



Worship@home

Sunday 24th September

Harvest



A simple harvest service. This has deliberately been written so that, if you wish, you could share with grandchildren etc., for which you will need a bag of apples, bowl of olives and a bunch of grapes

Opening Prayer

Calm me, Lord, as you calmed the storm ;
still me, Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease ;
enfold me, Lord, in your peace.

David Adam (b. 1936)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith 624

Hymn StF 124: For the fruits of all creation

Sing/read/pray the words or listen to it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CRW9qC2pqU>

- 1 For the fruits of all creation,
thanks be to God ;
for the gifts to every nation,
thanks be to God ;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
thanks be to God.
- 2 In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done ;
in the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done ;
in our world-wide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

- 3 For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God ;
for the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God ;
for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

Opening Prayer

God of our going out and our coming home, we worship you today. For the times and places that have filled us with joy, we praise you. Where we have chosen the wrong path and caused pain to ourselves to you and to others, we ask your forgiveness. For the assurance that you will walk beside us to forgive us and restore us, we thank you. **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Luke 13:6-9

Reflection

Here is a story of a gardener coming to look for fruit (figs) on his fruit tree but there was none.

Nevertheless, the gardener gives the tree another chance. He is a hopeful gardener, doing his very best to make the tree produce fruit.

I wonder what you think this story from Jesus is about? Jesus' stories are usually about God and God's relationship to us in some way. Perhaps God is coming looking to see whether our lives have produced a good harvest but God is disappointed? Yet this gardener, and therefore God, in love gives us another chance. Before the Ground Force team is called in to dig us over, God waits a bit longer for the fruit to come!

Picture if you can three special gardens, which between them hold the clue how our lives can produce the fruit and the harvest that God is looking for.

The fruit of the first garden

Show the bag of apples and ask "I wonder what's your favourite variety of apple?"

There are so many to choose from nowadays – many from around the world. Some look tasty. Some look rather waxy! Some look as if they may be sweet but turn out rather sharp.

The second garden is very different. This garden produces olives. *Show the bowl of olives*

Olives aren't always popular although to be honest my grandchildren can devour them like smarties! Olives grow in gardens too and can be eaten. But they can also be crushed to make olive oil, which has many uses.

The third garden is very different again.

Show the bunch of grapes.

This garden produces grapes. It is a grape garden or vineyard, as it is more usually known.

Often thought of as being good for our health, grapes look good, 'moreish'.

They can be very sweet and tasty. Which is why we sometimes take grapes to people in hospital. Grapes help us get better. Here are grapes to cure. So here are the three gardens and their fruits. With: apples to choose; olives to crush; grapes to cure.

Taking this picture further we might visualise that these gardens all have one rather special gardener to look after them. In fact, all three gardens are in the Bible and God is the faithful gardener. The three gardens have a message for us at harvest time about how God is faithful and how God wants to help us produce a harvest of good things in our lives.

a. The Apple Garden is there right at the beginning of the Bible story. It is the garden of choice...The Garden of Eden. (I know that the Bible doesn't mention an apple, but it is often the image that's used, for the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) God in love allowed us to choose whether to love him and know him or not, and we chose not to. God never wanted to force love on us and so it meant we chose what was bad for us and for our world. Christians take the mess of the world with its failed harvests and unfair trade seriously and we own up to the truth and it is us who have caused it, not God.

b. But God is faithful and does not leave us in the mess. Here is the olive garden next. It is a real garden in place and time and one where once God, in the form of Jesus, knelt to pray. It's called the Garden of Gethsemane – an olive garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Here Jesus chose to be crushed like the olives in that garden; crushed on the cross in our place for all the mess we caused. Jesus took on himself all the bad that we had brought into the world so we can have the opportunity of a new start, a clean sheet, a fresh beginning.

c. Which leads us on to the last garden, the grape garden. This is the garden Jesus used to describe how we can be different. In this garden Jesus says he is the main trunk of the tree and if we choose to belong to him, we can start producing the good fruit of the Spirit which we can see in Jesus: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control and faithfulness. Jesus described this garden to his disciples on the night before he died (see John 15).

As we get linked up to Jesus and this grape garden – this vineyard – this is the way we can be different and produce a harvest of good things that can make us and the world the sort of place God intended it to be all along.

Now, the picture above is of the grapes grown on the vine of a small church in an impoverished town (poiana) in Romania, which is close to my heart. Run by my friends Alex and Heather they seek simply to serve the townsfolk with food, medication, clothing, footwear and whatever they need often at cost to themselves. Here are a couple who seek to live out the Gospel calling of the three gardens, mistakes made, the calling of Jesus and the healing/restoration of God.

Prayer:

Father God thank-you for these three gardens, which show us how you have been faithful and long to be faithful to each one of us. As we face up to our wrong choices and as we accept that Jesus was crushed in our place, help us to be linked up to you so that our lives will produce a bumper harvest.

A Prayer for others

Ever-present God, we prayer with all those who pray in the name of Jesus today:

We pray for your church that you grant us patience as we continue to work to bring about the blossoming of your Kingdom.

For those who are anxious about the future and despair over perceived failure of a human harvest.

For those who have given their whole lives to making you known in the lives of others, and for those who have received your message but as yet have not blossomed into being the people you wish them to be.

For those estranged from loved ones who feel they are unable to do anything to bring about reconciliation.

For those who wrestle in the night with trouble and distress of body, mind and soul.

We pray especially for *(if you feel able name them out loud)*

Holy God, thank you for this wonderful creation and the privilege you have given to us to be a part of it. Help us to always desire the best of this world and to avoid taking it for granted. Show our leaders and ourselves how to avoid global warming, how to not only preserve what we have but how to make it prosper.

Teach us and all humanity to learn to be more selfless, caring and sacrificial in the way we live our day to day lives with creating and with each other. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer. Our Father ...

Hymn StF 130: We plough the fields and scatter

Sing/read/pray the words or listen to it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TypbIJ737AI>

- 1 We plough the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand ;
he sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine,
and soft, refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above ;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

2 He only is the maker
of all things near and far ;
he paints the wayside flower,
he lights the evening star ;
the winds and waves obey him,
by him the birds are fed ;
much more to us, his children,
he gives our daily bread.

3 We thank you then, O Father,
for all things bright and good :
the seed-time and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
for all your love imparts,
and, what you most desire,
our humble, thankful hearts.

Matthias Claudius (1740–1815)

*translated by Jane Montgomery Campbell (1817–
1878) (alt.)*

A Prayer of Blessing

Power of God, be our protection;
wisdom of God, be our guide;
word of God, be our inspiration;
shield of God, be our defence;
hosts of God, be our deliverance;
Son of God be our salvation; now and always. **Amen**

Original materials written by Rev Mike Redshaw

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