

11th October 2020 – Morning Service

Harvest Celebration

Rev Helen Croft

Introduction

In the days before supermarkets, when people grew all their own foods, a good harvest meant that they were not going to starve during winter. They had all the food they needed to feed their families until more crops grew in the spring. A plentiful harvest, safely gathered in, was definitely a good excuse for a party. These days, we still celebrate harvest to give thanks for all the good things we have, and to remember those who do not have enough.

StF 123 – Come you thankful people come

- 1) Come, you thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest-home!
Fruit and crops are gathered in,
Safe before the storms begin;
God, our maker, will provide
For our needs to be supplied;
Come, with all his people, come,
Raise the song of harvest home!
- 2) All the world is God's own field,
Harvests for his praise to yield;
Wheat and weeds together sown,
Here for joy or sorrow grown;
First the blade, and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear;
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.
- 3) For the Lord our God shall come,
And shall bring his harvest home;
He himself on that great day,
Worthless things shall take away.
Give his angels charge at last
In the fire the weeds to cast,
But the fruitful ears to store
In his care for evermore.
- 4) Even so, Lord, quickly come;
Bring your final harvest home;
Gather all your people in
Free from sorrow, free from sin,
There together purified,
Ever thankful at your side -
Come, with all your angels come,
Bring that glorious harvest home!

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Prayer of thanksgiving and confession

Creator God, thank you for the fruits of the earth:

For the seeds, for the roots, for the greens, for the fruit and for the grain.

Generous Lord, thank you for the abundance of your gifts; thank you for the human hands which help them grow; thank you for the skill which makes them into good things to eat.

May we remember the hungry, may we share this goodness with all and may we be truly thankful. Amen

Claire Benton-Evans

Our Lord God requires us to act justly, love mercy and humbly walk with him.

We confess that we have failed to live up to our calling: Lord, forgive and renew us.

For pursuing personal comforts while turning a blind eye to the destruction of your creation in the name of profit and progress: Lord, forgive us and renew our conscience

For protecting our own interests while closing our ears to the cry of the helpless and vulnerable:

Lord, forgive us and renew our compassion

For stockpiling possessions and wealth while ignoring the plight of the destitute and disadvantaged:

Lord forgive us and renew our compassion

For concentrating on our own concerns while holding at arm's length your call to uphold justice and peace:
Lord, forgive us and renew our commitment.

For claiming allegiance to your kingdom while failing to uphold its standards: Lord forgive us, and renew our courage and zeal to fulfil what you require of us, as we follow the example of our Saviour Christ. Amen

Like or need?

I don't know if you've noticed, but shops are very good at telling us what we must have, what is 'essential'. But what is it, that we really need and what is it, that we like... take a moment to ponder... What sort of things do you like? What sort of things do we need? Do some of our likes become needs?

StF 121 – Autumn days

- 1) Autumn days when the grass is jewelled,
And the silk inside a chestnut shell,
Jet planes meeting in the air to get refuelled,
All these things I love so well,
 - 2) Clouds that look like familiar faces,
And a winter's moon with frosted rings,
Smell of bacon as I fasten up my laces,
And the song the milkman sings.
 - 3) Whipped-up spray that is rainbow-scattered,
And a swallow curving in the sky,
Shoes so comfy though they're worn-out and
they're battered,
And the taste of apple-pie.
 - 4) Scent of gardens when the rain's been falling,
And a minnow darting down a stream,
Picked-up engine that's been stuttering and
stalling,
And a win for my home team.
- Ch) So I mustn't forget,
No, I mustn't forget
To say a great big thank-you,
I mustn't forget.*

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Reading: Luke 12:22-30

Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: they do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you – you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.'

Reflection

'Don't worry' said Jesus. 'Your Father knows what you need'. He reminds us that God has already give us an abundance of good things to use and enjoy.

God has gave us five senses to help us focus on things which nature provides to meet our needs:

Seeing – we can see the different types of weather (rain, sunshine) rainbows, flowers, trees

Touching – Cotton wool, wood, soil, water

Tasting – Fruit, chocolate, fresh bread, salt and pepper

Smelling – roses and other fragrant flowers, mint, cinnamon sticks

Hearing – birdsong, running water, while song, waves

All these good things are wonderful to have and appreciate, but that's not all. These gifts require a response from us – and perhaps now in these pandemic times it's even more important. Luke is helping us to remember how precious life is, and how when we turn our focus towards God, and place our trust in Him, then he will provide for our needs, whatever they may be.

Now that doesn't mean that if we ask for the numbers for the lottery next week, we are going to get them, or for that shiny new car that we have seen at the garage, as these are luxuries which we don't really need, but when we focus on God, and ask him to help us with our real needs, then we can trust that He will in due season provide what we ask for.

We have a God who provides for us in all of our life, if only we look to him as our guide and help, as we walk our road, or journey of life.

Jesus encourages us to remember this when he tells us to **STOP WORRYING** – in other words, trust in God, because he knows what we need. This is really difficult, especially when times are hard and in these days of Covid-19, but Jesus is right: worrying does not gain us anything – not an extra penny, nor a single extra hour of life. All worrying does is rob us of the enjoyment of what we have. Having lived the past five years in a rural Circuit, I have seen the importance of a good harvest to the farmers livelihood and how that'll impact what we can buy from our shops. Jesus is saying these words to farmers and fishermen who scraped a living from making things others might buy. They weren't like the rich fool earlier in the chapter who had an abundance. It was easy for them to worry if they didn't have a good harvest or a good catch of fish.

Jesus tells them that they are much more valuable than the birds and if God cares and provides for them, how much more does he care for you and me. So, don't make life about possessions but appreciate all the wonderful things God has given us in creation, and as we do, we might start to trust and realise that God is unbelievably generous and will provide for us.

So, as well as not worrying because our God is Jehovah Jireh and will provide, let us also **SHARE**. All these good gifts are not ours to keep and hoard, but to share with those who have less than us. That is why during this season, we encourage food to be given which can be shared with those less fortunate than ourselves in our communities. This is one of the ways which God provides for people's needs – not by making things out of thin air, but by using us as his hands and feet, to take the natural resources we have been given and share them out

And finally, let us **GIVE THANKS** to God for what he has given us. Give thanks before we eat, when we share and whenever we can, we need to remember that all good things come from God.

So let us:

Stop Worrying

Share

Give thanks - to Jehovah Jireh – the God who provides and loves us.

StF 130 – We plough the fields and scatter

- 1) We plough the fields, and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand;
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain:
- 2) He only is the maker
Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey him,
By him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, his children,
He gives our daily bread:
- Ch) *All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
For all his love.*
- 3) We thank thee then, O Father,
For all things bright and good:
The seed-time and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
For all your love imparts,
And, what you most desire,
Our humble, thankful hearts:

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Prayers of Intercession

Loving Father, You care for the flowers that grow in fields and for the smallest creature. How much more do you care about the needs and sufferings of the world you have created. As we bring before you our concerns and prayers

L: Father in heaven R: **Hear us and answer us**

Land for cultivation is overused or built on, the landscape is disfigured, those who work in it are in despair. Give strength to those who seek to live and work in harmony with their environment, and help us to be good stewards of your creation.

L: Father in heaven R: **Hear us and answer us**

Offices and factories are filled with stress, unhealthy competition sets colleagues against each other, fear of unemployment overshadows many at all levels. Give courage to those who strive to maintain the standards of God's kingdom in their workplace, and help us to act justly and honestly in all our dealings.

L: Father in heaven R: **Hear us and answer us**

Large organisations make financial decisions with little care for others. Small business struggle to survive. Compassion is swamped by a competitive spirit. Give wisdom to those who bear responsibility for major decisions, and help us to put the interests of others above our own.

L: Father in heaven R: **Hear us and answer us**

Materialism dominates the thinking society, people stockpile money and possessions. The gap between rich and poor grows ever wider. Give hope to those who feel discouraged and helpless, and help us not to give in to the temptation to look after our own interests but to give priority to the needs of the poor and vulnerable

L: Father in heaven R: **Hear us and answer us**

Make us willing servants and help us to show your love and care, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 126 – Praise God for the harvest

- 1) Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field,
Praise God for the people who gather their
yield,
The long hours of labour, the skills of a team,
The patience of science, the power of machine.
- 2) Praise God for the harvest that's sent from afar,
From market and harbour, the sea and the
shore;
Foods packed and transported, and gathered
and grown
By God-given neighbours, unseen and
unknown.
- 3) Praise God for the harvest that's quarried and
mined,
Then sifted, and smelted, or shaped and
refined:
For oil and for iron, for copper and coal,
Praise God, who in love has provided them all.
- 4) Praise God for the harvest of science and skill,
The urge to discover, create and fulfil;
For dreams and inventions that promise to
gain
A future more hopeful, a world more
humane.
- 5) Praise God for the harvest of mercy and love,
For leaders and peoples who struggle and
serve
For patience and kindness, that all may be
led,
To freedom and justice, and all may be fed.

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Closing Prayer

In our waking and sleeping, Father, protect us.
In our working and resting, Jesus, encourage us.
In our coming and going, Spirit, direct us.
In our daily living and lifelong pilgrimage, God the Trinity, guard, guide and watch over us, now and always.
Amen

*Adapted from The Bumper Book of Resources:
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