

Order of Service for Sunday 3 October 2021 Harvest Service

Welcome to our Harvest celebration service this morning, those of you here at Christ Church and those who are watching online. For those of you in church, do have a look around at the Harvest displays from the various groups and committees around the church

Gathering for worship

As we prepare ourselves to worship God we're going to do a simple prayer using our hands to ask God to be with each of us this morning.

We say the words 'God be with me' while we make a triangle out of our hands as a symbol of the Trinity. We say the words 'Christ be with me' as we stretch our arms out sideways as a symbol of the cross. We say the words 'Spirit be with me' as we make a flame shape with our hands

Call to Worship Psalm 65

You tend the land and water it

And the earth produces its abundance.

You crown each year with your bounty,

and our storehouses overflow with your goodness.

The mountain meadows are covered with flocks

and the valleys are filled with corn;

Your people celebrate your boundless grace

They shout for joy and sing.

Prayers of adoration

God of the harvest, You are love. Your legacy is love. Your Legacy is Jesus. You fill us with the good things of the earth. We come now, setting aside all distraction, to adore and thank you for being God of the harvest. We come into your Presence with joy, exhilaration, and anticipation, to come and see what the Lord has done. Amen.

Let's join together and sing our first hymn that reminds us that the true harvest of God is love.

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.*

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

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 that which you most welcome,
our humble, thankful hearts.

Matthias Claudius and Jane Campbell

It's now just 4 weeks to the start of the United Nations climate conference – also known as CoP26 – which takes place in Glasgow in November. We're counting down every Sunday using the clock on the pulpit so we can keep this vitally important conference in our thoughts and prayers. We'll pray for this later on in the service.

Prayer of thanks and confession

Loving God, great Creator, we come with gratitude and praise for all that is rich and wonderful in human life and with our bewilderment over all that spoils it. We come giving thanks for the earth's resources and with our prayers that the earth may not be desecrated by human carelessness and greed; and that the time may quickly come when all the children of the world will have all the food they need to grow up strong and healthy and to realise their infinite value as your daughters and sons.

Lord's Prayer

Offering and Prayer

And so we bring our gifts to God this morning. Donations of tools and money to support the work of Tools With A Mission and gifts of tinned and packaged food to support the work of the Storehouse, Hopeworx and HARP. If you've brought any gifts this morning and would like to bring them to the front then please come forward now.

Loving God, in your provision for our own needs, we thank you.
In your desire to provide for the needs of all, we honour you.
Let a full measure of provision flow, to meet the needs of all people.
Amen

Children's address

Jesus says the kingdom of God is like seeds. The seed grows night and day. Harvest is a wonderful time. A time when we come to church and reflect on the beauty of God's creation and say thank you to God for all the good things God has given us, like these apples for example. Do you like apples? When I cut this apple in half, we find pips, which are seeds.

These seeds remind me of a story about a man called John who liked apples so much, that wherever he went he would plant apple trees. Like this one here. Or, he would give away apple seeds, so people could plant their own trees and enjoy the apples as much as he did. Because, of how passionate John was about planting apple trees he became known as John Appleseed.

God wants each of us to be do the best we can to spread God's love to people that we meet wherever we go. That is not just about showing love but also about giving what we can to people who are in need. God is a generous giver, just look around you at God's creation. God holds nothing back, for giving is one of God's love languages. As we give, we show what God's heart is like to others.

John probably never got to see or taste the apples on all the trees that the people planted with his seeds, however, the trees and their apples remained long after him. They were his legacy. Legacy is like planting seeds in a garden that you never get to see. It's about how you touch people's lives. Have you thought how you will bless your family, your community, your world?

Mark 10: 17-28 *The Rich and the Kingdom of God*

Narrator: As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.

Man: "Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus: Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.’

Man: “Teacher all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Narrator: Jesus looked at him and loved him.

Jesus: “One thing you lack, Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

Narrator: At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,

Jesus: “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

Narrator: The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again,

Jesus: “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Narrator: The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said,

Jesus: “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Narrator: Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

Talk

Harvest is a time of plenty – a yearly reminder of the goodness and faithfulness of God, and echo of Jesus reminding us to look at the birds of the air who neither sow nor reap, yet the Holy One loves and feeds them. This is a full dress rehearsal for the coming kingdom with its economics of abundance, and not scarcity.

Our reading in Mark 10 sees a man approaching Jesus and making a very bold claim: basically, he says to Jesus, you know: I’m blameless. I’ve kept the law since I was a boy. In fact, his opening line to Jesus is: ‘Good teacher: what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

His greeting ‘good teacher’ is possibly an attempt to flatter Jesus and get an equivalent response: ‘Ah yes, well, you too are very good.’ This was the custom of the day, but Jesus does not fall for it. Jesus has a deeper message for him, and that is to tell him just how far away from the kingdom he is. ‘What must I do to inherit eternal life?’ asks the man. And Jesus’ answer is not actually straight forward: let’s look at it more closely:

‘You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.’ Did you spot the discrepancy? Yes, Jesus adds a commandment that is not actually in the original, and that is: you shall not defraud. ‘All these I have kept since I was a boy,’ replies the man. And he absolutely believes this.

So, Jesus has to reveal to the man the core problem: and that is his wealth. It is more difficult for a wealthy man to enter the kingdom than for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle.

In this encounter and also in dozens more throughout the gospels, Jesus casts a light on the fundamental injustices of the economic system that was destroying communities across the region. This system was based on debt, interest, hierarchy, inequality, and various forms of slavery. The economics of ‘this world,’ says Jesus, have no place in the kingdom of God. This worldly system pushes wealth to the top. To be wealthy in this system, means that you have automatically exploited the poor.

Many theologians have tried to tone down the radical nature of Jesus' attitude towards wealth. But this passage in Mark is really difficult to explain away. Jesus' meaning is clear: you cannot be wealthy and be a follower of Jesus at the same time.

And when we suddenly comprehend the meaning of this text, so plainly and clearly, well, it's quite excruciating for those of us who are by all objective measurements, very wealthy. We are like the disciples who look at each other with great uncertainty: if that is the case, Jesus, who on earth can ever be saved?

In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus confronts the world's economy that is based on hoarding wealth. Jesus teaches us not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth. Hoarding wealth, he teaches, allows the rich to get richer while the poor get poorer. This system devastates the earth, because nothing remains sacred as everything gets turned into money. The earth and the poor then suffer the consequences of greed, pestilence, and mayhem brought about by the relentless logic of the marketplace.

As consumers living in the developed world most of us are hugely privileged to have more than our fair share of what we need to live, we have access to a huge variety of produce much of which is grown and produced around the world by farmers and producers who are trying to make a living in very challenging circumstances due to climate change and Coronavirus.

Jesus' solution to the wealthy man is quite straight forward, although certainly not easy. Jesus invites the man to give away his wealth. Only then will he be in a position to be a true follower of Jesus. That same invitation comes to you and to me today, and it is just as difficult. Jesus is not suggesting that destitution is the route into God's kingdom but you and I are caught up in the worlds' economic system, and we have to accept that is very difficult to escape.

But the call to give away our wealth is the start of the journey. It's easy for me to compare myself to Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk and think that I am not wealthy at all. But if I compare myself to somebody in Nicaragua for example, then by virtue of living in the UK with all the benefits that accrue to me, not to mention that I exist within a system that privileges me because I am White, then I have to be honest and say, I am the rich person in Jesus' story.

Angela's coffee farm used to provide a good living for her family. But now she's facing a crisis. The changing climate in Nicaragua means her coffee harvests are shrinking every year. Too much rain and the coffee beans don't ripen properly. Too much sun and the coffee beans can suffer from diseases. Coffee farmers used to lose only 5% of their crop. Now it is 30%.

This Harvest, Commitment for Life is encouraging all of us to think about our legacies – what contribution, what lasting change will we make to improve the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves and of future generations. By supporting Commitment for Life and their work in Nicaragua and central America, which we will be doing later on this month through our prayers, actions, and generosity, we can help leave the world a better place. This change may not happen in our lifetimes, but we put our faith in the God of the unseen.

This means, I must find ways of sharing my wealth: my money, my skills, my advocacy, my influence, my voice to speak up when others have been forcibly silenced.

Another way we can leave a legacy by giving of our wealth and resources to enable people around the world to build better lives and fulfilling futures for themselves is to support the work of Tools With A Mission. TWAM is a Christian charity that collects unwanted tools, refurbishes them and sends them to 4 countries in Africa.

A third way we can help to create lasting change in the world is to buy fairly traded goods. We can do that after the service this morning by visiting the Traidcraft stall in the welcome area.

During this harvest time and beyond, let's leave a legacy of love for the most vulnerable in the world. Amen!

Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to You.
Make us Your own, Your holy people
Light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us Your bread, broken for others
Shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us Your building, sheltering others
Walls made of living stone.

Many the gift, many the people
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another
Making Your kingdom come.

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Prayers of Intercession

God our Creator, whose hands forged the world, and all the suns, moons and stars of space, you hold everything in being and continue your work moment by moment. And you call us to creativity, that we might share in making and re-making. As we place ourselves in your hands, make us true stewards, care-takers, justice-makers – so that what we offer might enrich the life of the world and speak of your glory.

God our Liberator, who with a strong hand led the people of Israel out of slavery to freedom, through the hands of Jesus, your son, you healed the sick, releasing them from bondage, and through the piercing of his hands on the cross you brought the world from death to life. Make us healers too – healers of one another and healers of the Earth. Take our hands into yours that we may touch all creation with your love.

God our Reconciler, who in the person of your Spirit calls us into community, guides us into the paths of peace and inspires our longing to become more like Jesus, let you hand nudge us into the adventure of painting new visions, writing new words, building new structures and carving new landmarks to meet the challenges of our time. As you embrace us, may our hands embrace the world to find that all our sisters and brothers – all living things – share the same pulse of God-given life.

Creator God, we pray for the CoP26 climate summit of world leaders taking place soon. We pray that leaders particularly of the wealthy and prosperous nations will have the courage and determination that is needed to take bold actions to halt the climate crisis that threatens future generations.

Creator, Liberator, Reconciler, into your hands we commit our lives.

Amen

I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky,
I Have Heard My People Cry.
All Who Dwell In Dark And Sin,
My Hand Will Save.
I Who Made The Stars Of Night,
I Will Make Their Darkness Bright.
Who Will Bear My Light To Them?
Whom Shall I Send?

*Here I Am Lord, Is It I, Lord?
I Have Heard You Calling In The Night.
I Will Go Lord, If You Lead Me.
I Will Hold Your People In My Heart.*

I, The Lord Of Snow And Rain,
I Have Borne My People's Pain.
I Have Wept For Love Of Them, They Turn Away.
I Will Break Their Hearts Of Stone,
Give Them Hearts For Love Alone.
I Will Speak My Word To Them
Whom Shall I Send?

I, The Lord Of Wind And Flame
I Will Tend The Poor And Lame.
I Will Set A Feast For Them,
My Hand Will Save
Finest Bread I Will Provide,
Till Their Hearts Be Satisfied.
I Will Give My Life To Them,
Whom Shall I Send?

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Benediction

May the God of the harvest leave a legacy of love in and through your life, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now, and evermore.
Amen

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