

October 2021 - Falling apples

For the past week or so I have known that, if I stand at one end of the vicarage garden, I will not have to wait for very long before I hear a soft thump as another crab apple hits the ground. Such simple treats have always brought me pleasure, and made me think.

Ever since I was a pre-school child in rural Kent, collecting mushrooms from the fields for breakfast, I have always enjoyed what I believe is sometimes called a 'wild harvest.' And I'm sure that the attitudes I learned then are good ones; attitudes of never gathering much, always remembering that what I gather as a treat is the food that wildlife depends on. So although I gather our falling crab apples, I leave plenty for the blackbirds and slugs. For me, the falling crab apples are pure treat. There is no way we could effectively pick them; the tree is too tall, with most of the apples at the ends of branches, way out of the reach of any ladder. So as I have gathered them, I have found myself reflecting on what else in my life is like the apples.

As I followed the journey of the falling apples, I thought first of the tree itself, dropping the apples at the right time, when they are ripe. I pondered how hard I sometimes find it to put things down, how I have seen family or friends fall into the temptation to hang onto objects or attitudes or behaviours that no longer serve any useful purpose; how it is often so easy to hang onto things that we might be better without. Then I thought of all the positives, seeing the crab apples as reminders of all the many blessings that come my way, unlooked for and undeserved and filling me with thanksgiving. Finally, I thought of the pleasure of using the apples, of looking up and trying out new recipes, of time spent in a way that I think of as play. And so I ponder the 'apples' that I can 'drop', the words or actions that I can give to bring simple joys to others.

Jesus may not have spoken of falling crab apples – as far as we know – but he certainly encouraged his disciples to look at the natural world around them and to reflect on what they could learn about themselves, about God, and about the attitudes God calls us to live by. So my prayer for myself and for us all this month, is that as we notice the changes that the changing season brings, they will become for us all opportunities for reflection and prayer.

Yours in Christ,
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