**The Glory of Ordinary Time**

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

Last weekend, the morning glories took me by surprise – as they always do.

During the all-too-brief months of this past spring and summer, I bought some plants and tried my best to give them the attention they needed so that they would grow into the plants I wanted and the plants I planned. I am too impatient to be a serious gardener, so I was not attempting anything more than keeping the flowers in a few pots alive and well throughout the season. Some did not make it. To my pleasant surprise, others did.

As August rolled around and the plants that thrived were reaching peak bloom, I felt the satisfaction that comes from seeing the tangible beauty of plans realized and effort rewarded. The fruit of my carefully laid botanical plans were blossoms that burst forth looking at least a little bit like the pictures in the garden shop.

Yet, just as the plants I tended were reaching primetime, their beauty was eclipsed by the bright bold explosion of vibrant pink morning glories bursting forth from previously nondescript vines along my fence and in my neighbors’ yards.

We did not plant them, and they received no care all season – except for the sun and rain freely bestowed on them. They were not planned, paid for, or cultivated. Indeed, many serious gardeners rail against morning glories as aggressive, invasive trespassers. Nevertheless, I must admit that the most beautiful blooms in my yard right now are not those I planned. Rather, it is the morning glories – my uninvited interlopers – that catch my eye and warm my heart.

Lowly, often reviled morning glories may point to something important about life itself. So often, the plans we make – even when they are realized – pale in comparison to the joy that comes our way unexpectedly and uninvited.

So often, we can plan a well-organized and costly vacation only to find when we return home that our favorite memory is an unplanned ice cream cone bought on a beautiful night.

So often, we can meticulously plan a business trip and find that the most valuable time was not the conference we duly attended but a seemingly random conversation that began an important collaboration.

So often, we can plan the perfect Thanksgiving meal and find that decades later it was a culinary disaster that gave the family a wealth of happy memories.

So often, we can plan a specific career path and then pivot to a whole new plan because, unexpectedly, someone or something unanticipated inspired us to try something new.

Appreciating that the unexpected may be better than our own plans is not easy. For a planner like me, it is uncomfortably uncertain. In those moments, though, when I find a new, beautiful, delightful surprise in my path, it may be time to remember the lowly morning glory.

The same God who made the morning glory sees every other beautiful thing for which I have not planned, worked, or sought. The same God who freely offers the beauty of the morning glory also freely offers all the other unexpectedly beautiful gifts that are waiting to be discovered every day.

There is great joy in seeing plans realized as intended – and in seeing the flowers bought, cultivated, and cared for bloom on schedule. But there is a very special joy that comes from those beautiful, unhoped for suprises that fill our lives. They are the glory of ordinary time.

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