

HARVEST (P4P Sept 2020)

With faith and hope we bring our prayers to God; we enter his presence with joy. May we cherish these times: Precious moments with God to pour out our hearts and listen for his reply. With joy and praise we bring our prayers to God; We enter his presence with faith. Amen

The modern British tradition of celebrating Harvest Festival in churches only began in 1843, when the Reverend Robert Hawker invited parishioners to a special thanksgiving service at his church at Morwenstow in Cornwall. His original idea of a thanksgiving service for harvest has developed and become the annual celebration that we look forward to and enjoy. Unfortunately this year are celebrations will be somewhat different/muted due to the limitations imposed by the covid-19 pandemic. However, we will still celebrate this season of Harvest Festival for it is great time to thank God for his infinite bounty and goodness and for his wonderful Creation.

***'As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.'* (Gen 8:22)** It has been a strange year, a difficult year for most of us and at present it looks as if we will still have to live with restrictions in our lives for a while longer.

Those comforting words from Genesis remind us that God's wonderful creation still endures, that the seasons still turn and that He will still provide for us. So let us give thanks to God for this year's Harvest – from land and sea and for all that He has provided – not just here in this country but across the world. We rely on successful harvests in other countries too to help feed us and sustain us.

'Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices, whose wondrous things hath done and in whom his world rejoices. Amen.

We thank God for those who, throughout the difficult 3 months of Lockdown earlier this year, continued to grow, produce, prepare the goods and food we needed: for those who continued to work in the shops and stores that remained open so that we could purchase the food: for the many people who donated to Food Banks, and who continue to do so, to ensure that those in need could get the food they required: for the good neighbours, friends, delivery personnel and strangers who collected the shopping, delivered the food and provided an important point of contact to those who were alone or isolating. We earnestly pray too for those countries where the Harvest has failed due to drought, locusts hordes, civil war, political uncertainties, global warming. Harvest failure leads to famine and malnutrition and great, great hardship for many who have no other resources. As a country we are very fortunate.

Lord God, we offer you our thanks at this harvest time, for the many ways in which you have provided for us. Father, for all you have given and continue to give, we offer our thanks and praise. May we never take your gifts for granted, but always share the gifts of our

harvest with those have so little. May we help our neighbours at harvest time and at all times. Amen (MU)

But Harvest is very much tied up with our stewardship of God's creation which He entrusted to us. Climate change greatly affects Harvest – e.g. the unseasonable and often destructive weather patterns due to global warming that is affecting the natural world. **We** are changing the pattern of 'seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter' through **our** neglect of God's creation. Some of our Harvests can be very destructive and damage God's wonderful creation. Think about the excessive 'harvesting' of the seas by large industrial fishing fleets that use drag nets across the seabed destroying the habitat of many fish and sea dwelling creatures which often get caught in the nets but have no commercial value. Over fishing is depleting fish stocks.

Think about the 'Harvesting' of swathes of forests by logging or burning, legally or illegally. The ground being cleared for agriculture but the crops that are often grown are not for local consumption but for vast plantations of Palm Oil trees to meet the demand from a very commercial world. In doing so the habitats of many endangered animals and birds are destroyed as well the homes of indigenous tribes and communities. The pollution that is caused by the burning of forests is well known. It is worth finding time to look at the food and various other products in your own home that contain Palm oil. Think about our own country we are 'harvesting' our hedgerows and woodland to create large featureless areas for agriculture and proposed ranch like cattle stations where large number of cattle are kept in pens and not in the fields and pastures. We are losing the habitat for our own native flora and fauna.

Pray for God's guidance to show us a way forward so we can help meet the needs of a hungry world and yet sustain and continue our care for the natural world. ***Lord Jesus, We are so grateful that you show us the meaning of abundant living, where everyone eats and has enough, where a sharing community is the measure of success, where generosity of heart is true wealth. Open our hearts, Lord Jesus, never to be afraid of the power of those –who sometimes include us- who are greedy and abusive of the resources of your world and of others. For with your love in our hearts, all things are possible. Amen***

There are natural resources that we have learnt how to use and are still learning to use positively and without destroying God's creation. For example, we can now 'Harvest' the power of the wind by the use of Wind turbines or 'harvest' the power of the sun by the use of solar panels to produce electricity. We are becoming more aware of the amount of food that we waste and how our greed can affect others.

Creator God, for daily bread and all who work to bring your harvest home we bring our thanks today. Forgive our ingratitude we who have so much yet waste what you have given. For those whose harvest is poor, whose crops have withered, water tainted, children starve, help those who bring relief and bestow on us an unaccustomed generosity, that all might share from your garden and

all might sing your praise. Amen

Harvest is a great season for the Christian faith for there is so much meaning beyond the usual hymns and harvest rituals and celebrations. For God also looks to us, to our harvest - how fruitful are we in our faith and in our actions? There is an old Korean proverb that says. ***"If you plant a bean, then you will harvest only beans, not grapes or strawberries."*** *God gave us new life through Jesus Christ and planted special seeds of forgiveness and love in our hearts. What fruit will we bear in our daily lives?"*

A moment of quiet, a time to listen, a time to be still with God – what does he say to **you** this harvest time?

***Creator God, provider of all we bring our thanks today.
And we bless each other that the beauty of this world and the love
that created it might be expressed through our lives and be a blessing
to others now and always.***

Amen

The Grace.