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Stock the Pond

As I think about the many ways my life has changed in the last year, one of the most unexpected things is the way that I am learning to enjoy life in the everyday moments.

As I spent time with a friend yesterday, we paused again and again to look at the day's sunset. We stopped the CD that was playing to talk about the words. We breathed in the experiences of the moment.

My friend commented that she had heard someone refer to this kind of life as having your pond stocked, a process that fills your pond with living, breathing fish, so that it teems with life.

And truly that was how I felt. At that moment, my pond was stocked. I was full.

Even today, as I have begun reading a book by Barbara Brown Taylor entitled "Leaving Church" and she gives voice to her life's experiences, her thoughts led me to stop, breathe, ponder, and enjoy the moment. I didn't feel it necessary to read the next chapter. I wanted to soak in the expressions of her heart.

I don't feel rushed as often as I used to although I am still busy. I remember looking at my calendar about a year and a half ago and feeling the strain, the weight of a life too busily lived and asking God, "What do I take off this schedule? What have you truly called me to do?" and feeling that there was no room for any change on that calendar. I have long written on my day planners in pencil to allow for changes and "neat" little corrections as if a neat calendar represented a life lived well. One especially painful day for me was the day when I realized how relative my seemingly important tasks were as I took my eraser and erased months of the best laid plans.

Now I find there to be more time for friendships. I find more time to read; more time to dream; more time to write; more time to listen to a great song; more time to take in the flavors in my food and drink; more time to feel the sun's rays warming my face, more time to enjoy a movie with my husband.

And I find that crises have a way of clearing our vision. Pain has a way of prioritizing our days.

I increasingly realize the need to live full. Full of pleasure and also full of pain. Full of hope and also disappointment. Full of peace and also fear.

I recently thought back over my life and realized that so many times I have tossed out that less than perfect picture of me and my life. You know, the ones that you go "Oh my goodness. I don't want anyone to see this. I look awful or fat or weird or ..." Fill in the blank. I have often chosen to forget the painful memories and in fact, I've worked very hard to eradicate many of them.

So I guess that as I am discovering the pleasures of a life openly broken, I am growing in my realization that to live fully, having one's pond stocked, embraces the desirable and the undesirable moments of our lives.

I think of the writer of Ecclesiastes who said...

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

And I am learning to live in the moments of beauty and the moments of tragedy. The moments of failure and the moments of success. The moments of excitement and the moments of the mundane.

The words of St. Iraneus have been words of sustenance for me during this last year. "The glory of God is man (and woman – my addendum) fully alive."

And I am finding that the place of living fully is the place where we embrace the joy and most surprisedly, the suffering, as a gift from God knowing that in and through it all, we can live, truly, fully, having our ponds stocked.

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