

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 27th September 2020

Harvest Sunday Worship

With Revd Neil Coulson

Hello, I hope you are well. Today is our Harvest Sunday Service and as we celebrate Harvest, we shall reflect on this Sunday's Lectionary Readings from the book of Exodus and Paul's letter to the Philippians.

This Harvest Sunday, although we are unable to support FIND with food gifts, as usual and as we are able, we are all invited to offer our support to FIND, the Ipswich Foodbank, Operation Agri and Commitment for Life, through our financial giving. All three charities will be able to use our donations to help those in need. If you would like to give this Harvest time, please either send a single cheque to John, our Treasurer, made payable to 'Christ Church, Ipswich' or give to Christ Church by online bank transfer with 'Harvest' in the reference box. Unless you would like to give specific amounts to one or two of our three charities (if so, please let John know), John will arrange for all gifts to be evenly shared with all three. For bank transfers, please use sort code 40-52-40 and account number 00028412.

Let us worship God together this Harvest time.

An opening prayer

We gather in the name of the Triune God,
 Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the Earth and all its creatures!
 Praise be to the Holy Trinity! God is sound and life, Creator of the Universe, Source of all life, whom the angels sing; wondrous Light of all mysteries known or unknown to humankind, and life that lives in all.
 (Hildegard of Bingen, 13th Century)

Our opening sentences

We gather in the image of the Creator
who is a community of love.
 We gather in the name of the Redeemer
who reconciles all of creation.
 We gather in the presence of the Life Giver
who inspires new life and renews it.

Hymn Come, ye thankful people, come, (R&S 40)

Come, ye thankful people, come,
 raise the song of harvest-home!
 All is 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!

All the 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.

Even so, Lord, quickly come
to thy final harvest-home;
from thy field upon that day
all offences purge away:
gather thou thy people in,
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there for ever purified,
in thy glory to abide.

Henry Alford (1810-71) altd.*

A prayer of thanksgiving and petition

Loving God,
we bring you this day our thanksgiving
for everything you have given us.
You have blessed us in so much:
teach us to use all your gifts wisely.

We thank you for the infinite beauty of our world,
for the complexity of the universe,
for the wonder of creation that can never be exhausted.
You have blessed us in so much:
teach us to use all your gifts wisely.

We thank you for the constant miracle of day and night,
summer and winter,
springtime and harvest,
the regular cycle of life that we know and depend on.
You have blessed us in so much:
teach us to use all your gifts wisely.

We thank you for the rich resources of this planet,
and for all those who labour in different ways
to make them accessible to us.
You have blessed us in so much:
teach us to use all your gifts wisely.

We thank you for minds with which to understand,
enquire and learn,
for senses with which to see, hear, smell, taste and touch,
and for health to enjoy, savour and celebrate.
You have blessed us in so much:
teach us to use all your gifts wisely.

Forgive us that sometimes we lose our sense of thankfulness,
becoming complacent and over-familiar
with the richness of creation.
forgive us for taking your many gifts for granted,
forgetting them,
squandering them,
even abusing them.
You have blessed us in so much:
teach us to use all your gifts wisely.

Loving God,
give us a new sense of joy and gladness,
hearts that are truly thankful.

Help us to recognise again the awesome riches of creation,
and to rejoice in the blessings which you shower upon us.
You have blessed us in so much:
teach us to use all your gifts wisely.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

OT Bible Reading: Exodus 17:1-7 (NRSV)

Water from the Rock

17 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' ³But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?' ⁴So Moses cried out to the Lord, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' ⁵The Lord said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.' Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah^[a] and Meribah,^[b] because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'

NT Bible Reading: Philippians 2:1-13 (NRSV)

Imitating Christ's Humility

2 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was^[a] in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shining as Lights in the World

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Reflection

First, this Harvest time we think a little about the gift of water as we reflect on Exodus 17:1–7. Here, the story of the people of Israel journeying on from the wilderness of Sin reminds us of how utterly dependent we humans are on the precious gift of water. In our times, sadly, there are even areas of conflict within our world where one of the causes of the tensions is a lack of water. For example, the war in Syria was preceded by years of drought and a number of scientists and researchers believe this drought (incidentally, made much worse by climate change and the misuse of water) caused crop failures that led to farmers and rural people abandoning their land and migrating to urban areas. This in turn compounded social stresses that eventually resulted in the uprising in March 2011.

In Exodus Moses, at God's command, strikes the rock in a symbolic action. Later on, in Numbers 20:10-12 we find that God becomes angry with him for the way in which, when annoyed with the 'rebellious' people, he angrily strikes the rock twice:

¹⁰ Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?' ¹¹ Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank. ¹² But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.'

Perhaps we can read this as a powerful reminder that we are to protect not only essential resources such as water, but in thinking about precious water, we also are reminded to protect all the world's resources and to use them, to treat them with reverence and not abuse them. Perhaps, we honestly accept and reflect on how more affluent lifestyles consume not only vast quantities of treated water but also vast quantities of the Earth's limited resources.

Now, with this in mind, let's think about the Philippians reading. Given that most of the world's environmental challenges are due to greed, this reading offers us valuable principles for life that could save this planet – be humble as Jesus was and look out for the interests of others, not our own.

Within our world, is it not a drive for status that leads to the endless consumption of all manner of mod-cons? And what if everyone lived a simpler lifestyle? As Rev Dr Rachel Mash, the Environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa writes, 'the planet would have enough for our need, there is not enough for our greed'. '*Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others*' would mean that we consider the impact on the worker and the environment of the products we buy. When buying everything from cheap clothes to the continuous supply of things like cucumbers (and I confess here the one we received in our home delivery this week came from Spain!), are we concerned about the wellbeing of workers and our world?

So as we worship the Lord of the Harvest, the Lord of all Creation this morning, let us think with the mind of the 'humble' Jesus, let us humbly, caringly, put the needs of others first, even if it is costly and countercultural. Let us use only our fair share of water. Let us use only our fair share of the world's resources and do so in a responsible, creation caring way. Let us follow in the footsteps of Jesus and embrace a life of service to others and take up the call to a simpler lifestyle. Are we willing to reduce our use of water, our use of the world's resources and simplify our lifestyle? Can we think more carefully about what food we buy and where it has travelled from, can we use less single-use plastic, much of which ends up in streams and then the sea? I know I need to care more, to do more! Let us join together this Harvest in a renewed commitment to care for and protect our world and its resources and in all we do, to seek to put the needs of others before our own. Amen.

Our prayers of intercession

A prayer for our world at Harvest Time:

We pray in thanksgiving for Mother Earth in whom all life is rooted,
Brother Sun whose energy radiates life, Sister Water who nurtures and revives us, and co-creatures with whom we live, and for whom we are called to till and keep this garden.

Creative Spirit,

enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

Creative Spirit,

enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this Earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the Earth.

Creative Spirit,

enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

Creative Spirit,

enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

In the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, hear our cries of compassion, and heal our world and all creatures. Inspire our hearts with a holy imagination, to rise, freed from the demands to produce and consume to imagine a just, sustainable way of living, where all have enough, and all may be restored.

Creative Spirit,

enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

During this Season of Creation, grant us courage to observe a Sabbath for our planet. Strengthen us with the faith to trust in your providence. Inspire us with the creativity to share what we have been given. Teach us to be satisfied with enough. And as we proclaim a Jubilee for the Earth, send Your Holy Spirit to renew the face of the ground.

Creative Spirit,

enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Creative Spirit,

enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

Amen.

(adapted from *A prayer for the Earth*, Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*)

A prayer for those we know and love:

We pray for those we know and love who are in need.

We pray that you will watch over them,

keep them in your love, uphold them and bless them.

We continue to pray for Netty Waters. Sadly, Netty was unwell and was admitted to hospital this week in need of urgent surgery for a subdural haematoma. She was transferred to Addenbrooke's Hospital on Wednesday, and thankfully, Netty had her operation during Friday night. We thank God that she is well

and is receiving excellent medical care. We pray for a full and speedy recovery for Netty and that she, Alan and their family would sense God's love, care and blessing at this time.

We pray for Stephen Hogger and his family following the sad loss of his Father. May they know the comfort, peace and love of God in this time of loss.

We keep Frank Austin in our prayers as he receives chemotherapy. We pray that this will be highly effective and will lead to remission. We pray that Frank, Janet, William and all the family would sense God's loving presence at this time.

We pray for Joan Cross and Chikondi Midgley who are facing difficulties in their health at the moment.

Here is a moment for our own prayers.

Lord, hear these our prayers, we ask,
in Jesus' name, **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hymn We plough the fields and scatter (R&S 124)

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 winds and waves obey him,
by him the birds are fed;
much more to us, his children,
he gives our daily bread.

We thank thee, then, O Father,
 for all things bright and good;
 the seedtime and the harvest,
 our life, our health, our food.
 No gifts have we to offer
 for all thy love imparts,
 but that which you most welcome,
 our humble, thankful hearts.

Matthias Claudius (1740-1815)
 Tr. Jane M. Campbell (1817-78)

The Blessing

May God who established the dance of creation,
 who marvelled at the lilies of the field,
 who transforms chaos to order,
 lead us to transform our lives and the Church
 to reflect God's glory in creation.

May the blessing of almighty God,
 Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
 be upon us and all those we love
 this day and always.

Amen.

The Grace

Holding each other in our prayers, we say together:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 the love of God
 and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
 be with us all,
 for evermore.
 Amen.**

May God bless you all richly,
 With our love and best wishes to you and your families,

Neil

Resources taken and adapted from *Seasons of Creation 2020*, *Prayers for all Seasons* (Nick Fawcett), *Sustainable Preaching* (Rev'd Dr Rachel Mash), *ROOTS for Churches Limited* and *A prayer for the Earth* (Pope Francis).
 Christ Church CCLI 181784

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Some further important notes for those able to join us in the Sanctuary on Sundays

It was so good that we were able to gather again last Sunday and thank you to you all for working with the restrictions required at this time.

The Deacons and Property Chair reviewed our first Sunday back in the Sanctuary from a 'Covid safe' perspective on Thursday evening. We very much felt that our morning went really well but we would like to share just a few notes with you please, in preparation for our future Sunday Services.

- From this Sunday, our Church, like many of other venues and businesses, is required to display a QR Code for NHS Test and Trace purposes. For those of us with smartphones, we simply need to download the 'NHS Covid-19' app and then on arrival, open the app, select 'venue check-in' and then scan the QR code which will be at each entry point. We do not need to do anything on departure. Additionally, we will still need to keep a manual record of all those in attendance too.
- Unless you are accessing the gallery, are disabled or have mobility difficulties, please could you use the main doors in Tacket Street to enter and leave the Sanctuary. This will help us remain 'Covid safe'.
- Please remain in your seats at the end of the Service and enjoy the organ voluntary. At the end of this, a deacon will then guide you from your seat.
- Please use the hand sanitiser on leaving the Sanctuary, as well as on entry.
- In order for us all to comply with the law and Denominational guidelines, it is important that we limit our interactions with others, maintain social distancing, briefly socialise within no more than one group of up to six people and move on from all exit points on leaving the Church as soon as possible to make way for other folk to depart the building. Thank you for your help with these points.
- Lastly, we are very thankful to our friends next door at St Pancras who very kindly sent us all a card last week, wishing us well for our return to the Church Sanctuary.

Thank you, we look forward to seeing some of you on Sunday. Once again, we hope to make a recording available later on in the day for those unable to join us. This will be an audio file this week.