



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 6 OCTOBER 2024 - HARVEST**

COLLECT

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.

Psalm 126

- 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, ♦
then were we like those who dream.
- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter ♦
and our tongue with songs of joy.
- 3 Then said they among the nations, ♦
'The Lord has done great things for them.'
- 4 The Lord has indeed done great things for us, ♦
and therefore we rejoiced.
- 5 Restore again our fortunes, O Lord, ♦
as the river beds of the desert.
- 6 Those who sow in tears ♦
shall reap with songs of joy.
- 7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, ♦
will come back with shouts of joy,
bearing their sheaves with them.

A reading from the first letter to Timothy, chapter 6, verses 6-10

1 Timothy 6.6-10

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

For the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from Matthew, chapter 6, verses 25-33.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel. Everywhere except Fitz introduces it with an Acclamation (the blue bit), and then we all use the introduction and ending (the green bit):

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, Chapter 6, verses 25-33.

Glorify to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Matthew 6.25-33

Do Not Worry

‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

A Reflection from Hannah...

'Don't worry!' can be one of the most unhelpful (if well-meaning) things to hear when we are... well... worried. When we feel churned up, concerned, when all sorts of dismal scenarios are playing out in our heads, when we can think about nothing else, when we forget to eat because we are in such a state of stress, simply being told **not** to worry is meaningless. In some cases, woe betide the poor person who uttered it if we feel obliged to point out the folly of the phrase! We can't just switch off our worries, and yet, at first glance, that seems to be what Christ is telling us to do.

And as we come together as rural communities to give thanks for the harvest, it's very easy to worry. Whether on a grand scale, or very much locally, we know that the land is under stress and life is getting less predictable. On one level, it's quite fun to cycle through ten-metre stretches of standing water, with my legs in the air and shouting 'weee!' as I go, but that's not as it should be. We have local challenges with sodden ground that have affected the lambing season as well as the crop yield. Our churchyard in Leaton has been a heartbreak this past year because of chronic groundwater flooding. Then, on a global scale, huge swathes of the world have been either in flood or on fire. Too much water... too little. And we're asked not to worry?!

But Jesus is not just flinging a platitude in our direction. There is a context- he is talking about God's provision for us all and, ultimately, that means the difference between what we want, and what we need. This planet does indeed have all that is needed to sustain the level of life that currently resides upon it. The problem is that too many of us have forgotten the difference between what we want and what we need, so resources are not shared fairly. Do not worry, says Jesus, about food or clothing- God knows what we need. And what we need is not the same as what we want- a point that Paul's letter to Timothy also makes when he writes about those who are trapped by senseless and harmful desires, who love money more than anything and who simply want more and more.

Harvest is a time to recalibrate our priorities, and recognise that we all struggle with that difference between want and need. We're all part of that murky confusion that leads to decisions that adversely affect others and the environment. Indeed, Jesus' instruction not to worry is about that very distinction. What we need, God will provide. What we *want*... well, that's of no interest! His encouragement is for us to seek God in all things and before all things, and then the emptiness of self-seeking, consumer agendas will become obvious.

So our first move, as we gather in gratitude for the abundance that we enjoy, and pray for the (agricultural) year ahead? To strive first for the Kingdom of God- to put the life of love which flows from the heart of God first, and then to see where that leads. Do not worry!