

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH SIGHTHILL 10th October 2021

HARVEST THANKSGIVING SERVICE
The land has yielded its harvest: Our God has
blessed us (Psalm 67:6)



CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it

All: Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice

HYMN: COME YE THANKFUL PEOPLE COME

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FqdCskCOQE>

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 Gods 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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OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Father in heaven, all good gifts come from you.
You send the sunshine and the rain, and it is through
your love and care that we enjoy the harvest time.

Thank you for providing so richly for our needs and
help us to share the good things we have with those
who have little or nothing. Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

Leader: Let us confess our forgetfulness of God, our
failure to give thanks and the ways in which we have
wasted the gifts of creation.

We confess to you our lack of care for the world you
have given us. Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy

Leader: We confess to you our selfishness in not sharing
the earth's bounty fairly. Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: We confess to you our failure to protect
resources for others. Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: May God show us his mercy, restore us in his
likeness and give us generous hearts and lives. We
celebrate the gift of cereal crops – wheat, barley,
oats and more. We celebrate the gift of our climate
and soil here in Scotland, helping us grow
vegetables and fruits in our fields and gardens. We
celebrate the daily gift of cows, goats and ewe's milk
from which we make our cheeses, butter, yoghurts,
ice-cream and more]

We celebrate seed for the future, gathered today so
we can eat tomorrow. We celebrate this gift of
potatoes – which we enjoy in different forms (chips,
tatties etc) together with fish, chicken, mince or
mushy peas. We also give thanks for farmers,
growers, packers and processors, for breeders,
stock people, shepherds and dairy farmers,

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: For all who cooperate and collaborate with God to bring food to our tables,

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: For distributors, hauliers, retailers and stallholders, for chefs, cooks and creative entrepreneurs,

All: Thanks be to God

leader: For our amazing world, the forests, mountains, the rivers, lochs, valleys, the Wild game and for the birds of the air which nest by the waters and sing among the branches. We say,

All: Thanks be to God, Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BIBLE READING: Deuteronomy 8: 7 - 18

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

BRIEF REFLECTION (Exeter Foodbank)

In our world of 24-hour supermarkets – with their shelves bursting with countless pre-packaged forms of wheat, barley and their gluten-free equivalents, with multiple varieties of Manuka honey and chilli-infused olive oil – it can be easy for us all to take food for granted. Harvest Festival is a great opportunity for us to recall and celebrate together the origins of these good gifts – to express our gratitude for the land and people who produce them, and to thank God from whom they all spring.

At Exeter Foodbank, a Christian charity which provides emergency food for local people in crisis, we also see the hidden hunger that exists in the midst of this modern 'land of plenty'. Every day, we meet people for whom the experience of wilderness (of food poverty and of destitution) and of slavery (to circumstances beyond their control) is both recent (or current) and raw. Yet amidst the frustrations of this work, there are also constant opportunities to recognise and appreciate afresh our dependence on God's provision. We are so grateful for the immense generosity of the local community, whose gifts of food, finance, time and prayer are a wonderful expression of God's care for those experiencing hard times.

This harvest, we invite you to the reflection below and join with us in prayer for all those experiencing food poverty in our community, and for those that help to address it.

"I came out of a hurtful break-up. I lost my driving license due to depression. I was a plasterer and a painter with a home and a family – then I was living in a car, I lost my car and was sleeping rough. I managed to get help with housing and am trying to rebuild my life and get some work. I have no income and am very low in mood. My health workers, the council and foodbank are helping me get out of this hole." Dave (Not his real name), EFB Client

"I never thought this could happen to me" is something we hear at Exeter Foodbank on a regular basis. At times, we can all tend to assume that foodbanks are for other people – for people 'not like us'. However, stories such as Dave's (above) are a sobering reminder that sometimes all our hard work and planning is simply not enough to get by. Debilitating illness, redundancy, relationship breakdown, bereavement, unexpected increases in living costs and much more can leave people vulnerable, in situations which are completely beyond their control. Others find themselves in predicaments which, with the benefit of hindsight, may have been partially preventable; in reality, many more people's situations are a very complex – indistinguishable - mixture of both.

At harvest, God warns us against trying to draw (often impossible) distinctions between self-inflicted and circumstantial poverty. Instead, he invites us to remember the true source of all our (fragile) wealth and our (transitory) ability to produce it – Himself. Moreover, in celebrating the source of all our material blessings, we are encouraged to give thanks for the ultimate gift they foreshadow: the rich, undeserved, unearned, extravagant grace offered freely to us all through Christ. Although identifying the causes of someone's crisis will shape the form – and duration – of

foodbank support we may give them, it should never curtail our desire to express God's generous heart.

Please pray that we will all develop a richer, deeper grasp of God's grace this harvest time, in the midst of a noisy world that can be quick to judge and slow to love. As we seek to act with wisdom and discernment in the messy reality of life, pray that our attitudes will remain rooted in thankfulness for all that we have freely received.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

In the richness of our faith, we lift our prayers of intercession to you our God, sowing the seeds of our compassion, care and love. Eternal Creator, on this Harvest Sunday, we pray for our world, created in peace and abundance. We marvel at its splendour and wonder, its resources and riches. Indeed, this creation is good. Yet there are many things not so good in our world.

There are people and animals lacking the food they need. Open the ears of those in power to hear the cries of the hungry and open their hearts to share from the abundance of their nations, including our own.

We lift up countries in conflict, praying for a harvest of peace. May your kingdom come on earth, and the seeds of your peace and justice be planted and grow in every land. We lift up our schools, the students and teachers, praying for a harvest of wisdom and opportunity. We lift up our hospitals, the nurses and doctors, praying for a harvest of care and healing of body and mind.

We lift up those who are sick at home, in homes or hospital and in need of prayer. We lift up this congregation, asking that you grow in us a harvest for the world. Sow more seeds of hope within our souls Lord, that we might yield goodness, patience and kindness in abundance. Sow seeds of peace in our lives Lord, that we might bear even more fruits of forgiveness, compassion and righteousness.

Come sow seeds of love in our hearts Lord, that others would reap the 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. We pray for victims of natural disasters in many parts of the world. We also bring to you those personally to us, in need of a prayer – we name them in silence - Grant them your peace and a harvest of your grace.

God, thank you for hearing our prayers, spoken and unspoken. Thank you for sharing your harvest with us, and empowering us to share it with others through our prayers of intercession. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOdc_sKBP8

1. Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices
Who wondrous things has done
In whom His world rejoices
Who from our mother's arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today
2. 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
3. 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

CCLI Song # 86638 Catherine Winkworth | Johann Crüger | Martin Rinkart © Words: Public Domain

BENEDICTION AND AMEN

May God the Father bless you,
who first sowed the seed of eternal life
in your hearts.

May God the Son bless you,
who nurtures you with the rain
and sunshine of love.

May God the Spirit bless you,
who brings all things to fruition;
and may the grace... Amen

SUGGESTION OF VIDEO AFTER THE SECOND/ LIVE SERVICE: IMELA (THANK YOU) VIDEO - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzU_jT7Y_JA