



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

September 2016 – *ENJOYING GOOD MEMORIES*

As we look back on some of the best experiences of our lives, we may be tempted to try to keep recreating those experiences. In his book, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, however, C.S. Lewis cautioned about the consequences of doing that:

I am beginning to feel that we need a preliminary act of submission not only towards possible future afflictions but also towards possible future blessings. I know it sounds fantastic; but think it over. It seems to me that we often, almost sulkily, reject the good that God offers us because, at that moment, we expected some other good. Do you know what I mean? On every level of our life—in our religious experience, in our gastronomic, erotic, aesthetic, and social experience—we are always harking back to some occasion which seemed to us to reach perfection, setting that up as a norm, and depreciating all other occasions by comparison. But these other occasions, I now suspect, are often full of their own new blessing, if only we would lay ourselves open to it. God shows us a new facet of the glory, and we refuse to look at it because we're still looking for the old one. And of course we don't get that. You can't, at the twentieth reading, get again the experience of reading *Lycidas* for the first time. But what you do get can be in its own way as good.



This applies especially to the devotional life. Many religious people lament that the first fervours of their conversion have died away. They think—sometimes rightly, but not, I believe, always—that their sins account for this. They may even try by pitiful efforts of will to revive what now seem to have been the golden days. But were those fervours—the operative word is *those*—ever intended to last?

...And the joke, or tragedy, of it all is that these golden moments in the past, which are so tormenting if we erect them into a norm, are entirely nourishing, wholesome, and enchanting if we are content to accept them for what they are, for memories. Properly bedded down in a past which we do not miserably try to conjure back, they will send up exquisite growths. Leave the bulbs alone, and the new flowers will come up. Grub them up and hope, by fondling and sniffing, to get last year's blooms, and you will get nothing. "Unless a seed die..."¹

Let us joyfully walk with God in His will, wherever that may take us. And let us remember and thank Him for the blessings He has given us in the past, enjoying the memories, but not assume they will be repeated in kind.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5: 16-18 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, 1992), pp. 26-27.