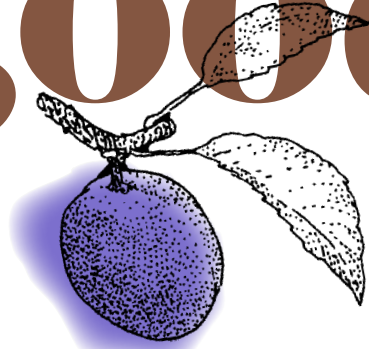


a good year



Faith always sees the bow of covenant promise whenever sense sees the cloud of affliction.

C. H. Spurgeon

IT HAS SURELY BEEN A BERRY YEAR. Every morning Linda heads out to perform her rounds and invariably returns with one or more buckets of red raspberries, black raspberries, or mulberries. The squirrels are so enamored of the mulberries, spending most of their days browsing the laden branches, that I wouldn't be surprised if they were not all suffering from what my old navy buddy used to term the "green apple quick-step". This has been a banner year for cherries, as well, with our one mature tree producing more than 24 quarts. And the ditches of the gravel roads are filled with extravagant displays of ripening elderberries.

The reason for this sumptuous bounty of fruit?



Reflections
by the Pond

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Sir Isaac Newton's third law of motion—presented along with his first two laws in the “Principia Mathematica Philosophiae Naturalis” in 1686—states that for every action (or force) in nature there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Our area has been inundated with heavy rains this spring and early summer. Copious water and its ill effects have been a staple of life around here for a couple of months. Basements and roads have flooded, fields have been swamped and crops lost. Families and businesses in low-lying areas have sandbagged and evacuated.

As bad as all this rain has been for many people, it has brought with it a concomitant benefit: a good berry year. There is nothing better than a wet spring and early summer for a bountiful harvest of fruit.



Oddly enough, it is not always so easy to tell the good from the bad.

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.”

2 Samuel 12:13-14

Just about everyone thinks they know what is good and what is bad. But just about everyone can be wrong about that. Did King David think it would be a good thing for the life of an innocent baby to be spared? Certainly. Did he consider it bad that God did not grant his request, and that his and Bathsheba's child died? Probably so. But for millennia believers have been not only informed, but edified by his righteous response.

So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate.

2 Samuel 12:20

Did the Marys mourning beneath the cross of Jesus believe with all their heart that His death would be not just a bad, but a horrible tragedy? No doubt. But His death was the perfect answer to man's sin, and has meant eternal life with God for all who believe.

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His

grace which He lavished on us.

Ephesians 1:4b-8

BY FAITH

We often can know with certainty what is right and what is wrong, for God's word is our source document for such things. But rarely can we know with certainty what is good and what is bad. This we must leave in the hands of our all-knowing God, for He alone knows both the passing and ultimate consequences of decisions and events here on earth.

This is what the prophet meant when he penned God's words, in his oft-quoted declaration,

**“Behold, as for the proud one,
His soul is not right within him;
But the righteous will live by his faith.”**

Habakkuk 2:4

Since we are not equipped to know whether events and decisions are ultimately good or bad, we must live by faith—faith that God knows what He is doing.

Today's “good” may turn as sour in our belly as last night's chili, and today's “bad” just may turn for our benefit on the morrow. Or one event, such as spring rains, can mean both bad and good for different people.

We cannot know, and if we truly live by that which we profess—namely, our God is

sovereign—then we will not waste time worrying about it. He alone knows the why behind His sovereign decisions.



Black clouds may be filled with destruction or life-giving, berry-producing rain. Silver-lined clouds may be orchestrated for exultant joy or used by Satan for evil. We cannot know. Nor should we *try* to know.

God is sovereign, and “the righteous will live by his faith.” And when we live by faith, *every* year is a good year.