

Oct 18 2020 Harvest: Christ Church Woodley

Notices

Call to Worship

God cares for the earth and makes it fruitful. He crowns it with his good gifts.

HYMN StF 121 Autumn days <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiSLJwfHX14>

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Autumn days when the grass is jewelled,
and the silk inside a chestnut shell,
jet planes meeting in the air to get refuelled,
all these things I love so well,
<i>So I mustn't forget,
no, I mustn't forget
to say a great big thank-you,
I mustn't forget.</i></p> <p>2 Clouds that look like familiar faces,
and a winter's moon with frosted rings,
smell of bacon as I fasten up my laces,
and the song the milkman sings.</p> | <p>3 Whipped-up spray that is rainbow-scattered,
and a swallow curving in the sky,
shoes so comfy though they're worn-out
and they're battered,
and the taste of apple-pie.</p> <p>4 Scent of gardens when the rain's been falling,
and a minnow darting down a stream,
picked-up engine that's been stuttering and stalling,
and a win for my home team.</p> |
|---|---|

Estelle White (b.1925)

Prayers of Approach

For the promise of harvest
contained within a seed,
we thank you.
For the oak tree
within an acorn.
The bread
within a grain.
The apple
within a pip.
The mystery of nature,
gift wrapped
for us to sow,
we thank you.

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, honour and blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong;
no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

We praise You, Lord, for all Your creatures,
especially for Brother Sun,
who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
of You Most High, he bears your likeness.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

We praise You, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,
fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Water,
so useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise You, Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night.
He is beautiful, playful, robust, and strong.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Earth,
who sustains us
with her fruits, coloured flowers, and herbs.

We praise You, Lord, for those who pardon,
for love of You bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
by You Most High, they will be crowned.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in their sins!
Blessed are those that She finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.

We praise and bless You, Lord, and give You thanks,
and serve You in all humility.

The Canticle of the Creatures
--St. Francis of Assisi

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day 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 forever more. Amen.

JUNIOR CHURCH:

Children's Address: The Lilies of the Field https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVICHd6_Pi4

Junior Church introduction and prayer

HYMN Pears and Apples <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n42cDsPI-EThis>

1 Pears and apples, wheat and grapes,
Many textures, many shapes;
Falling leaves in golden drifts,
Thank you, God, for harvest gifts.

2 Flashing shoals of silver fish,
Every colour you could wish;
Fishing boats, for you and me
Reap the harvest of the sea.

3 Deep beneath the ocean floor
Fuel and power have lain in store,
Brought to us through dangerous toil;
Thank you, God, for gas and oil.

6 Loving Lord, we know you care;
May we all your goodness share;
Save us from all selfish greed,
Finding you in those in need.

Joseph Booth

Blessing

Readings

Ruth 2:1-9: Ruth Meets Boaz in the Grain Field

¹ Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favour."

Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."³ So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they answered.

⁵ Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?"

⁶ The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi."⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me."⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

Matthew 13:31-33: The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

³¹ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field."³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

³³ He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds^[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough."

Deuteronomy 8:1-10: Do Not Forget the LORD

¹ Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors.² Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

⁶ Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him.

⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills;⁸ a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey;⁹ a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

HYMN StF 122 God whose farm is all creation

- 1 God, whose farm is all creation,
take the gratitude we give ;
take the finest of our harvest,
crops we grow that all may live.
- 2 Take our ploughing, seeding, reaping,
hopes and fears of sun and rain,
all our thinking, planning, waiting,
ripened in this fruit and grain.
- 3 All our labour, all our watching,
all our calendar of care,
in these crops of your creation,
take, O God : they are our prayer.

Leslie Thomas and John Arlott (1914–1991)

Sermon

When I was a boy, I had a favourite programme on the television (at least, I did after we got a television) and this was Tomorrow's World. It was about inventions. In the 1960s, there was a constant stream of miraculous new developments that held us spellbound. The presenter, Raymond Baxter, told us of these and said, "in the future, there will be so many labour-saving devices that our main concern would be thinking of how to fill our leisure time". In my imagination, the future consisted mainly of water-skiing.

But has life turned out like this? My impression is that people have got busier and busier, and both work and leisure are characterized by intensity. We earn more than we did back then, but we expect to own more, and the cost of fundamental things – particularly of houses – has greatly increased. It was never easy to afford your first house, but now it's almost impossible. So the sense of being on a tread-mill to earn our livings and do what needs to be done, has actually increased, not died away as Raymond Baxter predicted.

T.S. Eliot says,

“And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads,
And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour
Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance,
But all dash to and for in motor cars,
Familiar with the roads and settled nowhere,
Nor does the family even move about together,
But every son would have his motor cycle,
And daughters ride away on casual pillions.”

Whilst bemoaning the present, its obsessive velocity, and the fragmentation of the social units of family and community that we grew up with, it's worth saying that the Coronavirus, dreadful as it is, has done us some favours. It has slowed us down. It has brought us more into contact with our neighbours. It has reinforced local community. The value in that is sometimes newly revealed; as T. S. Eliot says in another part of the passage I referred to, "there is no community not lived in praise of God".

The solid Christian gain made is remarkable, but is not the main thing I want to talk about today, on Harvest Festival. I'm not going to talk about another thing much either, one of our

habitual refrains on this Sunday of the year, which is the bounty of the harvest and the plenty of earth's production which – if you know this remarkable statistic – is sufficient for everyone in the world. The problem is that we are not able, and maybe not determined enough, to get it to where it is most needed.

These are important matters whose truth and value are not in doubt. But I want to talk to you about something different today. I want to talk to you about having time, and taking time, to harvest the beauty of nature to nourish our souls. In other words, I want to say, contra T. S. Eliot, “the virus has required us to slow down. Let us take that as a lesson, and work with it. It will make us better people and bring us closer to God”. In this project, let us start with a quote from W. H. Davies, known as the ‘supertramp’, who spent some years wandering and sleeping rough – and writing about the way he saw the world. These are his words:

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Do we have time to stand and stare? Or is idleness accompanied by a sort of mental vacancy, as when we watch the television even when we don't like the programme. That sort of idleness might make us feel guilty, but it's not what I am talking about. I am talking about having time, as a state of mind. Having time to talk to our neighbours and get to know them; on a bigger scale, having time to know and understand God's world, drinking in these things, so that they become part of us.

I suppose that this is the contrast between Martha and Mary¹. Martha was bustling round doing all the things that had to be done for her guests; Mary was sitting and listening to what Jesus said. Martha complained about Mary's idleness, but Jesus told her, “you care, and you are troubled about many things; but one thing alone is necessary. Mary has chosen that important thing, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Of course, a balance is required. Things need to be done, and discipline is required. But we should not let work overwhelm that balance. Even though we are Protestants, we should not let the Protestant Ethic dominate us. Worldly work is a duty which benefits both the individual and society as a whole, but our duty to God is more than that. Our duty to God involves us also in appreciating, understanding and protecting his world. In return, we have a harvest of beauty, and it is this that I want to stress on this Harvest Sunday.

I ask you now to close your eyes, and call to mind a natural scene which is important to you; I ask you to relish it, and give thanks for what it has meant to you and continues to mean to you. As God has blessed us with this glorious, beautiful and productive world, we bless him, and give him thanks.

¹ Luke 10:38ff

HYMN StF 99 All creatures of our God and King <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqJHw1FU-MY>

- 1 All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing,
alleluia, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,
and silver moon with softer gleam:
*O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*
- 2 O rushing wind that is so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
O rising morn, in praise rejoice,
and lights of evening, find a voice:
- 3 O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
sing 'Praise him, alleluia!'
O fire, so masterful and bright,
giving to all both warmth and light:
- 4 Dear mother earth, who day by day
unfolds rich blessings on our way,
O praise him, alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that bloom and grow,
let them his glory also show:
- 5 And all who are of tender heart
forgiving others, take your part,
sing, 'Praise him, alleluia!'
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God, and on him cast your care:
- 6 And now, most kind and gentle death,
waiting to hush our fading breath,
O praise him, alleluia!
You homeward lead the child of God,
and Christ the Lord the way has trod:
- 7 Let all things their creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness,
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One:

St Francis of Assisi
(1182–1226)

Dedication of harvest offerings

God of light and God of night,
Creator of seed and mountain,
raindrop and fountain,
We bring our offering of praise.
God of right and God of might,
Lover of child and childless,
rich and homeless,
We bring our offering of praise.

This food is brought for your poor and needy
As you commanded us, and to the glory of your name.

Prayers of thanksgiving, and for Intercession

We say with the Church throughout the world:

Almighty and gracious Father,
we give you thanks
for the fruits of the earth in their season
and for the labours of those who harvest them.
Make us, we pray,
faithful stewards of your great bounty,
for the provision of our necessities

and the relief of all who are in need,
to the glory of your Name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with
you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Lord, on this day particularly, we bring you our thanks, our heartfelt thanks for this world of yours; for the bounty of nature and for all that is produced from it by human labour. We celebrate before you the skill of the plantsman and grower, the care of those who tend and nurture animals that are bred for food, for wool and leather. We thank you for foresters, for fishers and for fowlers. We bless you for the sun and for the rain, which provide the basis for all life. We remember the farmers, both in this country and overseas, who work with animals and crops often overcoming the extremes of weather, disease and pests to get their produce to the marketplace; also the fishermen, whether in the seas of Britain or far away, who fight wind and waves to land their catch safely.

For us, harvest is not an immediate thing; we live in the town and we depend on others to bring food to us from near and far. So, in our prayers we remember those in the transport, distribution and the retail sectors, for without them our shop and supermarket shelves would be empty. And we remember those countries whether the harvest is scant and the future is bleak, and we pray that the richer countries take steps to meet their needs.

By your Word love was established,
In the beauty of each created thing,
That all might look to the mountains
And in their majesty find you.
In fertile fields and valleys,
Crops and flocks would be tended,
Vineyards planted,
Communities grown,
Laughter heard.

God of Peace, sow seeds of hope in barren lands

Most gracious God,
by whose knowledge the depths are broken up
and the clouds drop down the dew:
We yield thee hearty thanks and praise
for the return of seed time and harvest,
for the increase of the ground
and the gathering in of its fruits,
and for all other blessings of thy merciful providence
bestowed upon this nation and people.
And, we beseech thee,
give us a just sense of these great mercies,
such as may appear in our lives
by a humble, holy, and obedient
walking before thee all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost
be all glory and honour, world without end.

Amen.

HYMN StF 126 Praise God for the harvest

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4W8OAmlyYeo>

- 1 Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field,
praise God for the people who gather their yield,
the long hours of labour, the skills of a team,
the patience of science, the power of machine.
- 2 Praise God for the harvest that comes from afar,
from market and harbour, the sea and the shore :
foods packed and transported, and gathered and grown
by God-given neighbours, unseen and unknown.
- 3 Praise God for the harvest that's quarried and mined,
then sifted, and smelted, or shaped and refined :
for oil and for iron, for copper and coal,
praise God, who in love has provided them all.
- 4 Praise God for the harvest of science and skill,
the urge to discover, create and fulfil :
for dreams and inventions that promise to gain
a future more hopeful, a world more humane.
- 5 Praise God for the harvest of mercy and love
from leaders and peoples who struggle and serve
for patience and kindness, that all may be led
to freedom and justice, and all may be fed.

Brian Wren (b.1936)

Blessing

For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food,
For love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends,

All: We thank you, we thank you Lord

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

AMEN

CREDITS

The blessing, 'for each new morning', by Ralph Waldo Emerson

The thanksgivings, 'Most gracious God', and 'Almighty and gracious Father', from the Book of Common Prayer.

'What is this life', by W H Davies 'the Supertramp' 1871-1940

'And now you live dispersed' from Choruses from 'The Rock' by T.S. Eliot

CCLI Licence 482115