the Occasion of Ma's Wedding Celebration

For this occasion, Ma's asked me to read Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2, 4, and 8. I will honor her by following the letter of her instruction, even as I present my own interpretive paraphrase. I'm also going to take the liberty of reading on a bit further—all too typically, Ma forgot the punch line...

For everything a time has been set—a time for everything one might want to do in this world.

A time to have children and a time to die,

A time to plant and a time to pull out what is planted,

A time to weep about something and a time to laugh at it,

A time to wail in distress and a time to dance about,

A time to love and a time to hate,

A time for war and a time for peace.

So what good does it do to attempt anything? I see in this only how God reminds us that we are limited!

However, everything does come together beautifully in its time. People have been given a sense of time precisely to appreciate how well God brings this about.

I've come to realize that there's no better response to our existential helplessness than to rejoice and make something good of life. Indeed, people eating and drinking and feeling good about the good they bring about is God's gift.

This passage is about God's grace in the face of our inability to control the world around us—about how he brings every good thing in its time, whatever we may do.

I think the challenge for us is the meantime. Are we willing to wait, learning, as the apostle Paul did, to be content with little and grateful with much? Or are we more

impatient, attempting to obtain the good things—spouses, families, security—before God has brought them at the time and in the way he intended to bring them? I know that too often, I thought that I knew better than God or, worse yet, I did not think at all, and ended up with my mess instead of God's best.

That's why I was so tickled with the news of my mother's marriage to Bill. Here, at this *possibly* late stage in her life, she finally found a spiritually compatible, quality soul mate. God, it turns out, had not forgotten her. Rather, he stuck to his intention to bless her this way, and moreover turned much else into blessings along the way. He was faithful regardless of how well she waited during the intervening years.

God works, Jesus said, on the day we rest (John 5:17), the day we testify that all our efforts accomplish nothing better than what God has already accomplished for us. Which is better: to eat, drink, and enjoy what God inevitably provides, or to exhaust ourselves before then for dubious result? *This* day, at least, on which we celebrate how God brought Pauline and Bill and indeed all of us together, let us engage wholeheartedly the better choice.

Enjoy your day!