

## Thoughts from the Garden – October 2015



A child gave me a gift at the garden today.

We were using the hats of the acorns to make loud whistling sounds by blowing between our barely spaced thumbs. As it was time for the group of children to leave, one fourth grade boy reached into his pocket and thrust his hand out to me. Before dashing away to catch up with the rest of his friends, he declared, “Here, this is my lucky acorn – you can have it.” We blew whistles across the field to each other – giving thumbs-up of enthusiasm – until he was out of sight. This occasion reminded me of another time, years ago, when a child offered me a ‘lucky’ gift. Five year old Scott ran up to me on the playground with three rocks in his hands. “These are lucky rocks,” he pronounced as he reached to give them to me. When he dropped them into my open palm, he said, “Good luck!” and ran away to continue his play.

There is something simple and sweet about receiving gifts from a child. Children seem to truly treasure whatever it is they are giving to you, and yet, they give it freely with no expectation of getting anything in return. It reminds me of two things. First, it reminds me of the treasures I take for granted far too often – lucky rocks and acorns, hand-picked dandelions and clover, tickling feathers, and unique pieces of artwork. Not only do I now have the best acorn-hat whistle with which I can show off my musical skill, I had a moment to contemplate the absolute treasure of the acorn – the bundle of potential and life that given the proper conditions can become an oak like those towering above us at the garden. Second, receiving gifts from children reminds me of the way I am gifted by God.

Being asked for nothing in return, I find myself the recipient of treasure upon treasure. God thrusts out God’s hand and says simply and sweetly, “Here, this is air – you can breathe it; here, this is water – you can drink it; here, this is soil – you can grow food in it.” Sometimes it takes a child handing me an acorn in order to recognize the gifts that are ever before me. Everything is gift, really. When I know that, gratitude replaces entitlement, appreciation replaces jealousy, and a longing to give away what I have been given replaces my desire to cling and take ownership.

I still have those lucky rocks, and I will probably hang onto the acorn top for at least the rest of this season so I can use it to demonstrate to the children who come and visit. Even when I don't keep a child's gift for very long, I find myself treating it with reverence. I gently lay the dandelions on the ground where they can break down and return to the earth. I hang up the drawings, and I blow the feathers into the air with the child who gave them to me. Do I treat the gifts I've been given by God with as much reverence? Do I even remember that I've been gifted at all?

Mikey's lucky acorn was an invitation to reflect on these questions and to give thanks for the lavish ways we all have been gifted by God. To be alive, to experience life with all of the senses and to share life with family and friends, plants and animals, mountains and oceans – I can almost hear God proclaiming, "Here, this is my lucky world... Good luck."

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