



"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Matthew 6:25



QUIETLY FEEDING



THERE IS PLENTY FOR ALL. The seed is scattered wide, generously, every morning without fail. Nearby, between two trees standing between the house and pond, lies a heap of field corn ears, replenished whenever it is consumed. There is plenty for all.



The snow birds arrive early every morning, just as the dim, gray light begins to reveal the cold shapes outside the library window. If I feed them right away, the diminutive, mono-

chromatic birds will enjoy a few minutes of uninterrupted breakfast before the blue jays show up. Once the larger, more intimidating birds arrive, the timid snow birds will scatter and perch nervously on the periphery, waiting for a chance to nip in for more seed.

Even before the arrival of the belligerent blue jays, however, there is turmoil within the ranks. There seems always to be one or two snow birds intent on keeping everyone else away from the food. They expend precious energy chasing after their brethren, with the apparent motive of keeping more for themselves.



Reflections
by the Pond

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*Hover o'er me, Holy Spirit,
Bathe my trembling heart and brow;
Fill me with Thy hallowed presence,
Come, O come and fill me now.*

*Thou canst fill me, gracious Spirit,
Though I cannot tell Thee how;
But I need Thee, greatly need Thee,
Come, O come and fill me now.*

*I am weakness, full of weakness,
At Thy sacred feet I bow;
Blest, divine, eternal Spirit,
Fill with power, and fill me now.*

*Cleanse and comfort, bless and save me,
Bathe, O bathe my heart and brow;
Thou art comforting and saving,
Thou art sweetly filling now.*

*Fill me now, fill me now,
Jesus, come and fill me now;
Fill me with Thy hallowed presence,
Come, O come and fill me now.*
Elwood H. Stokes

Likewise, around the pile of corn, a similar drama will be played out with the larger beasts. When a group of wild turkeys shows up to feed on the ears of field corn, there will typically be at least one who spends all her time trying to keep everyone else from eating.

Meanwhile, in both camps—the large turkeys and the tiny snow birds—the result is invariably the same: the belligerent never gets to eat. The one so intent on claiming everything for herself ends up going without. All the while she is busily pressing her claim, the rest are quietly munching away, filling their bellies with their portion—as well as what would be going to the troublemaker if only she would just quiet down and eat with the rest.

So when all is said and done, when all the birdseed and corn has been consumed, everyone leaves with a full belly—everyone, that is, but the ones who worked so hard to keep it all for themselves.

The avian world holds no monopoly on such bizarre behavior. Every office has someone who goes out of his or her way to dominate, to always have the last word, to take credit for every victory and renounce participation in every defeat. Above all else—perhaps above even financial reward—they seek power and glory. They are takers; if their own glory is insufficient, they will leach away the glory rightfully belonging to others.

Woe to those who add house to house
and join field to field,
Until there is no more room,
So that you have to live alone in the midst
of the land!

Isaiah 5:8

But at the end of the day, when the one so preoccupied with promoting himself leaves the office, he leaves alone. During the last eight hours he may have gathered up more prestige and preeminence, but he has gathered no friends. He may have gained power, but he has not gained the respect of

his fellows—indeed, he has gained only their contempt. He leaves filled to the brim with his vanity, but with an empty soul.

"Do not work for the food which perishes,
but for the food which endures to eternal
life, which the Son of Man will give to you,
for on Him the Father, God, has set His
seal."

John 6:27

We all know people like that. Sadly, even in the church there are individuals possessed of a desperate desire to claim credit, blessings, and glory—even if it means stealing them from others. In the one place where by God's grace and the blood of Christ everything is free, there will always be those intent on claiming something not their own.

And all the while that they are obsessed with temporal gain, those *not* so obsessed—the rest of their brothers and sisters in Christ—are quietly feeding upon the blessings and word of God.

How tragic the one who leaves the house of God brimming with their own vanity, yet with an empty soul.

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.
For her profit is better than the profit of
silver
And her gain better than fine gold.
She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with
her.

Proverbs 3:13-15

