

Harvest Thanksgiving

29 9 13

Eternal God,
you crown the year with your goodness
and you give the fruits of the earth in their season:
grant that we may use them to your glory,
for the relief of those in need
and for our own well-being.

Our text today may be found in Psalm 100:

'Enter his gates with thanksgiving . . .
give thanks to him . . .
For the Lord is good . . .'

Today is Michaelmas, the feast of St Michael and All Angels, and I'd love to preach a sermon to you this morning on angels but given today is our Harvest Festival, instead I am going to explore with you the principle of saying thank you.

So when did you first learn to say thank you? I guess saying please and saying thank you is something we learnt from our parents from an early age. It was polite. It was right and proper to ask nicely for things and to say thank you when you were given them. Were you encouraged to write thank you letters at Christmas for presents received? When I first started teaching, I was impressed by my Head Master, the late Roy Smith, who thanked me at the end of my first

term for all I had done for my pupils at Davenant Foundation Grammar School. But what shocked me and made a real impression on me was that Roy was not simply being polite and a good Head but he actually knew and appreciated what I had done.

So if saying thank you is a good idea, what have we got to be thankful for? There are four readings this morning; each adds something to the list.

First the Psalm from which our text is taken. Psalm 100 reminds us that God is our maker and that we are his, **'the sheep of his pasture'**. That we should be joyful in coming before him to worship him. That God is good, that he is merciful and that we should be thankful. If we recognise him as such, who would not be grateful?

Secondly, the Old Testament passage from Deuteronomy 26. At harvest-tide, the Jews are reminded of their history, of how once they were nomads, of how once they were called out of slavery in Egypt to possess the Promised Land where the harvest would be good and plentiful. And in gathering in the harvests in due season, they should remember what God had done for them, give a part of the harvest back to God and celebrate their good fortune with their neighbours.

Thirdly, a short passage from the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, in which he urges us to **'Rejoice in the Lord always'**. And why? Simply because **'The Lord is near'**. This surprising and encouraging truth means that we

have no need to worry and that we truly can enjoy **the peace of God which surpasses all understanding**'

And lastly, the gospel from John 6 which concludes with one of the great I AM statements: **'I am the bread of life.'** Earlier in the chapter, Jesus has fed the 5,000 and here, in being questioned by an unsympathetic and challenging crowd, Jesus makes this surprising claim – to be in fact the bread of life and he challenges his hearers to respond by saying: **'Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'** As their Messiah, the Christ, Jesus is pointing to the possibility of being spiritually satisfied by belief in him and through following him. Powerful stuff !

So there we have it: God is good and he is the source of all good things so we should rejoice in him knowing that through belief in him we will be spiritually satisfied.

And that sounds like a good reason to me why we should be thankful not only today when we remember with thanksgiving the time of harvest but everyday when we sit down to eat. But, of course, it does not stop with the act of being thankful; we are also being encouraged to express our gratitude in our concern for those less fortunate than ourselves. By our sending of the fruit and vegetables and tinned and packaged foods to the Little Sisters of the Poor in St Servan and to the Banque Alimentaire in Dinard, we are putting our faith into practice by making our words our deeds. May that be true for us all, now and always.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

29th September, 2013

G: Sermons 28 : Harvest

