

## 2 Oct 2022 Luke 12: 13-21 you can't take it with you.

I can get quite nostalgic about the ecclesiastical seasons of the year. Most people remember Christmas and Easter, but Annunciation? Trinity Sunday? Candlemas? Whitsun? And today we celebrate harvest.

In this morning's reading we hear about a man asking Jesus to sort out an inheritance problem for him. Not surprising, church leaders are known for their wisdom. It was not unusual to consult the priests about legal issues, and before the Israelites had a King, they had Judges. It would be reasonable to ask Jesus to sort out a dispute over inheritance. However, Jesus isn't interested in solving his legal / family quarrel. He sees quite clearly what all this is about.

His response is to tell a story about a super harvest.

Perhaps you're wondering what sort of harvest you can produce?

You might grow some vegetables at the allotment, but if your veg all comes from Waitrose, if you brought a tin of beans to donate, what is your harvest?

Our work has defended our country, tended the sick, audited accounts, managed companies, cultivated gardens, taught children, created works of art, ... so much more. We can dedicate that work to God and regard that work as our own harvest.

Then we should consider what we do with that rich harvest. Think about the man in Jesus' story. He plans to build new barns to store his wealth and then relax happily. It's all about what **he's** achieved and what **he** can do to make himself happy. A self-congratulatory story in which he is the star performer.

However, God has other plans and all his grand schemes are for nothing. He dies without enjoying a moment of his leisure.

Many of us are retired. What should we make of this?

The story is not a death sentence for us. Not necessarily. It's an invitation to think about the things we prize and where we put ourselves in the story of our harvest, our achievements and the things we have.

We all have a longing, a searching, in our souls for something more. It's so easy to focus that on getting more stuff, being more influential, wearing the latest fashions, getting more followers on Instagram, having more exotic holidays (and that's before we start on children's schooling!)

We silence that nagging little voice which asks us what on earth we think we're doing. We reassure ourselves: just get this done, and then we won't have to worry, everything will be under control. We'll have enough for the retirement, the holiday, the new house, the children's education, the future.

There's the problem. We think we can be in charge! The man in the story owned the fields and ploughed the fields and scattered. The soil, and rain and sunshine, and the seasons, allowed the seeds to grow and flourish.

God, the one who worked six days and rested on the seventh, the first worker in the world, created this soil and the seasons in which his crop ripened. God has the final word. And God takes care of the little birds and the flowers of the field.

What's more, there **is** some work that God put us here to do, whether we're farmers or something else.

Our everyday work, which is why Jesus' stories are all about daily life, working in the fields, looking after the livestock, cooking, cleaning, managing and caring for the workforce. Think of Ruth gleaning, all the stories about vineyards, the prodigal son in Luke 15, who ended up looking after the pigs, the shepherd in John 10, searching for his lost sheep. There are soldiers, fishermen, the centurion whose faith was so strong his servant was healed, the tax collectors, the women who swept their rooms, cooked with endless supplies of oil and flour, the managers, kings and slaves.

And our work for God? Jesus said ... in Matthew 9:36-8 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Have you heard the saying 'actions speak louder than words?' I used to think it came from the Bible and used it to justify trying to do the right thing without challenging myself to talk about my faith.

Some time ago I was a volunteer for a charity which buddies up with families with under 5s. In the training, it was made very clear to us that we must not talk about religion. With some regret on that point, I signed up and I visited a number of families over the years. One family had very tiny frail triplets. The mother had been very ill during the pregnancy and was rushed into hospital at risk of her life and those of the babies. Her husband, alone at home and fearing for her life, very clearly heard a voice telling him that she would be alright. And he knew straight away that it was true.

Back home, with her babies, the mother wanted so much to hear about my faith, but I had promised not to talk about it. My answers to her questions were insufficient and I'm sorry.

So let's celebrate our harvest, enjoy it and share it! Let's share the physical harvest of good things that we can thank God for every day, and let's share the wealth that comes with a love of God, and share that, in whatever way we can.

Here's the message, in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 <sup>17</sup> Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup> Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. <sup>19</sup> In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

**Fleur Pelly, 2 October 2022**