



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

January 2016 – *The Joy of Accepting God's Unexpected Gifts*

In C.S. Lewis's science fiction book *Perelandra*, a professor named Ransom is sent to the planet Venus. He encounters a green woman who is like Eve before the fall. She is content and relishes fellowship with and trust in her Creator. She knows no sin or evil. Ransom tries to explain the concept of temptation by asking her if she ever wished or hoped that something had turned out otherwise. After pondering, the green Lady replies:

What you have made me see ... is as plain as the sky, but I never saw it before. Yet it has happened every day. One goes into the forest to pick food and already the thought of one fruit rather than another has grown up in one's mind. Then, it may be, one finds a different fruit and not the fruit one thought of. One joy was expected and another is given. But this I had never noticed before—that at the very moment of the finding there is in the mind a kind of thrusting back, or a setting aside. The picture of the fruit you have not found is still, for a moment, before you. And if you wished—if it were possible to wish—you could keep it there. You could send your soul after the good you had expected, instead of turning it to the good you had got. You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other...

And this ... is the glory and wonder you have made me see; that it is I, I myself, who turn from the good expected to the given good. Out of my own heart I do it. One can conceive a heart which did not: which clung to the good it had first thought of and turned the good which was given into no good...

I thought ... that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it. I thought that the good things He sent me drew me into them as the waves lift the islands; but now I see that it is I who plunge into them with my own legs and arms, as when we go swimming. I feel as if I were living in that roofless world of yours when men walk undefended beneath naked heaven. It is delight with terror in it. One's own self to be walking from one good to another, walking beside Him as Himself may walk, not even holding hands. How has He made me so separate from Himself? How did it enter His mind to conceive such a thing? The world is so much larger than I thought...

How easy it is to become discontented and lose our joy when we don't get what we had expected. We so easily refuse the real good that God has given us and make it bitter by focusing on what we thought we deserved or expected. On the other hand, what joy can be had when we realize that out of love for God we're walking in His will.

"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

PHILIPPIANS 4:12-13 (NIV)



¹ C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra*, Pan Books, Ltd.: London, 192, pp. 61-62.