

Circuit Harvest Service, Sunday 11th October 2020
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit



Welcome and Call to Worship:

A very warm welcome to you all! We come to worship God, we come as we are, with our hopes, our fears, our joys and our sorrows. We come, because God call us.

Today we celebrate harvest. Through our hymns, our prayers, our readings and our message we are reminded that this is God's world, a planet God has lent us, a world we are called to care for. We're grateful that Sarah is preaching, and to all contributing to the service. And thank you for being here as well.

Let us pray,

Lord, sometimes we are tempted to take the easy option...to take life easy, to drink, eat and be merry. But we know there is more to life than that. Life is about being rich in our relationship with you, God. So we worship you and we praise you.

Hymn:

Come, you thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home!
Fruit and crops are gathered in
safe before the storms begin:
God our maker will provide
for our needs to be supplied;
come, with all his people, come,
raise the song of harvest home!

All the world is God's own field,
harvests for his praise to yield;
wheat and weeds together sown
here for joy or sorrow grown:
first the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear —
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come
and shall bring his harvest home;
he himself on that great day,
worthless things shall take away,
give his angels charge at last
in the fire the weeds to cast,
but the fruitful ears to store
in his care for evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come —
bring your final harvest home!
Gather all your people in
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there together purified,
ever thankful at your side —
come, with all your angels, come,
bring that glorious harvest home!

Henry Alford (1810–1871)

Prayer of Praise:

Father,
we praise you for our wonderful world
and we thank you for all the things we can see and hear.
We praise you for the beauty of trees and fields,
of streams and rivers, of seas and oceans,
of hills and mountains and valleys.

We praise you for the world in which we live,
and for all the people who share our lives.
We thank you for our friends and our family,
for those we meet at school, at work or at church.
We thank you for those who love us
and we praise you for those who show us your care.

We thank you for your love to us in Jesus Christ,
and we praise you for his coming to share all that life means to us.
We praise you for his life on earth,
for his teaching about you and your kingdom.
We thank you for those who he helped and healed,
and for those whose lives were made whole by his love.
We praise you that he still touches, changes and heals people today.
Reaching to everyone, rich or poor, religious or not.
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession:

Lord Jesus,
forgive us for the times we have forgotten you.
Forgive us for not trusting you when we could have,
and for thinking that we could change our own lives.
Forgive us for not giving you our best,
and for not showing your love to those in need.
Forgive us our lack of love and lack of hope.
We are sorry for those times when we have judged other
people and times when we love only those who love us.
Forgive us when we are unforgiving,
and fill our lives with your love and care.
[Silence for personal prayers]

We hear your gentle word of grace,
telling us all our sins are forgiven.
Now may we let such gentleness as you show us
be known to everyone. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

Jesus said, "When you pray, go into your own room, shut your door
and pray to your Father privately. Your Father who sees all private
things will reward you. And when you pray don't rattle off long
prayers like the pagans who think they will be heard because they
use so many words. Don't be like them. After all, God, who is your
Father, knows your needs before you ask him.
Pray then like this –

'Our Heavenly Father,
may your name be honoured;
May your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven.
Give us this day the bread we need,
Forgive us what we owe to you,
as we have also forgiven those who owe anything to us.
Keep us clear of temptation, and save us from evil'.
For the kingdom, and the power and the glory belong to you,
Now and for ever. **Amen.**

Hymn:

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.

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.

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)

Reading: Genesis 1 – 2:3 'Children of God Storybook Bible'

In the very beginning, God's love bubbled over when there was nothing else - no trees, no birds, no animals, no sky, no sea – only darkness.

Out of this love, God spoke, 'Let there be light.' And there was day. And there was night. And when the first day was done, God smiled and knew that it was good.

On the second day, God said, 'Let there be sky where the clouds can float and the wind can blow.'

And the sky was bright blue and beautiful.

On the third day, God said, 'Let the waters gather together into oceans and let the dry land appear.' Now God decided to make the world even more dazzling, with tall trees and long grass. And then the first flower opened in all its glory.

On the fourth day, God said, 'Let the sky be filled with the sun and the moon.' And God scattered stars across the sky like sparkling diamonds.

On the fifth day, God said, 'Let there be birds to fly and sing, and fish to swim and splash.' And the world was filled with the joyous sound of birdsong.

On the sixth day, God said, 'Let there be animals – elephants and giraffes, cats and mice, and bees and bugs.' And suddenly the world was a very noisy place.

But something was still missing. Then God said, 'I will make people, and I'll make them like me so they can enjoy the earth and take care of it. He did just as he had said, and it was all so very, very good.

God looked at everything that he had made and clapped his hands together in delight. 'Isn't it wonderful!'

And on the seventh day, God laughed, and rested and enjoyed his glorious creation.

Reading: Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to them, 'Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.' Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And

the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

Hymn:

God in his love for us lent us this planet,
gave it a purpose in time and in space:
small as a spark from the fire of creation,
cradle of life and the home of our race.

Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
life that sustains us in body and mind:
plenty for all, if we learn how to share it,
riches undreamed-of to fathom and find.

Long have our human wars ruined its harvest;
long has earth bowed to the terror of force;
long have we wasted what others have needed,
poisoned the fountain of life at its source.

Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it,
ours, as God's stewards, to farm and defend.
From its pollution, misuse, and destruction,
good Lord, deliver us, world without end!

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

Reflection: Rev. Sarah Knebel

When was the last time that you dropped something fragile and it shattered? It's so easy to do and yet often impossible to put the pieces back together again. All around us we see the fragility of our world; in the intricate detail of delicate flower petals and dragonfly wings, in the branches of trees that seem strong until they snap in a storm, in cliffs that have stood for centuries that crumble and fall, in the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected the lives of thousands in

this country and millions across the world, in the migration of refugees, in the images of starving people and conflict torn countries, in climate change the list could go on.

There is no doubt that the world is fragile, but the Bible tells us that when God created the world and looked at it, it was good and God was pleased with what God saw. Whilst fragile the world was a beautiful, harmonious place. A place in which God celebrated all that God had created, including the creation of human beings. Human beings are honoured, respected and enjoyed by God. In the text all of creation stands before God and all creation is seen to be good. Human beings are set apart only in that they are designated to order and to care for all that God has created. It could be said that this text is a text all about unity, the unity of creation, a unity that is understood to be not only aesthetic, but also ethical. The world is beautiful, but the world is also called to be obedient to God's overriding commandment to love and care for all that God has made. God does not call the world to be chaotic, fragmented or in conflict. God calls us instead to a free and gracious commitment to take care of the creation that God has made and to share in God's enjoyment of it. His call is not a requirement or an obligation, but an invitation. An invitation that is based on trust. God has entrusted to us the care of God's creation.

But, just like the words of hymn that we have just listened to, the passage from Luke reminds us that the world is only lent to us, it does not belong to us and it is not for us to store up or hoard all that it produces. Our time on earth is only temporary and whether rich or poor we cannot take anything with us when we leave it.

The man in the story, the rich fool, appears to assume that he alone has a right to all of the crops that have been produced and gathered in, but that he now does not have room to store. He doesn't, for one moment, appear to consider that the wealth of what he has should be shared with others; amongst his family, his workers and his

community, for example, all who are likely to have helped in the production of the crops. Instead he decides to build larger storehouses in which to keep all that he has for himself, so that he can live in abundance for many years to come. This man appears to be completely self-centred and separated from God and others by his tie to his earthly possessions. God, however, points out the error of his ways as he says to him, “You fool, this very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”

Yet, who are we to judge this rich fool, when we have so much to learn from him. Like the rich fool, our greed, our desire to find security in possessions, has made others go hungry and live without clean water and our misuse of the planet has robbed millions of their own dignity and a chance to live a healthy life. We have only to look at the smouldering rubbish dumps containing only some of the plastics that we have produced to know how our lifestyles damage the lives of those elsewhere.

This passage calls us to think ethically and justly about how we live our lives and respond to need so that we do not become like the rich fool who just feeds his own greed and yields to his own selfish desires. It highlights our responsibility to the poor of the world and calls us to return to sharing all that we inherit from the earth, as opposed to grasping greedily at all that we can get from it.

In a world where we produce enough food to feed everyone, 690 million people still go to bed hungry. In 2019, 135 million people in 55 countries suffered from an acute food shortage and one in three people suffered from some form of malnutrition. Eradicating hunger and malnutrition is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Not only do the consequences of malnutrition cause suffering and poor health, they also slow progress in many other areas of development like education and employment. The sad thing is, we do not need to look far in our society to find areas where deprivation is high and where people are hungry.

What are we doing with the fragile world that God created? Do we really take care of it and the people in it or do we only think of ourselves? And what can we do to help?

Let's start with some local ideas. It worried me the other day when I was shopping to see people stock-piling again. What effect does stockpiling have? For those who can afford to buy lots all at once it gives them material security, yes. Like the rich fool they know that they can live in abundance. But for those who can't afford to stockpile it creates scarcity and a lack of resources when they are needed most. Perhaps we need to think twice, before we stockpile more than we need, about how our actions may affect others around us. We might instead support our local food-bank more to ensure that in time of increased need there is plenty for all and something for everyone.

We might also consider taking action as part of the 'Reset the Debt' campaign recently initiated by the Methodist and the United Reformed Church amongst others, which calls on the Government to create a Jubilee Fund to provide grants to pay off and cancel unavoidable debt accrued by the poorest households during the lock-down period, in order to give them a more stable platform from which to face the difficult winter ahead. It is thought that 6 million people in the UK have fallen behind on rent, council tax and other household bills because of coronavirus and almost one in five have borrowed money to pay for every day essentials such as food. Reverend Richard Teal, the President of the Methodist Conference, recently said, “This call comes out of what churches have seen in communities throughout the country. We know that during lock-down people have focused on keeping themselves and their families safe and fed – and for many that meant bills or even some rent had to go unpaid. These families are now facing a crisis and this is simply not right.’ More information about this campaign and how you can support it can be found on the Methodist and United Reform Church websites.

As churches we could consider becoming Eco-churches or even an Eco-circuit. Becoming an Eco Church is so much more than looking after buildings in an environmentally-friendly way – though that's a key part of the process. It's a journey that affects every area of our church lives, including how we engage with our communities and the wider world. It is about holistic mission, caring for creation through our worship and teaching, our engagement with both the local and global community and through living out eco-sensitive values in our daily lives. There is so much that could be explored here that would reflect our's and the church's care for God's creation.

According to the World Food Programme, the world has made great progress in reducing hunger, and we have seen some wonderful examples of this locally during lock-down with people giving produce from allotments to food-banks and to families in need, and people continuing to collect for shoe boxes, to name just some of the many acts of generosity within our communities, but there is still a long way to go. If the world is to be set free of hunger by 2030, governments, individuals and public and private organisations must work together to create innovative, lasting solutions. What part will we play in this, both as churches and as individuals, as we honour our commitment to take care of God's beautiful, yet fragile creation?

Let us pray:

Loving God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we thank you for the wonder of all that you have made. As we go about our business today and everyday, may we tread with care, consume with moderation, and share with generosity so that all your people might delight in your goodness and the goodness of your creation. Amen.

Prayers for others and for the world:

Here in the modern city,
We have no fields to plough;
Our food is grown by others
and comes, we know not how;
And yet we want to offer
our harvest praise today,
For still in God's creation
we have our part to play

In our city, our town, Lord, help us to play our part.
In our world, in our global village, help us to do our best.
To value the harvest, to appreciate all that is grown by others,
And to never take any of it for granted.

We place our trust in money,
and in the welfare state;
But these we know are human
so justice has to wait;
The harvest is unequal
and some, they have no bread.
O help us to keep fighting
'til all your folk are fed.

In our places of work, our homes, our communities,
Lord, help us to work for justice,
To create a world that is equal, fair and good.
To provide bread for those who hunger,
And hope for those who despair.

So at this time of harvest
our grateful thanks we sing;
the first fruits of our labours,
our lives an offering.
Let's plant the seed of justice
and work that it might grow,
until God's Reign eternal,
on earth its fruit shall show.

In our homes and our hearths, Lord, sow seeds of compassion,
In our hearts and our lives, Lord, sow seeds of hope.
The hope that comes from knowing you,
The hope that comes from an awareness of your presence.
Nurture within us a desire for justice, for rightness and for truth.

All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above,
Then thank the Lord,
O thank the Lord,
For all his love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Offering:

*(For those who are setting aside their offering each week this prayer
may be said:)*

Bless the offering we bring, Lord God, and bless us too,
that our money and our whole lives might be for you;
that your will be done and your Kingdom come,
even through us.
In Jesus' name.

Amen

Hymn:

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
for by his power each tree and flower was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;
sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord!

*Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!*

Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding —
yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free.

*Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!*

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death he rose; and all his foes shall own his name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord! ...

David John Mansell (b.1936)

Blessing:

We bless you, God of Seed and Harvest
And we bless each other
That the beauty of this world
And the love that created it
Might be expressed through our lives
And be a blessing to others
Now and always. Amen.

After Service Telephone Chat:

If you are not able to join the online Zoom After Service Coffee and Chat, this option offers an opportunity to join Rev. Sarah Knebel and others around the circuit for a chat on the telephone.

You can use either a landline or a mobile phone to join the call. To join the call you dial the telephone number below as you would any telephone number and then you will be asked to type in the access code on your telephone/mobile phone keypad. You will also be asked to say your name before joining the conversation. Dependent on your telephone contract/calling plan this call may be charged at local rate. (This telephone call is provided by a company called Free Conference)

Dial-in information:**Sunday, 4th October 2020 from 11:45 AM****Telephone Number: 0333 011 0616****Access code: 623 5908**

Please note the call asks you to press the 'E' key after entering the access code. You do not need to do this. You can either press the '#' key, or just wait, and you will be connected to the telephone chat.

CCLI: 86449