



# Bounty

He who receives a benefit  
should never forget it.

He who bestows should never  
remember it.

*Pierre Charron*

**I**T HAS HAPPENED BEFORE that the orchard trees, all puffed and fluffed in their glorious spring blossoms, thick with the delicate flowers that presage autumn fruit, have subsequently produced little or no fruit.

It has also happened that the blossoms have naturally morphed into the small beginnings of fruit, raising our expectations for a bountiful crop—only for those small beginnings to later fall or wither away to nothing, within a month's time.

Over the past few years there has been a steady diminishing in the number of bees in the United States, and this could be why blossoms sometimes do not produce fruit. Without bees, the blossoms never are pollinated, and thus never produce fruit. Or strong spring winds can blow the blossoms from the branches before they can be pollinated or form their fruit.

No matter the work of man, the harvest is always in God's hands.



This year, however, the spring blossoms did not play us false. The glories of spring passed

effortlessly into the youth and middle-age of summer, with trees laden with hundreds and hundreds of diminutive green apples. Then, as the weeks passed, the apples began to ripen and turn red—still there, still with the promise of a bountiful harvest.

And, lo, in the fullness of time, trees that had begun the year clothed in spring's delicate lacework entered autumn with branches burdened and groaning under the weight of ripening fruit. Suddenly there were apples everywhere. Windfalls piled up on the grass under the spreading canopy. Slender branches sagged lower as bunches of fruit piled one atop the other like clustered grapes.

Thus it has been, here in the Middle Lands, an "apple year." Almost everyone with a tree has been inundated with apples. Apples, more apples, and even *more* apples. Applesauce, apple cobblers, apple crisps, apple wine, apple pies, apple dumplings.

Apples coming out of our ears.



Are there any among the idols of the  
nations who give rain?  
Or can the heavens grant showers?  
Is it not You, O Lord our God?  
Therefore we hope in You,  
For You are the one who has done all  
these things.

*Jeremiah 14:22*

Reflections  
by the Pond

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It is true that we cleared the native grasses and planted the trees in our orchard. It is true, as well, that from time to time we prune the trees and tend their needs, doing what is necessary to limit damage by deer and rabbits and other beasts of the field.

But ultimately the measure of the harvest is in God's hands.

We cannot choose when the rain will come. We cannot control the velocity or timing of the winds that blow out of the north and west. We cannot beckon the bees to attend on cue. All this and more is set by the one who holds the earth in His hands.

So the increase belongs to Him.



But the Lord is the true God;  
He is the living God and the everlasting King.

At His wrath the earth quakes,  
And the nations cannot endure His indignation.

*It is* He who made the earth by His power,  
Who established the world by His wisdom;  
And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.

When He utters His voice, *there is* a tumult of waters in the heavens,  
And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth;  
He makes lightning for the rain,  
And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

*Jeremiah 10:10,12-13*

One wonders, from time to time, from where man gets his arrogance. Or perhaps a more accurate way to pose the question would be: Faced with the overwhelming evidence for the hand of God at work in this world, why does man persist in thinking he is the one in charge?

The answer no doubt lies in the inevitable conclusion. If we are the ones in charge—if we are the ones responsible for the bounty and blessings of the land, then we can take all the credit. It is not in man's nature to happily give credit to someone else. The farmer who

toils and struggles through the spring and summer months to produce a crop is loathe to share credit for the autumn harvest.

It takes the transformation of a life and will by the indwelling Spirit to change man's base, self-centered nature. Only then are the blinders removed, and our incessant gaze on self is redirected upwards to the gracious and generous God who showers us with His blessings.



Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever."

*2 Corinthians 9:6-9*

What, then, are we to do with the bounty God pours into our lives? Is it ours to keep? When a friend gives us a prettily wrapped gift for our birthday, it is understood that whatever is inside the box is ours to keep and do with according to our own good pleasure. Is that how we are to receive *God's* gifts?

A God-centered, Spirit-empowered life will always receive His bounty with the question, "What do You want me to *do* with this?"

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

*2 Corinthians 9:10-11*

