

Apart but Together Worship – Harvest Service
13th September
Growing Gratitude & Generosity

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to our Harvest worship service today.

In a traditional Harvest Service we would be bringing our thanks and praise to God for his provision, and bringing food to share with others in our community.

This morning we will be thinking about how we can express our thanks to God and how we might share and give to those around us – our family, friends, neighbours and those we don't yet know.

Invitation to Worship

As we gather today,
we gather around Jesus,
the Word become flesh,
who made his dwelling in our physical world.

As we gather, we bring our physical selves too,
not just thoughts, hopes and dreams,
but also our hands, our feet, our bodies –
bringing our whole beings;
symbols of our whole lives.

As we pause to be thankful
for all that God has provided,
may we respond in worship,
offering the whole of ourselves
as a sacrifice of praise,
and may our gratitude grow our generosity today.
Amen.

Prayer (based on Psalm 65 GNT)

Let us pray:

O God, it is right for us to praise you in Zion
and keep our promises to you,
2 because you answer prayers.
People everywhere will come to you
3 on account of their sins.
Our faults defeat us,
but you forgive them.
4 Happy are those whom you choose,
whom you bring to live in your sanctuary.
We shall be satisfied with the good things of your house,
the blessings of your sacred Temple.
5 You answer us by giving us victory,
and you do wonderful things to save us.
People all over the world
and across the distant seas trust in you.
6 You set the mountains in place by your strength,
showing your mighty power.
7 You calm the roar of the seas
and the noise of the waves;

you calm the uproar of the peoples.
 8 The whole world stands in awe
 of the great things that you have done.
 Your deeds bring shouts of joy
 from one end of the earth to the other.
 9 You show your care for the land by sending rain;
 you make it rich and fertile.
 You fill the streams with water;
 you provide the earth with crops.
 This is how you do it:
 10 you send abundant rain on the ploughed fields
 and soak them with water;
 you soften the soil with showers
 and cause the young plants to grow.
 11 What a rich harvest your goodness provides!
 Wherever you go there is plenty.
 12 The pastures are filled with flocks;
 the hillsides are full of joy.
 13 The fields are covered with sheep;
 the valleys are full of wheat.
 Everything shouts and sings for joy.

We say now together, the prayer taught to us by Jesus:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 Hallowed be thy name;
 Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;
 On earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread,
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 As we forgive those who trespass
 against us.
 And lead us not into temptation;
 But deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom,
 the power and the glory,
 For ever and ever.
 Amen.

HYMN : [We see the Fruitful Harvest](#) (based on We plough the seeds and scatter)

Reading: 2 Corinthians 9 vs 6 - 16

⁶ Remember that the person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop. ⁷ You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly. ⁸ And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. ⁹ As the scripture says,

"He gives generously to the needy;
 his kindness lasts forever."

¹⁰ And God, who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your

generosity. ¹¹ He will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for your gifts which they receive from us. ¹² For this service you perform not only meets the needs of God's people, but also produces an outpouring of gratitude to God. ¹³ And because of the proof which this service of yours brings, many will give glory to God for your loyalty to the gospel of Christ, which you profess, and for your generosity in sharing with them and everyone else. ¹⁴ And so with deep affection they will pray for you because of the extraordinary grace God has shown you. ¹⁵ Let us thank God for his priceless gift!

FOOD CHAIN

Look at these 5 pictures below. Can you put the pictures in the right order to show the journey of a loaf of bread? (if you look closely, you might recognise some of them)





Farmer



Shop
Worker



Baker

The correct order is:

- Farmer (sowing, caring, harvesting)
- Miller (grinding the wheat to make flour)
- Baker (combining with other ingredients, baking)
- Driver (transporting the loaf to a supermarket)
- Shop worker (selling you the loaf)

It is a complex web of relationships that needs to be in place to provide you with a loaf of bread.

Reflect

When we enjoy food, water and electricity, do we think about all the people who have worked hard to provide them?

Do we ever thank God for all the people who are involved in these tasks, and pray for them?

Spend a few moments now thanking God for all He provides.

Growing Gratitude and Generosity

Harvest is a time to stop and remember that everything we have is ultimately a gift from God. We might talk about "my food", or "my money" or "my house". But all the things we have received are reliant on a long chain of people, and when you trace that chain back it always begins with the gifts of God.

Farmers know this - they put work in by sowing and reaping, but there are other processes which they have no control over.

As Christians, we know these to be the provision of God. Paul uses this image of the farmer being provided for in our passage from 2 Corinthians 9. He writes:

"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness." (2 Cor. 9:10)

So what does this mean?

1) God is God of all of life

The first thing we can notice in this passage is how Paul is constantly mixing things we think of as "spiritual" with very ordinary, everyday things. In fact, at times it is difficult to know if Paul is talking about physical seed and bread, or if he is using seeds and bread as metaphors for the work of God in us. That is probably because Paul didn't think with the same attitude that we have towards so-called "secular" and "sacred" things. For Paul, every aspect of life was sacred, made by God. All of life speaks to us about God, is an opportunity to be blessed by God, and is a chance for us to serve God.

We see this also in Deuteronomy. Moses tells the people that when they obey God they will be blessed in every aspect of life:

"You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock – the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you... The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. The Lord will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in obedience to him." (Deut. 28:3-9) "

Blessing is not just a feeling of inner peace, nor is it merely about financial gain. God is interested in the Israelites' baskets and their kneading troughs. He is interested in your computer, your filing cabinet, your hammer, your whisk, your paintbrush and your stethoscope. He blesses us in rural and urban places, in our homes and our workplaces. He is involved in our conflicts and our struggles. He wants us to be holy and obedient to him in every aspect of our lives. Harvest is a good time to be reminded that our God is the God of the whole of our lives.

Grounded in gratitude

When we begin to realise this, the result ought to be gratitude towards God. Paul ends this section of 2 Corinthians 9 with a shout of praise:

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15)

God's giving to us is literally "indescribable"; so lavish, so complete. When we consider how God not only provides for our physical needs, but even went as far as sending the gift of his only Son to save us by his grace - this is truly a reason for heartfelt thanks!

It is easy to forget to be grateful. Stopping to count our blessings and to express thanks to God is one of those heart-habits which we need to return to. Studies have shown that

gratitude has benefits for our emotional and physical health, for our relationships and even helps people sleep better!

But, more importantly, being thankful puts God back in his rightful place as the source of all life and the centre of our lives.

At this time of Harvest, we give thanks to God for all our provision – physically and spiritually.

Gratitude grows generosity

This also leads us to our third point - that gratitude grows generosity. The most obvious theme of this passage from 2 Corinthians is the financial gift that Paul was encouraging these Gentile Christians to give to the struggling Jewish believers in Jerusalem. But we can misunderstand what Paul is saying if we begin with the question of giving. We can look at the subject of giving as if it was a business transaction. If I give this much, how much will I get back? What is in it for me?

If I feed my money into God's slot machine, how much will he pay out?

It is possible to take Paul's words about sowing and reaping out of context to make us think that Christian giving works in this way. But to do that would be dangerously missing the point. Christian giving has to be based on our two previous points:

- 1) God is the God over all of life, and
- 2) he has been abundantly generous towards us.

When these two things move from our heads to our hearts, it can inspire free, abundant and grateful giving. It becomes the overflow of thankful hearts that simply want to get involved in the lavish generosity of God. When we give from this motive, Paul describes three results:

Firstly, as we open our hands to give, we create space for God to continue to provide for us. Paul writes:

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion."
(2 Cor. 9:11)

Notice that: enriched in every way. Not just receiving money but the abundant and enriching flow of God's generosity, the blessings of contentment, kindness and - yes - continued provision. This passage does say that as we give we will receive; that is one result of entering into God's generosity. But the fruit of our giving has two other results - see in this verse: "

"This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God." (2 Cor. 9:12)

The second result of giving, says Paul, is that other people's needs are met. There is no doubt that right now, today, people across our community and our world have needs which may only be met when we join with our generous God in giving from what we've received.

But thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, we discover that this giving is not just for our benefit or for meeting other's needs: it is an act of worship to God. Giving to others is itself an expression of thanks and praise. Paul goes on to say:

"Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ." (2 Cor. 9:13)

Giving can communicate the very heart of the gospel. When you give motivated by gratitude for God's generosity, other people will catch a glimpse of what the gospel means to you and it will lead them to praise God for themselves.

How about this year, as we are unable to gather our Harvest gifts at the front of church to share with the community, we commit to sharing with our friends, or family, or a neighbour, or even a stranger. Could you provide (adhering to social distancing guidelines) a meal, or bake something. Could you give your time and share a tea or coffee in the garden, do some shopping for someone who might appreciate the help, cut someone's grass or weed their border. Could your act of giving be a prayer? This is a way we, as God's people, can give thanks to God for his generosity to us and can demonstrate to others his love and care.

I pray we will be a people recognising God is the God of all life, a people grounded in gratitude and a people growing in generosity. Amen

HYMN: [Great is thy faithfulness](#)

Communion

We share together in the Lords' supper. Please click the link below to watch. If you want to partake in communion, please have bread and wine/juice ready for the appropriate moment.

[Click here for Communion](#)

Intercessory Prayer

Let's pray :

Almighty and everlasting God, creator of all that is seen and unseen, of all we can understand and all that is yet to be revealed. You have placed us in a universe with breathtaking splendour and with an ability to constantly surprise and amaze us; and so hear us as we humbly come before you to seek your help and guidance in our lives.

We come to you in simple trust and, as Jesus taught us, in the certain knowledge that you are our heavenly father and will listen to the prayers of us, your children.

At this special thanksgiving time of the year we pray for all who work so that we have food to eat and share. We remember the farmers, both in this country and overseas, who work with animals and crops often overcoming the extremes of weather, insect pests to get their produce to the marketplace. Also, the fishermen, whether in the North Sea or in the Pacific Ocean who fight wind and waves to land their catch safely. We must also in our prayers remember those in the transport, distribution and the retail sectors, for without them our shop and supermarket shelves would be empty.

Lord bless all who labour to satisfy our needs and we pray that all trade between peoples may be done openly and fairly and with due regard for the environment and for human dignity.

We pray for all families represented here today. Each one is made up differently and faces the normal ups and downs of family life in different ways. We pray that each family finds a place in it for the love of Jesus Christ and that special peace which it brings.

We pray especially for families known to us who are coping with illness, poverty, worry or tragedy. Show us where we can lend a sympathetic ear, speak a word of comfort or offer practical help and so show your love in action.

We take a moment to remember to you those of our congregation we wish to bring before you...

And finally, as you so freely gave of yourself, help us to use our God-given gifts freely in the service of others and to do so with joy in our hearts

We ask this in Jesus name, Amen

Closing Hymn

Our final hymn O What a Saviour, is a new hymn written by a group in Scotland, and reminds us that God does indeed provide all we require and fulfil all our needs.

HYMN : [O What a Saviour](#) (New Scottish Hymns)

Closing Prayer

If you have received a Pilots activity bag, or our latest Newsletter you should have also received an envelope marked "Do not open until the 13th September" (if you haven't received one, let us know and I will ensure you get one!)

Very carefully, open the envelope and slowly tip the contents onto your hand.

Do you know what these are?

INSERT PIC

These are poppy seeds, one of the smallest seeds, common in hedgerows, gardens and meadows all over the UK.

I suggest sowing these seeds in your garden, at the park, down the Transpennine etc – just scatter them over the earth or grass. As we have heard God will provide the heat of the sun, the rain and it may result in beautiful flowers all over Hornsea.

Perhaps, sow them with this prayer as we end our worship this morning :

God, we hold these seeds in our hand.
We see smallness, weakness, insignificance.
You see potential, growth, significance.
Tiny seeds grow by your power into huge trees. They provide food for the hungry and
homes for the birds.
Tiny seeds grow into crops and from the darkness of the earth springs forth your life,
your harvest.
Tiny seeds grow into beautiful flowers.

Your Kingdom is like a tiny seed.
When we look at your church, and our own lives,
we see smallness, weakness, insignificance.
You see potential, growth, significance.
Give us eyes of faith and willing hands to see your Kingdom grow in us.
May we feed the hungry with food and the bread of life,
welcome the homeless into your family,
and gather the harvest your love has provided.
In Christ's name
and the power of the Spirit we commit our lives to you again.
Amen.