

Acorns from Heaven?

Normally my yard does not crunch when I walk in it. So I got curious in November when I started hearing a distinctive crunching sound everywhere I went. I discovered that the oaks in Florida were producing an abundant crop of acorns—up to four times the normal amount, in fact. Acorns were everywhere—covering sidewalks, driveways and parking lots, filling gutters, and rolling around inside the chassis of my car.

I promptly christened 2010 the Year of the Acorn and began investigating why the trees were dropping so many of the hard, brown seeds. Were squirrels sending a distress signal? Could we use the acorns for food? (I imagined acorn-encrusted tilapia and acorn frappuccinos.) Or was this a sign of global warming?

I couldn't ask Al Gore, so I turned to my local newspaper and discovered that not even forestry experts understood the nutty phenomenon. One manager of a tree service said it best: "It's a bumper year." I recognized a subtle ("*Ouch!* That acorn hit me!") sign from God in this freak of nature.

It's harvest time.

Many of us might find this hard to believe. We've been through a tough season. People have lost jobs. Churches have slashed budgets. Nerves are frayed. I know many folks who are hanging on by a thread. How can it be harvest time?

And yet if we look around there are signs of harvest everywhere. Many new churches are growing in the United States, even while lukewarm churches are dying. Response to the gospel is at an all-time high in places such as India and Iran.

On a more personal side, many people I know are weary. They've

sown and sown and sown, but in this time of economic uncertainty they feel stuck in a place of barrenness. Some have lost the strength to pray. Many have been tempted to quit.

I wrestled with that temptation last year, but the Lord brought me to the promise of Galatians 6:9: "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (NASB). I realized harvest is guaranteed as long as I don't give up.

While acorns were still falling in my yard I learned that oaks sometimes overproduce acorns as a survival mechanism in times of stress or drought. The trees are preaching to us. Seasons of adversity refine us. Difficult times lead to harvest times.

I've never known such a downpour of acorns in my 18 years in Orlando. I'm sure there's a biological cycle at work. But the spiritual message is obvious: "Be patient. The harvest will come."

Jesus is indeed Lord of the harvest. I can till the ground, sow seed and water crops but it is God who causes the growth (see 1 Cor. 3:6). I can't put deadlines on God or force Him to produce according to my schedule. But I can be assured that when I plant His Word, He will watch over it and cause it to produce His intended results.

Right after the acorns fell all over my yard I took a missions trip to a region of Guatemala I've visited six times. I've preached there, prayed for people, disciplined young leaders and sown God's Word in many ways. But something was different this time. I saw lots of fruit.

The Lord spoke to me during the trip: "You are not just spinning your wheels. The work may seem tedious, and you may encounter disappointment and delay for a season. But be certain that when you abide in Me, the words you speak and the work you do will always produce lasting fruit."

God has promised a harvest. As you walk through this year I pray you will find new strength to keep your hand on the plow.

Keep planting and watering. Keep loving those people who have rejected Christ. Keep praying for those who have wandered away from God. Don't give up on your church. Stay faithful and expect a bumper crop in 2011.

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