

4th October 2020 6 pm Healing and Refreshing: Harvest

Led by Ann Gibbons. Meditation and prayers by Lynda Howells

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|--|---|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Hymn: Come, ye Thankful People, Come..... | 2 |
| Meditation: Harvest-time..... | 2 |
| Harvest Video..... | 5 |
| Hymn: All Creatures Of Our God And King..... | 6 |
| Hymn: We Plough the Fields and Scatter..... | 6 |
| Intercessions..... | 7 |
| Poem: Faithfulness..... | 8 |
| Great Is Thy Faithfulness..... | 8 |
| Blessing..... | 9 |

Introduction

[Ann Gibbons:]

Hello everyone, and welcome to this service. Tonight is a celebration of harvest. We will sing some harvest hymns and Lynda will bring her meditation. In Genesis chapter 1, verse 31, and the first verse of chapter 2 it reads,

31 Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

2 **1** So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. **2** On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. **3** And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

In the Old Testament, God called His people to celebrate the festivals and gave specific instructions as to how feasts of harvest were to be conducted. In the New Testament, Jesus used seeds and food in the parables, the parable of the sower, the feeding of the 5000, the celebration of the return of the prodigal son, using food eaten as spiritual food for us, as fruits of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The greatest of these is love. This reminds us that it is important to celebrate together, and give thanks for God's provision.

A prayer as we begin our time together:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thank You that we can come before You to give thanks for all You have provided for us through the seasons of the year. Help us to draw near to You now with grateful hearts, and remember those in this country and around the world who struggle to bring food to their tables. And Lord, we are mindful of the effects of our ways of life, causing the planet to change dramatically. Help us to come together as countries and governments to work for good and not destruction.
Amen.

We come together for this service to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the beauty of the earth that He created, to thank Him for the fruits of the earth to provide food for us, to acknowledge the seasons of the earth, that give us continuity, to marvel that in spring, then summer, autumn, then winter, we see the changes and beauty each season brings. We are also thinking of whatever season we find ourselves in, in times of good and in times of trial, we all experience in our life's journey.

We are mindful of the situation at the moment with the COVID pandemic, how our lives have continued to be changed. We think about how we are misusing the world, causing climate change: the rain forests being cleared, and animals losing their habitats, which is having such a knock-on effect in change: the temperatures rising and water levels increasing, as ice caps collapse into the sea and the raging forest fires. Sometimes these things can seem so overwhelming. We lose sight of our foundation in Christ Jesus, as we were thinking about in our last service. The first verse in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 speaks of a time for everything. Verse one says,

- 1 For everything there is a season,
a time for every activity under heaven.
- 2 A time to be born and a time to die.
A time to plant and a time to harvest.

These are the gifts from God.

We're now going to sing our first hymn: *Come, ye thankful people, come* and then Lynda will bring her meditation. And after this will be a short time of reflection.

Hymn: Come, ye Thankful People, Come

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 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!2. We ourselves are God's own field, Fruit unto His praise to yield; Wheat and tares together sown Are to joy or sorrow grown; First the blade and then the ear, Then the full corn shall appear; God of harvest, grant that we Wholesome grain and pure may be. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. For the Lord our God shall come, And shall take the harvest home; From His field shall purge away All that doth offend, that day, Giving 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, forever purified, In God's garner to abide; Come, ten thousand angels, come, Raise the glorious harvest home! |
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Meditation: Harvest-time

[Lynda Howells:]

I stand and watch the wind and breeze, grabbing the leaves of the trees and playing with them: turning, tossing and flying around, a myriad of bright colours, a swirling dervish controlled by the wind, blowing them this way and that.

And then calm. The wind retreats, stops playing with the leaves. And they fall gently to the ground, cocooned and silent, a carpet of colour.

What have we sown this year for harvest? What torment lies dormant, hidden in our lives, which needs bringing to the light?

Harvest. A time to reap what we have sown, maybe? What have we sown? In faith and trust we plant seeds into the dark soil, after perhaps reading instructions on the packet. We put a label in, to enable us to remember what we have planted. And we wait, trusting and believing that growth will happen at the right time. Perhaps we water occasionally, to avoid the soil drying out completely.

Harvest. Maybe a time for our prayers to bear fruit. How do they bear fruit - in us or others? Prayers answered or not?

Our Father, You are in the dark as well as the light. We don't always see what we think we want to see.

Come, Lord Jesus, come. We cry out to You, Holy Spirit. Search us, search our hearts. The darkness which at times lives within us, sometimes dormant, quiet, but still there. Search it out, please, our Father.

Replace it with Your seeds of love and hope, of reassurance and a reminder of Your promises, shown to us in all the beauties of this season.

As a seemingly dead seed has been buried in the earth, in Your perfect time it bears fruit.

The leaves on the trees fall to the ground, leaving the branches bare to rest and be fed until they start to grow new leaves and blossom, bursting open again in God's timing.

Our Lord, You show us and You remind us in Your creation Your promise of renewal in our lives.

We have no words to fully give You the glory You're worthy of. But we come, we come to worship You and praise You, holy, holy Lord, our blessed assurance that You are with us in everything, our good times, our sad times. Our pain is Your pain.

And as a seed lies dormant in the dark until it sprouts new shoots, so must we rest in Your loving arms, held safely, trusting Your goodness and plans for our lives, to bring forth fruit in Your time.

Oh, that we could be like the seed buried in the ground as a small dried-up speck in the dark, waiting patiently until You cause us to break through into the light, to blossom and to bear fruit for You.

This harvest comes and goes each year under Your loving guidance. We thank You for Your faithfulness.

Your love, so tender to each one of us. Our lives nestled in God's arms, safe and secure. Oh, that our trust, it could be that of a baby.

We are part of God's creation. And He longs for us to let Him feed and nurture us, to dare to let go of the weeds of doubt and fear, which try at times to strangle us and try to stop us growing to fulfil God's purpose for our lives.

Just a seed buried, asleep, warm, cocooned by the miracle of God's creation, watered by the provision of God's rain. And in His time we will start to grow shoots to be strong, to fulfil the purpose God has for us in His world.

We cannot stand the comfort of the familiarity. We know we have to be obedient to our purpose.

Nourish us, Father, that we would grow strong through Your guidance, and strengthen us to play our part in bringing Your Kingdom to Earth.

The leaves fall from the trees. This is a time to let go, let things go. A time of thankfulness for the harvest. A time of rest. A time of new life, but we cannot at the moment see it. "Oh love that will not let us go."

The fields are bare after harvest, ready for ploughing and the sowing of fresh seeds again. As the farmer sows in faith and trust the seeds buried in the soil, may we sow our prayers, in trust and faith that our Father God will bring forth fruit in the fullness of His time and His perfect plan.

What seed do I want to be? Safely cocooned in the dark warm earth out of harm's way, in my own little world? Or will I dare to grow through the weeds, through the middle of our world, the greed, the selfishness? Leave that behind, and allow myself to flourish as a branch on the vine of the Lord Jesus, my leaves growing to protect and care for the lost, the helpless, those who have no help, those who have no hope, the ones the world crosses the road from, so as not to be tainted by them, those who do not know love, only abuse and hatred, rejected by the so-called modern society in which we live, treated so unfairly.

Can I say, "Here am I, Lord"?

Here am I.

Amen.

[two minutes of music; picture zooms out from candle, revealing this:]



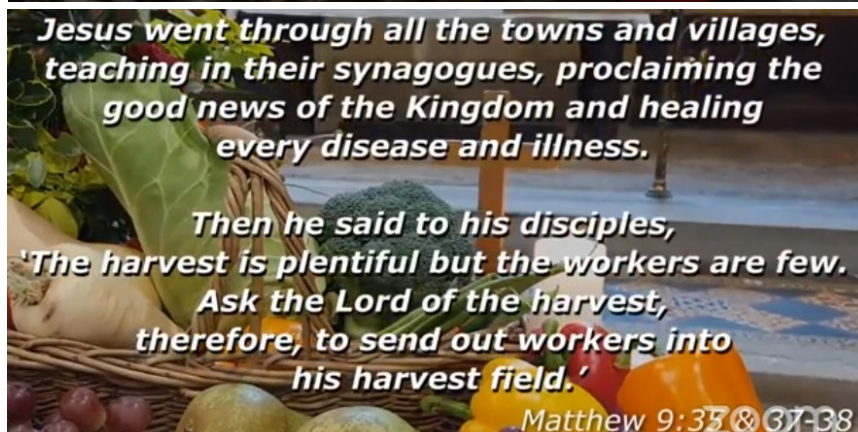
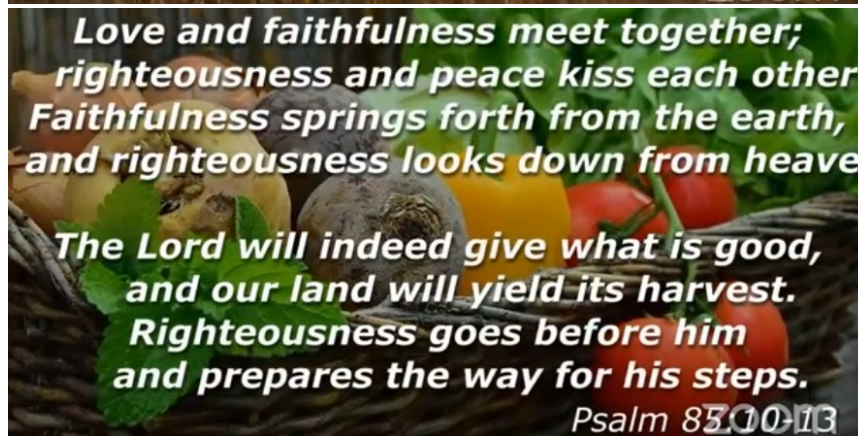
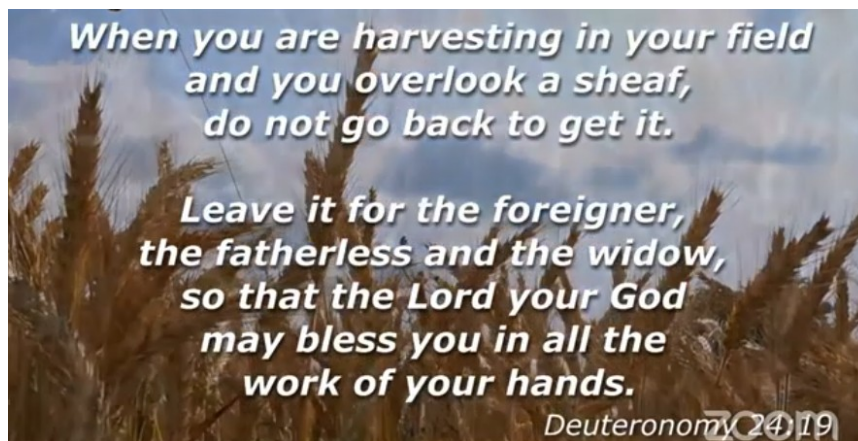
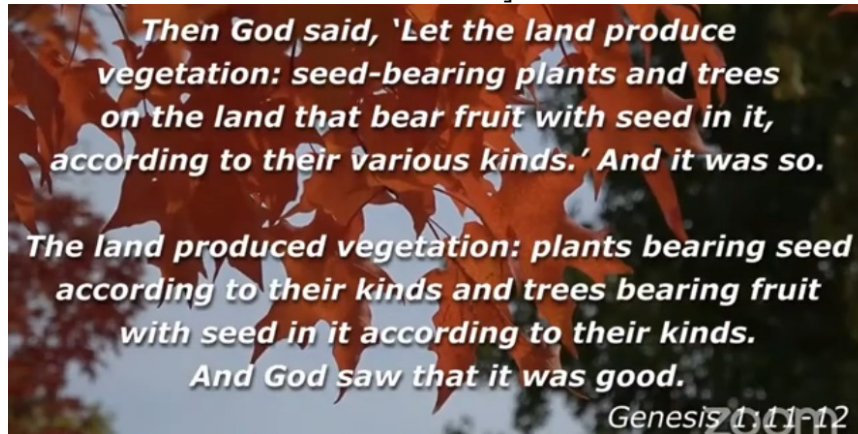
[Ann:]

As always, thank you, Lynda, for your inspiring meditation words.

We now have a harvest video to watch. And then we're going to sing two hymns together. We're going to sing *All Creatures of our God and King* and *We Plough the Fields and Scatter*. But first we watch the harvest video.

Harvest Video

[Music for 4 minutes - Verses on the screen:]



Hymn: All Creatures Of Our God And King

1. All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Thou, burning sun with golden beam,
Thou, silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
2. Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship Him in humbleness,
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three-in-One,
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
3. All the redeemed washed by His blood
Come and rejoice in His great love
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Christ has defeated every sin;
Cast all your burdens now on Him;
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
4. He shall return in pow'r to reign;
Heaven and earth will join to say
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Then who shall fall on bended knee?
All creatures of our God and King.
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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.
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.

Refrain:

All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord
For all His love.

Refrain

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;
Accept the gifts we offer
For all Thy love imparts,
And what Thou most desirest:
Our humble, thankful hearts!

Refrain x 2

Intercessions

[Lynda:]

Normally when we meet in church in our Healing and Refreshing services, Ann and I offer to pray with anyone who's in need of personal prayer, but as this cannot happen at the moment, there will be an opportunity for you to ask your Heavenly Father for help, for whatever you need. Just tell Him one-to-one what's on your mind.

So, Lord, we bring our prayers to You now.

We pray for Your world. We are living under a cloud of fear. Father, please shower us with Your peace, Your hope, and Your love. Assure us that whatever happens, we are safe under the shadow of Your wings. Thank You that Your love for each one of us is constant.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Father, there's so much on our minds to think about, to be concerned about. So we pray:

For our young people. Please help them to deal with the challenges which life is throwing at them at the moment. And for older people to be tolerant and not judgemental. Help us all as we respond to the effects of the pandemic. We respond in so many different ways, Lord, so just help us, please, to be kind to one another: the children, teachers, and everyone else involved without children, going back to school, that they will be safe as they return to a very different format.

For all our students at university, Lord, whether it's just the first time of going or perhaps their second or third year, and living life in a very different environment. So please, Lord, be with them.

For governments around the world, they would be led by You, in all the decisions they make, for the good of all Your people.

For the discussions taking place over Brexit, that there will be a good outcome for the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe.

For the researchers, trying to find a vaccine against COVID: help and guide them in their research, to free us from this terrible virus, to bring healing and restoration to Your world.

For the vulnerable, living in fear at the thought of another lockdown.

And for all those waiting for undergoing treatment for cancer and other life-threatening illnesses, Lord, and for the hospitals, for everyone involved in trying to bring some normality, Lord, and bring healing to all who need it.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for everyone who is suffering through the greed of others, the poverty in our world. That we would listen to You, and we would do our bit to eradicate poverty and suffering, whether it be through our prayers and financial or practical ways.

We will now have a few moments quiet for You each to bring Your own prayers to our Father God, who is always here to listen to You,

[pause]

Thank You, Lord, for listening to us, thank You.

We pray, Father for all those who have been bereaved, for people who are grieving for whatever reason, whether it be breakup of relationships or the death of a loved one. Whatever the reason, Lord, please comfort them, especially in these very difficult times.

We thank You for our families and our friends, all who we know and care about. And, Lord, we pray for a blessing on those known only to You.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Father God, we thank You for the harvest. Thank You to the farmers and all who provide our food. Thank You for the beauty of the autumn season: the colours, the fruits of the harvest, and all the goodness of promises, with which You bless us.

We thank You for Jesus. And we pray for a fresh outpouring of Your Holy Spirit on each one of us, that we will be renewed and refreshed, to live and serve You.

And finally, Father, we pray that when this virus has been conquered, the whole of Your world will be united and live in peace, according to Your holy Word,

Merciful Father,
**Accept these prayers for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.
Amen.**

Poem: Faithfulness

[Ann:]

I'm going to now read a poem called *Faithfulness*. It's written by Margaret Bowdler.

As long as Earth endures
season will follow season.
We have no reason
to doubt,
that winter will be followed by the spring.

As long as earth endures,
each varying seed that's sown,
will grow to yield its own,
no fear
that where the wheat is planted briars will grow.

Written in the rainbow,
a promise never broken,
for God has spoken.
Faithful to His people,
He keeps His marvellous laws.
A covenant with us, as long as Earth endures.

We hope that you have enjoyed this service, and have had a good sing. In a minute we're going to sing our final song, and after this, Lynda will then read a blessing for us. So our final hymn is *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

[not included, as it is still under copyright. The lyricist died only 60 years ago, and copyright lasts until 70 years after the author's death.]

Blessing

[Lynda:]

We do thank you for joining us tonight.

We just pray that you've been touched by Father God speaking to you.

And a blessing:

Your Father God wants you to know how much you are loved by Him. Each one of you is His precious child, loved so much.

He gave Himself to bring you eternal happiness alive through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who died for you.

He took your sin upon Himself. He paid the price to enable you to live freely, forgiven.

So, as you go out into this next week and the future, be filled afresh with His peace, His hope and joy on your life's journey through good times and bad, knowing your Heavenly Father is by your side, all the time.

Amen.

God bless.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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Come, Ye Thankful People, Come (Harvest Home) – lyrics by Henry Alford 1810-1871 (written in 1844, based on Psalm 100:4); usual tune “St. George’s, Windsor” written by George J. Elvey (1816-1893) in 1858. Public Domain. Version used in this service from Hull Minster by permission: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf0Mn-U0630>

All Creatures Of Our God and King – original words (verses 1-2) by St .Francis of Assisi, translated by William Henry Draper; usual tune “Lasst uns erfreuen” (let us rejoice), 1623 traditional German tune. In the version played in the service, tune adapted by Jonathan Baird and Ryan Baird, who also wrote verses 3 and 4. Copyright © 2013 Sovereign Grace Worship (ASCAP). Used by permission.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness – lyrics by Thomas O. Chisolm 1866-1960 (written in 1923); usual tune “Faithfulness” by William M. Runyan 1870-1957.