

**Worship for 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Harvest Festival
(complete text. A video version is also online)**

Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

A very warm welcome to all; whether you join every week, occasionally or even if it is your first time you are all most welcome.

We thank all those taking part and Trevor Pethick for the sermon.

Come, let us worship God.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

On this Sunday we come to celebrate harvest and all you have provided for us in this wonderful world you have created. We pray that through this time you will reveal yourself to each one of us as we worship in Spirit and in truth.

Amen

Hymn: StF 123 – Come you thankful people come

- 1. 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!**
- 2. 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.**

- 3. 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.**
- 4. 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)

adapted by Compilers of Hymns for Today's Church

Opening Prayers

God our maker, you provide for our wants year by year and generation by generation. You love us and give us food and shelter.

You give us people to care for us and to be cared for by us. You give us community and call us to be part of the one world community.

You enrich our lives with thought and pleasure, music, art and storytelling.

At the centre of all this, you give us our Lord Jesus Christ, as Saviour and friend, guide and example, showing us how you intend life on earth to be.

We worship you.

God of harvest, you have given us everything we need, yet we are ungrateful.
We are selfish and live in a world that has not yet made poverty history. Where the poor do not have enough and the rich too much.
We have much to learn about what it means to be your disciples and co-workers.

Deliver us, O Lord, heal us, forgive us.
As you forgive us help us to forgive one another.
Jesus says I forgive you go in peace, go in love, go in joy.

Amen

Hymn: StF 102 – For the beauty of the earth

- 1. For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.***
- 2. For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.***
- 3. For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.***
- 4. For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
pleasures pure and undefiled:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.***

- 5. For each perfect gift and sign
of your love so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.***

Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1835–1917)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Ruth 2:1-13 (NRSVA)

Ruth Meets Boaz

^{2:1}Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ²And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favour.' She said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' ³So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. ⁴Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you.' They answered, 'The Lord bless you.' ⁵Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'To whom does this young woman belong?' ⁶The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, 'She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. ⁷She said, "Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers." So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment.'

⁸Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have

ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.’ ¹⁰Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, ‘Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?’ ¹¹But Boaz answered her, ‘All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹²May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!’ ¹³Then she said, ‘May I continue to find favour in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants.’

1 Timothy 6:6-10 (NRSVA)

⁶Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

Matthew 6:25-33 (NRSVA)

Do Not Worry

²⁵‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they

neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Sermon

Sometimes in the Bible you come across words or terms that have fallen out of use, or perhaps the meaning has changed. In our OT reading we come across Ruth ‘gleaning’ in the fields. The only thing you are likely to have ‘gleaned’ anything recently is information. Over time the meaning has changed. In the Old Testament it carries a very practical connotation. At harvest the workers would gather the crops from the fields but inevitably some scraps would be left. The poor and destitute would then be allowed to come and collect, or ‘glean’, these leftovers. It was a way of helping people in need in a way that preserved their dignity. Everyone participated in the harvest.

So, as we celebrate harvest this year let’s reflect on the need to grant everybody their daily bread, and with dignity. It sounds so obvious, yet there are too many people today the harvest doesn’t

reach and to Christians this should be unacceptable.

Since the end of post war rationing we have taken the plentiful availability of food and other essentials for granted. Too much so, perhaps. We expect to turn up at the local supermarket and buy more or less whatever we want. We haven't needed to worry about how it got there, the complicated supply chain leading right back to the farmer's field or fisherman's trawler. If you live in a rural community the likelihood is you will have a good appreciation of food production. Those of us in towns and cities barely give it a thought. Worryingly, a survey a few years ago discovered a third of children thought cows drink milk rather than produce it!

When the link is broken between what we eat or wear or use and where it has come from, the result is complacency, carelessness or abuse. If you paused to think of the environmental damage of buying food from half way round the world you would happily accept a little inconvenience to search out local produce. If you knew that cheap T-shirt had been made with slave labour somewhere far away you wouldn't buy it. But you don't, so you do. If you like, it's poor stewardship of creation. Governments and large corporations bear a huge responsibility, but so do we, both as churches and individuals.

At harvest our thoughts turn to all that God provides, not just food. Our homes, clothing, education, health care, friends and family, people to love and people who love us. If we only see these things as being provided by other people, we lose sight of the bigger picture, that 'all good things around us are sent from heaven above'. We risk undervaluing them, taking them for granted, even misusing them. On the other hand, when we see them as God-given we afford them respect.

We heard part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel in which Jesus tells us not to worry about food or clothing. This may be fine for those who have easy access to such basics, but it seems a bit harsh on those in poverty. Their anxiety is perfectly understandable. Perhaps he is hinting that there is plenty to go round, as long as we share it properly. And there are plenty of examples today where this isn't happening. A few years ago it was wine lakes and butter mountains. These days it's food poverty, exemplified by the huge increase in foodbanks. Today we face the pointless expiry of valuable Covid vaccines in the UK when these excess doses could be put to good use in other parts of the world. This winter we are facing large rises in energy costs. The well off will be able to cope but those on the bread line will face difficult choices, exacerbated by the removal of the uplift in Universal Credit. Better stewardship is needed.

It's not happening partly because our society's priorities are not God's priorities. Matthew goes on to record Jesus contrasting the way of God with that of 'pagans', whose lives are dominated by material things. They amass belongings on an ever larger scale, worried they will run out. Paul's letter to timothy echoes the sentiment in that well known and sometimes misquoted phrase "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil". Just a few verses earlier Jesus warned against storing up treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy. But followers of Jesus, as we shall sing shortly, should 'seek first his kingdom and righteousness'. Yes, first, second and third! In this kingdom everyone's needs are met. In this kingdom we recognise there is enough to go round. In this kingdom we think of our neighbours first, particularly those in need. We uphold their right to dignity. In Old Testament times this included the practice of

gleaning. Today we no longer glean food but it is well within the bounds of possibility to afford everyone both dignity and food if only we lift our eyes, focus on Him and get our priorities right. He continues to provide the harvest. Let us be worthy stewards of it.

Hymn: StF 254 – Seek Ye First

**1. Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you;**
Allelu-, alleluia:

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
allelu-, alleluia!*

**2. Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and the door shall be opened unto
you;**

Allelu-, alleluia:

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
allelu-, alleluia!*

**3. We shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;**
Allelu-, alleluia:

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
allelu-, alleluia!*

Karen Lafferty (b. 1948)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Father God, we thank you for all that you have made. You chose to create us in your own image. You made us stewards of your creation. For all that you are, for all that you have done, for all that you have given, we offer our thanks and praise.
Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Lord of the harvest,
Let there be harvest in your world.

We pray for those places in the world where the crops have failed
and for those where poverty is the result of human aggression and human greed

We pray for a harvest of peace and plenty

Let there be harvest in the hearts of children, women and men.

We pray for those who are spiritually starved, who long for meaning in their lives and who need to belong.

Give to your church patience and energy, boldness to speak out and the ability to listen

We pray for a harvest of faith and of lives transformed by the Gospel

Let there be harvest in our own lives, and in the lives of those we know and love.

We pray for those who are sick or troubled, for those who are lonely or who have suffered loss
We pray for ourselves, that, whatever difficulties we face, our lives may be grateful and joyful.

We pray for a harvest of deepened love and more faithful discipleship

Help us to work with you and seek your Kingdom first to bring it in.

We ask all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

We join together in saying 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.
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**

The Offering & prayer

God who cares for us we bring you gifts to thank you for the ways in which you continue to provide for us. May we always care for those who don't have enough and work to make your world a fairer place. In the name of Jesus.
Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 124 – For the fruits of all creation

- 1. 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.**
- 2. 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.**
- 3. 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)

Prayer & blessing

Creator God you are Lord of all time and space. You are present in this place, in this moment. We go out into the days ahead to encounter more of you, our God.

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you now and always.

Amen.

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StF 123 – Come you thankful people come

Henry Alford (1810–1871)

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Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1835–1917)

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Karen Lafferty (*b.* 1948)

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