

Today is Harvest Sunday. We celebrate God's goodness, His faithfulness in caring and providing for our physical needs. Above all, we celebrate God's abundance. God does not do things in halves or quarters; nor does He do things in small portions. Pictures of the universe are proof of God's "abundance"!

Let's start with a question: What makes the harvest special? Its not a rhetorical question, I am looking for answers, please!

Some of the answers given by the congregation included: sunshine, rain, soil, hard work. One lady, Irene, hit the nail on the head - SEED, she said.

That's what makes the harvest special - SEED! Without seed there would be no harvest. It may sound like common sense, but it was God who told Noah, after he disembarked from the ark and offered a thanksgiving offering to God, He said, ***"As long as the earth endures (as long as there is this earth), seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will NEVER cease."*** (words emphasised, mine)

I have some seed here with me in four bowls and as the bowl comes to you, take ONE seed and hand onto it. Some seeds are VERY small, the are not. Some, you may say, are not seeds, but I assure you, the seeds coming around to you are all seeds and all are edible.

I would like my miso bowls back please, otherwise Narola will never trust me, again

While the seeds are going around , please would you look at the front cover of your Order of Service. If you see a red dot on the top right corner, please would you stand. I know there are eight, but I don't know who the eight are.

Thank you all for standing up.

Now look inside, at the bottom of page 3 and you will see a white label stuck there, starting with numbers in red and followed by words.

I shall lead in a reflection and when the time comes for 1, 2, 3 and 4, I shall look at you in turn. Please stand and read in a loud voice, the Bible text (A) or the Prayer (B) written there. Thank you.

1. Hold the seed in the palm of the hand.

You have in your hand ONE seed. Place it in the open palm of your hand. Look at it. The ONE seed in your palm is special. Look at it carefully. Is there any sign that there is life IN the seed? You cannot see life in the seed, but you DO believe it contains life waiting to break out, don't you? The seed is precious and valuable. The seed is a gift from God, because all life come from God.

It is the way of God!

Now close your fingers over the seed in your palm. This is the seed hidden, as it would be in a bag or packet or envelope. You cannot see it, but it is there, waiting, ...waiting, ...waiting ... one day the seed will see the light; it will experience the warm embrace of the soil and be fed by rain. One day... one day ... in the meantime, the seed must wait ... wait... wait.

Have you ever thought: one seed has no price. No one buys ONE seed, but like the ONE seed in the palm of your hand, each of our lives is precious and special. God has given each of us a life that does not have a price, but to God, each life is so valuable, it cannot have a price, because there are not enough numbers in this world to put a price on your life.

- 1. A** Those who wept as they went out carrying the seed will come back singing as they bring in the harvest. (Psalm 126)
- 1. B** Forgive us, Lord, for taking the gift of life for granted and for not treating each other as your precious children.

2. Holding the seed between finger and thumb.

Now hold this seed between your finger and thumb. Some seeds are hidden and not visible at all; some seeds might be barely visible. You have different seeds; some are smaller than others, some look similar, but each seed is

different. Even the seeds which look similar, have small differences in size and shape, which we cannot see.

It is the way of God!

The seed between your fingers seems too tiny to be anything important or significant. Yet it contains a surprise waiting to happen. Like any surprise, we don't know what it holds, but like everything that has life, the seed in your hand is a lesson from God.

Like the seed in your hand, God has planned each of your lives to become something surprisingly more than you yet are, appear to be, or imagine to be!

2. A The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed... the smallest of seeds, but which, when it is grown, is the greatest of plants.

Matthew 13

2. B Forgive us, Lord, for not recognising the small beginnings of your work in us and for not believing in your surprising plans for our lives.

3. Holding the seed hidden in the closed fist

The seed is now hidden in the soil. It remains out of sight so it can grow in secret. The warm embrace of the soil, feeds the seed.

But, the miracle of the seed has not yet happened. The miracle of the seed begins when it dies to itself in the depth of the earth.

It is the way of God!

The seed must surrender itself to the soil where nourishment is plenty, and the nourishment is richer than the seed could have ever imagined. The nourishment in the soil changes the seed, and thus begins its journey of life, first to grow and be strong, and then to bear fruit, and finally be a blessing to those it does not know and has never met!

Like this seed, God invites us to be hid in Him. In the peace and quiet of our early relationship with Him, God changes and nourishes us in secret. No one knows the change taking place in us, but we remain surrendered to Him. God works deep in our lives and it is a miracle of God's love, that life emerges from death.

3. A Accept the word that God plants in your hearts, which is able to save you. James 1

3. B Forgive us, Lord, for not spending time with you and for tolerating those things in us that ought to be put to death.

4. Placing the seed on top of a book.

Now, take the Bible or Hymn book in front of you, place the seed on it and hold the Bible/book with both hands.

The seed does not grow in an instant. It needs time and it needs lots of care. The future of the seed is known only to the one who cares for it. No one else can make it grow faster or better, except the One in whose hands is the power of Life.

It is the way of God!

Like this seed, God's plans for us are for life, the whole of our lives, and beyond our lives on earth. God works His plan for us, through encouragement and direction found in His Word, through parents, family and friends who have gone through a similar process, and of course our life of worship together. But he won't rush what is so important and so very precious to Him. So, to be impatient with God, doesn't work with Him.

D. 1 Behold the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until the early and the late rain. James 5

D.2 Forgive us, Lord, for wanting things the quick and easy way and for hurting the very people whom you want to use to help us grow.

Now place the seed on a surface in front of you. Pause for a moment and now consider, what will become of this seed one day.

Perhaps you are coming up to a crossroad in life, wondering what's next. Should I do this, or do that? Some people say do this, other say, do that. My best friend says, don't do anything without telling me!

Perhaps you have personal difficulties and cannot see or experience God - where is He? Why does He not do something? Why does God not answer? Why does He not answer my prayer?

The harvest reminds us a very important truth about life.

Jesus said, "Unless a seed of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12

The truth of the Christian life is, after death, comes life. The world would have you believe it the other way, that after life is death. But the Truth is that after death, is life.

Now, please don't go out and bury yourself in the earth, telling everyone, "Kalyan told me to do this!" Your body won't be **taking** nutrients from the soil; in time your body will be giving nutrients to the soil!

You have life, because someone else died for you! Through His death, you have life! You have life, because God came to the earth as His Son surrendered His life for you. He died for you, so that you may have life!

All He says is, "Trust me. If you can trust the seed to produce a harvest and feed you, then trust me to work in you, and bring new life in you, that when you

have grown healthy and strong in your relationship with me, You will be a harvest of blessing to people you don't even know, or would ever know!

What makes the harvest so special? The miracle of the seed! Never say you don't believe in miracles; miracles happen every day, when the seed becomes food!

May God, who supplies seed to the sower and bread for your food, may this our God, supply and multiply your sowing, and increase the harvest of your kind deeds, every day.

2 Corinthians 9

AMEN