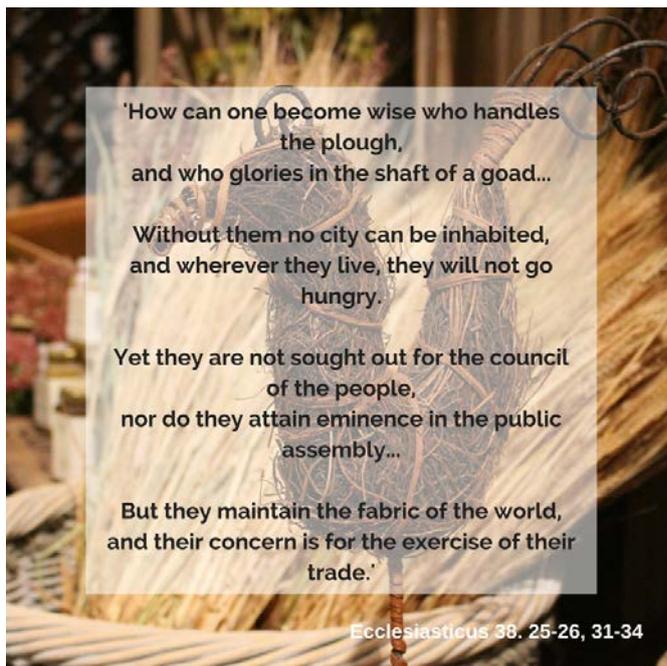


Reflection on Harvest – Chris Hodgkins, Rural Business Chaplain

I remember the first time I ever ploughed. It was a misty autumn morning in Surrey where I was at agricultural college. I remember the tractor, a Massey Ferguson 135 and the plough was a three furrow Ransomes. However, what sticks mostly in my mind is the smell of the freshly turned soil on that misty autumn morning in Surrey.

Some of the wisest people I have ever met are those who farm.

Those people who 'handle the plough and who glory in the shaft of a goad, who drive oxen and are occupied with their work and whose talk is about bulls.'



Farmers live with the earth and its seasons, they understand the affects that climate change has on the weather and the growing season. They understand genetics, they are part farmer, part vet, part scientist.

They understand the subtle change in an animal's behaviour that tells them there is something wrong.

As a former herdsman the plough is a mystery to me. I never could grasp the skill of looking behind me at what the plough was doing whilst driving in a straight line.

Ploughing, the breaking up and turning over of soil, is like the breaking open of our lives when we allow Jesus to enter in. The burying of the rubbish as the soil is turned over is like the washing away of our sins in the water of baptism.

The furrow may not always be straight but then neither is the path we walk on, how often do we look back causing a kink in the straight line of our life in Christ?

The soil provides the nutrients for growth, just like our reading of the bible and our life of prayer, but it has to be tended.

The tilth must be prepared, the hard, compact soil must be broken and the rocks and rubbish buried.

So the plough is not only important to us as a critical part of the food chain, but is an important metaphor for our Christian life or indeed life in general.

A well ploughed field will allow for a good crop.