

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 3rd October 2021

Trinity 18 Harvest Thanksgiving Festival

Welcome:

Opening hymn: Come ye faithful people come

1 Come, ye thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest-home:
all be safely gathered in,
ere the winter storms begin;
God, our maker, doth provide
for our wants to be supplied:
come to God's own temple, come;
raise the song of harvest-home.

2 All this world is God's own field,
fruit unto his praise to yield;
wheat and tares together sown,
unto joy or sorrow grown;
first the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear:
grant, O harvest Lord, that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

3 For the Lord our God shall come,
and shall take his harvest home;
from his field shall purge away
all that doth offend, that day;
give his angels charge at last
in the fire the tares to cast,
but the fruitful ears to store
in his garner evermore.

4 Then, thou church triumphant, come.
raise the song of harvest-home:
all be safely gathered in,
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there for ever purified
in God's garner to abide:
come, ten thousand angels, come,
raise the glorious harvest-home.

Henry Alford (1810-1871) and others CCLI Licence 2370586

Let us pray:

Before the sunlight, before the mountains, before birdsong, before breath, you, God, maker of all, were there! You are the architect of the universe, the keeper of all time, the poet of creation, the sower of every seed; and we, who inhabit this world of your making; we who thrive on the harvest of the earth; we, who have also been shaped by your hand and raised by your love; we fall silent at the wonder that surrounds us. We are all privileged children of a gracious God. Amen

Silence – as we reflect on all that God has given us

Prayers of Confession

Minister: If we have not wondered at the world; if we have barely glanced for a second at what took millions of years to evolve; if we have eaten food with more greed than gratitude; if we have erased your fingerprints with our footprints; if we have made nature mourn; then, Lord, register in heaven the regret we confess on earth.

Silence – as we recognise our misuse of creation

God has blessed us, but still God's children go hungry.
Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy**

God has blessed us, but still the poor cry out for justice.
Christ, have mercy, **Christ, have mercy**

God has blessed us, but still we see inequality and oppression in the earth.
Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy**

Absolution

In the beginning, God saw all that had been made and declared it good. And in Christ, to a weary world and to guilty people, God allowed for the recovery of our lost goodness by declaring, 'Behold, I make all things new.' So, may God forgive you and restore you, and so fill you with love for the earth that you yearn to care for all of creation. **Amen.**

The Harvest Collect

Let us pray: God our creator, from atom to planet, your universe is awesome. Give us eyes to notice the wonders around us every day, and the will to live in the harmony of your creating. Help us to own the connection of all things, even at the cost of our own wants and comforts; so we may live gently on earth, and all creation praise you. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 16.11-15

The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.'

Then Moses said to Aaron, 'Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, "Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining." ' And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 'I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God." ' '

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?*' For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.'

Gospel Reading: John 6.28-35

Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So, they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

Reflection

Are you a 'Great British Bake Off' fan? I think one of the most challenging weeks for the contestants is 'bread week', where they are asked to make all different sorts of bread; pitta, pizza, sweetbreads, structural bread... I hadn't realised the complexities of bread making. Also, as a part of the programme, we learn some history. Sue Perkins says: "Bread is at the heart of British life. For centuries the quest of ordinary men and women to get their daily bread has determined the structure and the layout of our towns and cities, it's dominated our economy and even driven our politics."

From the first small loaf, baked maybe by our stone age ancestors 10,000 years ago in the middle east... bread has brought change to our lives... first of all by allowing people to settle and build permanent homes.

Bread has also been at the heart of our celebrations. From at least Celtic times, people have celebrated the first loaf from the first wheat of the year. This tradition was adopted by the Saxon Christians and re-named 'loaf-mass'... or Lammas.

But with the beginnings of the industrial revolution, and the movement of people into towns and cities, this tradition began to die out until it was brought back again by a Reverend Robert Hawker from Morwenstow. He changed it to the end of the harvest – but still with a loaf of bread at its centre.

But bread also has a difficult history. It is tied up with politics, and poverty, and justice issues throughout its history. When windmills were invented and built, people had more time to work on the land because they no longer had to grind their own wheat daily – but they had to pay for the privilege and they became economically dependent on those who owned the windmills – and some ripped off the poor.

And bread today is still tied up with the stewardship of our earth. Palm oil is used to make bread because it is sold at room temperature and easy to bake with – and it is cheap. But we see the consequences with the burning of Amazon rain forests to clear the land for the growing of this crop.

Bread has history – and in its history we find our own story too.

Bread, therefore, features in the ministry and teaching of Jesus. In our reading today we see that Jesus is aware of the physical hunger which draws people to him in the hope of being fed. But he reminds them that spiritual hunger

can be just as important. We need not only to consider our physical life but also to take care of all that makes us human.

God is concerned with all of that – our physical and emotional and mental and spiritual needs and provides bread for us in all sorts of ways. Jesus reminds people of the manna that fell from heaven (not bread strictly but it looked and felt like bread) and how God provided for the daily needs of his people.

Let's take a moment to consider how God provides for us. Not just in putting food on the table and a roof over our heads, but in a person to talk to at just the right time, or a sunset which shows up when we need it, or something to help us laugh. How often, though, do we forget God's provision and all that we have?

Jesus' ministry also included times of showing God's abundance. The feeding of the crowd of more than 5000 people is a wonderful example of how abundant God can be. But the wonderful part of the miracle is not just the abundance but also where it came from, a small boy sharing his lunch of 2 fish and 5 loaves.

How do we share what we have and take a part in that miracle? What little do we have that can be shared – not just at harvest time but throughout the year. In the months to come, if we do face food shortages or price rises it will be the vulnerable who suffer most.

It is in the sharing of bread that we remember Jesus through celebrating Holy Communion. It was in the breaking of the bread that the disciples on the Emmaus road recognised Jesus (as told in the Gospel of Luke), and in the Gospel of John we read of Jesus preparing a BBQ on the beach of fish and bread for his disciples on the beach. In the breaking and in the sharing of bread we remember the love of Jesus and we find community together.

In bread we see the provision of God and today we give thanks for all we have.

In bread we see to the brokenness and the pain of our world, remembering injustices of the past and the present day and the carelessness with which we treat our world. But also, in the broken bread we find the risen Christ who comes with healing and hope – and who is our daily bread on whom we rely. Amen.

Hymn: For the beauty of the earth

1 For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:

*Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.*

2 For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light:

Lord of all...

3 For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild:

Lord of all...

4 For each perfect gift of thine
to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:

Lord of all...

Folliot Sandford Pierpoint (1835-1917) CCLI Licence 2370586

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in Creator God, the beginning and source of all life; of light and dark, stars, sky and sea, plants and all creatures.

We believe in Redeemer God, Jesus Christ, the Light to live by. Born of a woman, he grew in wisdom; storyteller, teacher, and healer, a friend of the outcast. He walked the hills of Galilee, sailed the lake with fishermen, lived the Way he taught. He was betrayed, rejected and crucified by the powerful, died and was buried. On the third day, he rose again and was seen by his friends for a time. His kingdom is present on earth.

We believe in Sustainer God, the Holy Spirit of wind and fire, who moves over the waters, awakening love and faith within us.

We believe in the mystery that is God. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Creator God, your world is wonderful, full of delight and difference. We pray today for all who care for the world and for those who work to bring us understanding. We pray for those places where life is demanding, for those living in hostile climates caused by nature or by human beings. In every place bring your hope and healing.

Come Holy Spirit of God.

Generous God, we pray today for all who work to bring us food and for all who speak out for those who have little food. We pray for those who will not have enough to eat today, and for all those who are working to bring help. In

every place bring your hope and healing, **Come Holy Spirit of God.**

Healing God, we pray today for all who endure pain in mind or body and for those who seek to help them. We pray for those working in hospitals and those in research, those who work in our community and those caring out of love. In every place bring your hope and healing, **Come Holy Spirit of God.**

Joyful God, we pray today for all who bring us delight and help us show praise and thanks in our daily lives. For our children and those we love, for those who entertain and those who create beauty in words and music, paint or clay, we pray that your creative life overflows with joy. In every place bring your hope and healing.

Come Holy Spirit of God.

Holy God, we pray today for the life of our church, for all who serve and all who lead. Help us to be people who share generously and speak boldly of your love. Give our leaders and teachers wisdom, and give each of us the courage we need to follow you and share in the ministry of the church. In every place, bring your hope and healing.

Come Holy Spirit of God.

Loving God, we pray for ourselves, knowing that you see each of us with eyes of love. Help us to love ourselves as you love us and to reflect your image into the world around us. In my life bring hope and healing.

Come Holy Spirit of God.

Gathering all these prayers together, we pray as our Saviour taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name;
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today, 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, Amen.**

Final Hymn: We plough the fields and scatter

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.

All good gifts around us

3 We thank thee then, O Father,
for all things bright and good,
the seed-time and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer
for all thy love imparts,
but that which thou desirest
our humble, thankful hearts.

All good gifts around us

*Matthias Claudius (1740-1815) tr Jane Montgomery Campbell (1817-1878)
Wir pflügen und wir streuen CCLI Licence 2370586*

Blessing

God the Father, who created the world, give you grace to be wise stewards of his creation.

God the Son, who redeemed the world, inspire you to go out as labourers into his harvest.

God the Holy Spirit, whose breath fills the whole of creation, help you to bear his fruits of love, joy and peace.

And the blessing of God Almighty, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you, this Harvest and always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

We will tread the earth lightly!
Our hearts changed by love
Working to transform the world

**Scattering God's blessing
The love of the Living God
Inspired by the Holy God.**