

Harvest

28 9 14

Eternal God,
you crown the year with your goodness
and you give us 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 this morning is from our gospel reading, part of Luke 17 v 16:

'He . . . thanked him.'

Do I ? Do you ? Do we ? Do we say thank you ? I think it's important to do so, don't you ? It's important to recognise what someone else has done and to be grateful. It's polite and it means we're awake and aware of what is being done for us and that we want to say thanks. The healing of the ten lepers has this interesting point - only one of the ten had the energy and motivation to come back to say thank you to Jesus. And that one man is a Samaritan, an outsider !

Okay, so today's our Harvest Festival. Time again to say thank you for what we often take for granted: the rich variety of food that's available to us in shops, in the market and in whatever supermarket we care to patronise. I was brought up in London and the terraced streets in which I grew up were far removed from the rhythms of the natural year. But in school and later in church acknowledging the

harvest and saying thank you was part of the annual cycle. So here in France today we should be saying thank you for what we have received and for what we are about to receive. As today's collect suggests, we have a threefold loving duty with regards to the ingathered harvest: to use them to the glory of God, for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being.

Today, however, I'd like to reflect on a different type of harvest – the fruit of our relationship with someone we love, someone we have married. One of the privileges of being a priest is conducting people's weddings and this year I have been involved – or to be precise by the middle of next month I shall have been involved – in eleven marriages. Added to that, there have been two wedding blessings at St Bart's – Val and Geoff's Golden Wedding was celebrated at the start of August and at the end of that month, Ann and Paul Elms celebrated their Silver Wedding by renewing their wedding vows and blessing their wedding rings.

So what have we to be grateful for in marriage? Why should we be saying thanks? Now, as you know, I'm not married; I'm a bachelor, a celibate priest, so what do I know? I speak as an observer, as someone looking in from the outside. And this is what I see.

Above all companionship, being together with someone you love someone you like, someone you want to be with. Literally, a companion is someone with whom you share your bread with. But there's so much more to marriage than just eating and drinking together. It's sharing a common space, sharing the jobs that need to be done, sharing earning a living. And, of course, there is what the modern

marriage service terms 'the delight and tenderness of sexual union'. Curiously, in Psalm 19 v5, the Psalmist compares the sun to a bridegroom emerging from the wedding chamber, radiant with love. Being in touch, connected with one you love and who loves you is a gift of God in creation and to have children together is the most natural yet wonderful fact of life.

So though I guess much more could be said about why marriage is a real blessing, let it suffice to say that our union with someone else in the sight of God and with respect to the law is something which we should all be grateful for. If it wasn't for my mum and dad, I wouldn't be here to today. Would any of us ?

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

28th September, 2014

G: Sermons 30 : Harvest

