

Rebuilding Hope and Confidence - Harvest

Introduction

Many of us remember harvests of the past when our churches were full of fruit and vegetables and the Harvest Sheaf stood proudly in front of the altar. Nowadays Harvest gifts come in tins and packets from the supermarket and are often hastily gathered just before the Harvest Service. Times have changed and our way of life has changed so our Harvest Thanksgivings reflect that. Prosperity is measured not by full larders but by bank balances and the harvest field is not on a farm but in a firm. Thanksgiving if done at all is for fame and finance not food.

Yet these things do not satisfy hunger as the gifts of harvests past did. The hungers of our world are for love, for friendship, for life to have a meaning. These hungers can only be met by cultivating not the fruits of the field but the Spirit – Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Gentleness, Generosity and Self Control.

*Lord Jesus, many people have full larders,
with bread enough and to spare,
and yet inwardly they are hungry
for the things of the Spirit.*

*You are the Bread of Life:
without you our hearts go hungry,
our lives are empty.*

*Help us constantly to feed on you by faith,
that we may know the abundant life
you came to bring us all,
for the glory of your name. Amen*

Hymn:

To thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise

Sung by Marlborough College Choir

To thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise

In hymns of adoration;

To thee bring sacrifice of praise

With shouts of exultation.

Bright robes of gold the fields adorn,

The hills with joy are ringing,

The valleys stand so thick with corn

That even they are singing.

And now, on this our festal day,

Thy bounteous hand confessing,

Upon thine altar, Lord, we lay

The first-fruits of thy blessing;

By thee the souls of men are fed

With gifts of grace supernal;

Thou who dost give us daily bread,

Give us the bread eternal.

We bear the burden of the day,

And often toil seems dreary;

But labour ends with sunset ray,

And rest is for the weary;

May we, the angel-reaping o'er,
Stand at the last accepted,
Christ's golden sheaves for evermore
To garner bright elected.

O blessed is that land of God,
Where saints abide for ever;
Where golden fields spread fair and broad,
Where flows the crystal river:
The strains of all its holy throng
With ours today are blending;
Thrice blessed is that harvest-song
Which never hath an ending.

Confession

God has blessed us, but still God's children go hungry
Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

God has blessed us, but still the poor cry out for justice
Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

God has blessed us, but still we see inequality and
oppression in the earth

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

Bible Reading: Matthew 9: 37

Then he said to his disciples,
“The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.”

Reflection

The Fruit of Silence is Prayer; it fulfils our deepest desires raises our silent cries to the Lord and is our salvation.

Psalms 86: 6-7

The Fruit of Prayer is Faith; for in it we find freedom and strength as children of God and we are made whole.

Galatians 3: 26, Matthew 9: 22

The Fruit of Faith is Love; for God loves those who love God and anyone who seeks God will surely be found

Proverbs 8: 17

The Fruit of Love is Service; freely giving of ourselves for others, not for self gratification or praise but to build up God's kingdom for the good of others *after William Blake*

The Fruit of Service is Peace; for you alone Lord, make us dwell in safety *Psalms 4: 8*

Hymn: Meekness and majesty

sung by St Martin's Voices

Meekness and majesty,
manhood and Deity,
in perfect harmony,
the Man who is God.
Lord of eternity
dwells in humanity,
kneels in humility
and washes our feet.

*O what a mystery,
meekness and majesty.
Bow down and worship
for this is your God,
this is your God.*

Father's pure radiance,
perfect in innocence,
yet learns obedience
to death on a cross.
Suffering to give us life,
conquering through sacrifice,
and as they crucify
prays: 'Father forgive.'
Refrain

Wisdom unsearchable,
God the invisible,
love indestructible
in frailty appears.
Lord of infinity,
stooping so tenderly,
lifts our humanity
to the heights of His throne.
Refrain

Graham Kendrick (born 1950)

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Prayer

Father, as we celebrate this season of thanksgiving, we give thanks for the blessings of food, provision and nourishment.

Please grow in us a harvest for the world.

Come, sow a seed of hope within our souls, Lord, that we might yield goodness, patience and kindness in abundance.

Come sow a seed of peace in our lives, Lord, that we might bear the fruits of forgiveness, compassion and righteousness.

Come sow a seed of love in our hearts, Lord, that others would reap blessings of family, friendship and community.

May each seed of hope, peace and love grow within us into a harvest that can be feasted on by all.
Amen.

Mary Sumner Prayer

All this day, O Lord,
let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
and every life I touch, do thou by thy Spirit quicken,
whether through the word I speak,
the prayer I breathe,
or the life I live.

Amen

Closing prayer

Eternal God, You crown the year with your goodness and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being: through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever, Amen.

Hymn: Now thank we all our God

sung by St Martin's Voices

Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things hath done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
hath blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Nun danket alle Gott Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)
Translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)

Thank you for joining in with Thursday Prayers.

Choral music: The Church of England St Martin in the Fields
Theme music: Catherine Hilton
Background: by Hello I'm Nik on Unsplash
Readers: Kirsty Screeeton, Denise Smith, Andrea
Walsh, Jenni Beaumont, Ian Butterworth,
Tricia Stokes

CCLI: 5097385

**Next Thursday Prayers will be on 11th November
with the theme of Remembrance.**