

## Harvest

25 9 16

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

Our text may be found in today's gospel reading, John chapter 6 and verse 35:

'Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life.  
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,  
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

Once again, here at St Bart's, we are celebrating Harvest Festival. Summer is coming to an end; the harvest is safely being gathered in; it is good to be alive, to eat, to drink and to be merry.

I am by birth a city boy. We had a back garden; there was the local park; and Wanstead Flats and Epping Forest were nearby but, essentially, I was brought up in a strictly urban environment. Nonetheless, at primary school, we made a big thing, each year, of the harvest and this celebration was part and parcel of our Church Year. It seems perfectly right and proper that we should thank God for his goodness. Just as it is a good idea to say a grace before a meal, it is right to be

mindful of the natural rhythms of life, of the good order of creation, in which food is grown and harvested in due season and, in this bounty, we should recognise and be grateful for God's goodness to us.

I am pleased to be part of a church which takes seriously our duty to be good stewards of what God gives us: each month we make a collection of food to pass on to the Banque Alimentaire in Dinard and, at Harvest, we also make a donation to the Little Sisters of the Poor in St Servan.

But, this morning, I like to consider, briefly, the exciting truth embodied in today's text, one the seven 'I am' statements made by Jesus: **'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'**

Food and drink are vital to sustain life. So I love the idea that Jesus is a source of both. Bread is one of the basic ingredients of a good, healthy diet and six days out of seven, I walk to the Gaubert's boulangerie in La Place de la République to buy a pain au céréale and a croissant. In the communion service, Jesus uses the image of his body being like Matzah, the unleavened bread of a Passover Meal, broken for us, his life for our lives. Literally, the word of God, Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the Spirit enfleshed, sustains our lives by feeding us on several levels: literally and spiritually in the food we eat and through the teaching we digest.

Water is also vital for life. Without sufficient liquid, we will dehydrate and die of thirst before we ever die of hunger. In John's account of Jesus' meeting with the

unnamed Samaritan woman at the well at Sychar, Jesus tells her that he is the source of living water. And that idea of quenching our thirst is the second symbol of the communion service: that in the cup of wine of the Passover meal that the disciples shared with Jesus is the sign of his blood that is shed for them and for us. Blood is the life force of living creatures and God's blood, in the person of Jesus, is shed for us so that we have what is necessary to live. The quenching of our thirst, literally and spiritually, is what makes belief in Jesus such an attractive proposition.

So let me end today's sermon in celebration of the Harvest with this thought: that in Jesus we are being truly fed and watered: the bread of life, the source of living water, it is God, our Father, whom we should thank for sustaining us, his children, through his only begotten Son.

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

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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