

Wimborne Methodist Church 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Harvest Festival

Rev. Linda Chester

10.27am CD All things bright and beautiful: Rutter

**Welcome:** Steward

Call to Worship CD For the beauty of the earth: Rutter

**Hymn: 123 in StF** Come, ye thankful people come: (YouTube: Three Harvest Hymns 18th. Sept 2017 with organ, choir and congregation).

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 is 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;  
Lord, of harvest, grant that we  
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come,  
And shall take is harvest home.  
From his field shall in the day  
All offences purge away.  
Give his angels charge at last  
In the fire the tares to cast,  
But the fruitful ears to store  
In his garner evermore.

Even so Lord, quickly come,  
Bring thy final harvest home;  
Gather thou thy people in,  
Free from sorrow, free from sin.  
There for ever purified,  
In thy garner to abide,  
Come, with all thine angels come,  
Raise the glorious harvest home.

Henry Alford 1810-71

**Prayer:**

Almighty God, we unite to praise and thank you, both here in church and with friends worshipping at home. In joy and wonder we remind ourselves of the richness of creation and acknowledge your faithfulness in providing for all our needs.

You have blessed us beyond our deserving.

Creator God, for the beauty of this season, the constant cycle of day and night and the vital gifts of rain and sunshine, we bring our heartfelt gratitude.

Loving God, we thank you for the variety and abundance of the global harvests.

We praise you for the gift of our own life and the blessings we have enjoyed through the years.

Help us to be generous in sharing, patient in caring, and sincere in our witness for Jesus Christ our Lord, whose words we now pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven**

Hallowed by 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.

And 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.

**Our Father in heaven**

Hallowed be your Name,

Your kingdom come, your will be done

On earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

And deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory  
are yours, now and for ever.

Amen.

**Reading: Matthew 13: 1-9 & 18-23**

**The Parable of the Sower.**

Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up.

Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the

plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

**Hymn 130 StF We plough the fields (YouTube as above)**

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.

*Chorus*

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 thy love imparts,  
And, what you most desire, our humble thankful hearts.

Matthias Claudius 1740-1815

**Address** - using Power point

When was the last time you sewed some seeds ?

Apart from sewing grass seed, I have a small garden without a green-house, so I buy young plants rather than using seed.

\*But my great-grandfather, in Somerset, was a real gardener and he like his generation and those before him, like yours, grew everything from seed.

The picture portrays a young man sowing cereal in 1C Galilee.

Such a labour intensive job, scattering the seed, walking up and down the field, with a heavy bundle of seeds across the shoulders.

\*Inevitably, some of the seed fell across the paths to the edge of the field where people would walk through to the next village. This seed would be eaten by birds or trampled underfoot.

\*Much of Palestine is covered in rocks or stones, and even after preparing a "field" some seed would land in amongst stones left behind, with poor or little soil.

\*Irrigation is now amazing and Israel leads the world in hydroponics, with mile upon mile of piping taking precious water to the crops. But in Jesus' time with little rain, small plants in poor soil could not survive.

How many plants did you lose in the intense heat of this summer ?

\* Why is it weeds are the strongest plants in our gardens ? They seem to grow anywhere, without invitation, and always thrive !

In amongst the growing crops in Palestine, and along the wayside, hardy thistles would choke and quickly take over. Even today walking along the tracks in Galilee thistles feature (to the delight of photographers.)

\*Fortunately, with all the hard work, a proportion of the seed yielded a harvest.

But even then, it varied; some 30, some 60 some 100 fold. The crowd gathered knew what Jesus was talking about. They only had to look around them.

**\*What has this to say to us, in 2020 ?**

All of us are at different stages in life's journey. But this year is unique; at last years' harvest we'd never heard of Covid-19, "Lockdowns" and "Social distancing".

Perhaps you've felt trampled on by authority, wilting at times under the bewildering circumstances and choked by the multitude of regulations.

At times I've felt like offering to pay double the price to purchase a newspaper with good news!

And yet there has been a bountiful harvest of kindness, good neighbourliness, outstanding medical care and devotion, and a new appreciation and appraisal of what life is all about.

Technology has come into its own. For example, one of the services I listen to on a Sunday, is live streamed from Westminster Central Hall, London (where Alison McMillan moved to become their deacon).

Previously, the usual congregation averaged between 200-300 people. Since the church building has been shut, the weekly online viewing figures average between 7000 and 8000.

This could mean 15,000-20,000 individuals !!!

How's this for a hundred fold harvest ?

Imagine our weekly congregation here increasing by even TEN fold !

We`d number around 800 people - too many for this building.

I don't believe our amazing God sends trauma or tragedies, but they may be used, IF we are open to His Holy Spirit.

\*God sows seeds in each one us. And He longs to nurture those seeds through faith and worship. These last six months, unable to meet for worship and fellowship, we`ve realised just how much we need each other.

It was wonderful to come here last Sunday, and today, to see you again.

Now think of *all* the things which have given you hope and encouragement during these months: your Bible, your garden, prayer, knowing people are praying for you, friends, neighbours, family, humming your favourite hymn, listening to music, a glorious sunset, a pet.

\*As well as encouraging us individually, God nurtures us through our surroundings and through other people.

At any one time I would suggest that some of us are at a 30 watt glow, some will be glowing 60w and others will be glowing 100w !

No-ones` flame glows the same all the time. We all have ups and downs. And this is why God has given us each other, to share the inextinguishable "Light of Christ. "

When our flame flickers and splutters, God puts someone there to reignite the flame, through a smile, a phone call, a letter, a casserole, a prayer. But it`s important for us to be OPEN to God to both receive and to give.

How easy it is not to notice that someone`s flame is wavering !

\*When was the last time you sewed seeds ?

What were those seeds ?

If they were God-given seeds they will bear the Fruits of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Let us praise God for His Harvest ! Amen

**\*denotes next picture**

**Prayers of Intercession:** Christine Thompson

**Hymn 129 StF** verses 1 & 4 ( YouTube Winneba Youth Choir, Ghana, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017)

To thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise, in hymns of adoration.

To thee bring sacrifice of praise with shouts of exultation.

Bright robes of gold the fields adorn, the hills with joy are ringing,

The valleys stand so thick with corn that even they are singing.

O blessed is that land of God where saints abide for ever.  
Where golden fields spread far and broad, where flows the crystal river.  
The strains of all its holy throng with ours today are blending;  
Thrice blessed is that harvest song which never has an ending.

William Chatterton Dix 1837-98

**Blessing:**

Now may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, those you love and those for whom you have prayed, now and always. Amen.

**CD The Lord bless you and keep you**

Rutter