



Reflections & Prayers for Harvest Festival 4 October 2020



In our gospel reading today, Jesus tells his disciples that, like the successful farmer, we can choose day by day, what to value and what to give our hearts to. Either we choose the kingdom of God or we are distracted with looking after our wealth. David Nye reflects on this reading.

Contents

Readings for this Sunday	p. 2
Reflection	p. 2-4
Prayers	p. 4-5
Parish Prayers	p. 6-7

Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to look up in your bibles at home and read.

Deuteronomy 8. 7-18

2 Corinthians 9. 6-15

Luke 12.16-21

Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

Reflection from David

Today 4 October, is our Harvest Festival, the time when we give thanks for the harvest. Normally, we would come to church and bring our gifts, some of the produce that we had been growing and other items of food that we would offer to God and then later distribute it to our local foodbank and others in need. We can't do that at this service although you can bring your gifts to church this afternoon at 4pm for a short service. In my garden, I have been growing apples and potatoes and courgettes and tomatoes and some others as well. Perhaps you have been growing fruit and vegetables like these. But none

of this would grow without the sun and the rain and good soil – all the things that come from the natural world that God has given us to enjoy.

Over these last few weeks, we have celebrated Creationtide, when we have specifically thanked God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life, when we have reminded ourselves of our responsibility to protect the environment and prayed about the issues of ecology and climate change. Our harvest thanksgiving that comes at the end of this Creationtide season is all part of that. It is an opportunity to thank God for the harvest of farmers elsewhere, an opportunity to thank God for all that he has given us and an opportunity to respond to his abundant gifts to us.

Let's remember that our food comes from the sea as well as from the land and fishermen often encounter very dangerous conditions. We need to thank God for all those who bring our food to us; for farmers and fishermen, for those who process the food and those who deliver it to shops and to our homes.

Let's not forget that we are rarely really hungry and even during lockdown there was plenty of food to eat. Many in the world always wake up feeling hungry. We are not just lucky, we are greatly blessed in all we have.

That story we heard read to us was about a farmer who had more than enough of everything. He and his family could never eat it all. But he was selfish. He thought only of himself. He could only think of building bigger barns for all the produce he had grown. It never occurred to him that he might think about helping others who were struggling to make ends meet: he never thought to give anything to the local food bank. He never even thanked God for what he had. He was all right and no one else mattered.

And what about us? During these past few months of lockdown I'm sure that you like me, will have had many requests for donations to various charities, for those who are in need. Normal fundraising has pretty much dried up for all of them: they are in a desperate situation. Friends and family have asked us, and you, I expect, to sponsor them on bicycle rides and on walks and various other activities. I'm sure we have all done what we can to help the sick, the homeless, abandoned animals and the heart rending cries of the starving in faraway countries. Where we can, we have responded to these cries for help.

That's really great. That's what it means to love one another, to care for those in need, for those who are sick and suffering and homeless. But ask yourself, is that enough? People are often very generous in responding to appeals especially when there are disasters where thousands are made homeless by earthquake or landslide or forest fires. Excellent. But to truly love and care for our neighbour, as Jesus says we should, we ought to be generous in sharing what we have, all the time: not just when there is a national emergency. Regularly we should be giving some of the bounty we enjoy to those who are in need. Don't be like the farmer in the story who had no concern for others: let's be open hearted and generous in sharing with others.

St Paul tells us that giving and being generous is rather like sowing seed: if you're stingy then the harvest will be poor. If you're generous with the seed, then the harvest will be much better. Being generous will never make us materially better off: we won't win the lottery or suddenly find that our bank balance has increased: but we will have wealth of heart and of spirit. And that will be enduring.

Harvest Thanksgiving is a wonderful climax to this season of creationtide when we thank God for the whole of creation and for the gift of life. We can never ever thank God enough for the gifts he has showered on us. But it also reminds us of our responsibility to be generous to others every day. To be generous with our love, to be generous with our time, to be generous with our concern for others and to be generous towards God. Over the next few weeks, we will be considering how we ought to respond to God and how to acknowledge his huge generosity to us. We need to examine how we offer back to God part of some of our time, some of the gifts and skills we have and part of our riches. Especially at St Johns we need to consider how much we should be giving, so that so that we can continue to tell those around us about the good news of Jesus Christ.

Prayers

Heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty:
open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works;
that, rejoicing in your whole creation,
we may learn to serve you with gladness;

for the sake of him through whom all things were made,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Your Son has promised that the Spirit will lead us into all truth:
we pray for the community in which you have set us,
for one another and for ourselves,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace.

Amen

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

As our saviour taught us, so we pray

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.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican cycle of prayer:

Sunday	The Anglican Church of Tanzania
Monday	Peterborough (England); Christ the King (Southern Africa)
Tuesday	Phulbani (North India); Christchurch (Aotearoa NZ & Polynesia); Kolhapur (North India)
Wednesday	Pittsburgh (The Episcopal Church); Chubu (Japan)
Thursday	Polynesia (Aotearoa NZ & Polynesia); Clogher (Ireland; Cochin (South India)
Friday	Popondota (Papua New Guinea); Coimbatore (South India)
Saturday	Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea); Colombia (The Episcopal Church); Kollam –Kottarakkara (South India)

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Felmersham (Deanery of Sharnbrook)
Monday	Parish of Harrold (Deanery of Sharnbrook)
Tuesday	Parish of Keysoe (Deanery of Sharnbrook)
Wednesday	Parish of Knotting with Souldrop (Deanery of Sharnbrook)
Thursday	Parish of Melchbourne (Deanery of Sharnbrook)
Friday	Parish of Milton Ernest (Deanery of Sharnbrook)
Saturday	Parish of Oakley (Deanery of Sharnbrook)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Long Buftlers, Longfield Road
Monday	Magna Close, Maple Cottages
Tuesday	Meadow Walk, Meadway
Wednesday	Mons Close, Nairn Close
Thursday	Netherfield Road, Newton Close
Friday	Oak Way, Oakfield Road
Saturday	Oakhurst Avenue, Oakley Road

The Sick:

Berkeley, Emily, Amy Smart, Claire, Jo, Sue, Christine Strohm, Hermione, Karen, Sue Holt, Enid Giles, Jo Young, Shambu Mitra and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Barry Williams

On their year's mind:

Philip Emerson, Audrey Rolt, Herbert Burchell, Valarie Parkin, Anthony Whittaker, Henry Stroyan, Philippa Buller, Judith Hooper, Robin Lawrie.

[A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday