

**Sermon – Trinity 17**  
**Harvest Sunday (Psalm 65: 6-13; Luke 12: 16-31)**

*"Through the written word and the spoken word, may we hear the Living Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ." Amen.*

There are certain times in the Church year when we are invited to stop, look around, pay attention and notice. Harvest Sunday is one of those occasions.

We pay attention to the food on our tables, the beauty of the fields, the changing seasons, the work of farmers and growers, the people who transport and prepare our food, and all the ordinary things that sustain our lives. We may note, perhaps with particular gratitude, just how much we receive.

Psalm 65 gives us a wonderful picture of a world overflowing with God's goodness. The psalm speaks of God watering the earth, enriching the soil, blessing its growth, and crowning the year with goodness – such a beautiful phrase for Harvest Sunday.

The harvest is not just something we produce. It is something we receive.

Of course, the processes culminating in the harvest require enormous amounts of human work. Seeds must be planted, fields cultivated, crops protected and gathered. There is skill, patience and perseverance involved. But none of us can make the seed grow simply by our own effort. We cannot command the rain, nor can we make the sun shine. We cannot create the soil or the intricate processes of life by which a seed becomes a plant, which in due time bears fruit.

Harvest reminds us that our lives depend upon gifts we did not create, which leads us to Jesus' parable in Luke 12. Jesus tells us about a rich man whose land produces abundantly. At first hearing, this sounds like a harvest story. His land has been bountiful. His barns are full. He has a problem that many people might regard as enviable in that he has more than enough.

But listen carefully to the man's words. "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" He decides to pull down his barns and build larger ones. Then he says to himself, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

There is nothing wrong with having a good harvest. There is nothing wrong with enjoying the fruits of one's labour. The problem is deeper. The rich man's mistake is that he has confused abundance with security, believing that if he can accumulate enough, he will be safe. His barns become his security system, his possessions his future. His wealth becomes his identity.

And notice something else – the man speaks almost entirely in the language of "I" and "my". "I will tear down ... I will build ... I will store ... My crops ... my barns ... my grain ... my goods."

There is no thanksgiving. There is no recognition of God. There is no thought of neighbour. There is no sense that his abundance might be a gift to be shared. The harvest has become something to possess rather than something to receive.

Immediately after telling this parable, Jesus turns to speak about anxiety, saying, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear."

This does seem rather unrealistic. There are plenty of things about which we can legitimately worry. We may worry about the cost of living, about our families, about our health, about the future, about climate change, about scarcity of water resources. For many people in our world, the question of whether there will be enough food is not an abstract spiritual question. It is a daily reality, a daily worry.

But Jesus is not telling us to stop caring. Rather, he is inviting us to discover a different foundation for our lives as he points to the ravens, then the lilies, and back to creation itself. The birds do not manufacture the world in which they live. The lilies do not create their own beauty. Creation continually receives.

Jesus says, “Consider the ravens ... consider the lilies...” In other words, Jesus is telling his followers, including us, look around you, pay attention, notice what God is doing. That is one of the great gifts of Harvest Sunday. It teaches us to look. Because Harvest is an antidote to taking things for granted.

Most of the time we simply turn on a tap and water comes out. We go to a shop and pick food from the shelves. We sit down to a meal without thinking about the countless people and processes involved in bringing that food to us. Harvest Sunday invites us to pause and say, “Thank you”. These two words are at the heart of Christian faith: thank you, or in Greek, εὐχαριστέω. Encouraging us to this simple act of thanksgiving is the goal of today’s readings.

During term time, our 7-year-old grandson Raphaël spends every Tuesday afternoon until Wednesday evening with Chris and me. He likes to pray

before we eat, and what he prays is so sweet: “Thank you God for rain. Thank you for sunshine. Thank you for soil. Thank you for all the beautiful things in the world. Thank you for animals and plants. Thank you for our planet Earth. Thank you for the holidays. Thank you for school. Thank you for Papa and Mummy. Thank you for Grandpa and Grandma.” And when we gently ask him to bring his thanksgiving to a close, he says loudly, “Thank you God for everything! Amen!”

I hope and pray that Raphaël’s sense of gratitude and thanksgiving will continue all through his life. We thank God from whom every good gift comes. This is the vision of Psalm 65. The hills rejoice. The valleys are clothed with grain, and the meadows are clothed with flocks. The whole creation seems to sing. It’s as though the earth itself has become a hymn of praise to our Creator God.

So, if everything is gift, then what do we do with what we have received? This is where the rich fool’s story can become uncomfortable for us because the question is not just, “How much do I have?” It is, “What am I going to do with what I have been given?”

The rich man had plenty, but he had no vision beyond himself. His solution to abundance was simply to build bigger barns. But Jesus offers us another way. The Christian response to abundance is not accumulation but generosity. The question is not “How much can I keep?” but “How might what I have received become a blessing for someone else?”

Hopefully, Harvest Sunday leads us towards giving. We bring foodstuffs to church because we recognise that what we have is gift. We give to food banks, charities and NGOs because we recognise that abundance carries

responsibility. We can support those who are struggling because we recognise our part in securing the wellbeing of our neighbour. And we care for the earth because we recognise that creation is not ours to exploit without limit. It's God's creation, entrusted to our care. That's why Harvest Sunday happens within the season of Creationtide.

Our gospel passage concludes with very reassuring words from Jesus, "Do not keep seeking what you are to eat and what you are to drink and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that seek all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

The answer to anxiety is not simply having more; it is learning to trust God. And trusting God changes how we see everything. If I believe that everything I have ultimately belongs to me, then I will be afraid of losing it. If I understand my life as gift, I can receive what I have with gratitude and share it with generosity. If I believe that there will never be enough, I will cling tightly to what I have. If I trust in God's providence, I can begin to open my hands.

Now, this does not mean that Christians should be careless or irresponsible. Jesus is not condemning prudent planning or hard work. But he is challenging the illusion that our possessions can save us. The rich man's barns could not give him what he most needed. His life was not secured by what he possessed.

Perhaps Harvest Sunday asks us to consider not only the harvest of the fields but the harvest of our lives. What is growing in us? Gratitude? Generosity? Compassion? Care for creation? Trust in God? Are we becoming

people who receive God's gifts with thanksgiving and pass them on with love?

The harvest of Christian discipleship is not measured by the size of our barns. It's measured by the fruit of our lives - the generosity we offer, the kindness we show, the people we encourage, the hungry whom we feed, the lonely whom we accompany, the earth which we protect, the gifts we share, the love we give.

Today we hear two voices from our readings. The voice of Psalm 65 says, "Look at the abundance of God's creation. Give thanks". And the voice of Jesus says, "Do not let abundance become an idol. Trust God, seek his kingdom, and share what you have received." The two voices belong together as gratitude naturally leads to generosity.

We are reminded that we do not live by our own strength alone. We live by grace. The earth gives its harvest because God sustains it. We receive food because countless people and processes contribute to it. And beneath all of this is the generous providence of God.

As the psalmist says to God, "You crown the year with your goodness." May we receive that goodness with grateful hearts. May what God has given us become, through our hands, a blessing for others. May we be people whose lives become a harvest of thanksgiving and love. Amen.