**Harvest Praise @ Home 24th September 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Genesis 1: 27 – 30 Matthew 6: 25 – 33

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**Reflection from John**

As every year goes by my respect for farmers grows. It’s a tough life and the challenge of making a viable living is for many an ever-growing challenge. So, I want to suggest two things.

Firstly, as we celebrate Harvest this year – if you know a farmer go and thank them for what they do – tell them that we really appreciate their hard work from which we all benefit and not just in terms of the food they produce.

Secondly, just in case you don’t know a farmer or feel too awkward to go and speak to one let’s give them a round of applause.

The old harvest hymn tells us “All may be safely gathered in” but for farmers that means working all day AND sometimes much of the night to supply us and others with food.

And harvest itself is for many farmers – at home and abroad – a fragile business not just because of our unpredictable weather but also the other elements which increasingly endanger our harvests: flood, drought, fire, soil erosion, overgrazing – to name just a few threats.

We might also see how our faith is relevant at this pivotal moment in world history. Our harvests – and our food supplies – are becoming increasingly fragile because of the encroaching climate change which is already upon us. Imagine you are blowing bubbles. Bubbles remind us that Creation, harvest and farming are at the same time vital, beautiful and yet so fragile.

**Our reading from Genesis Chapter 1: 27 – 30** has a few questions to answer. Here we can see clearly one of our problems:

Verse 28 says, **“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”**

These are strong words: to subdue, to have dominion over, as one would stamp or trample on the grapes in the wine press. Surely, we have taken these words too literally for too long?

Biblical scholars tell us rather that dominion means stewardship of all elements of creation that every aspect can thrive alongside us and other species.

This is a hard lesson for us and its implications will now be uncomfortable as we come to terms with having dominated creation rather than be its stewards or caretakers.

Harvest is not just the business of farmers anymore. We must play our part in looking after creation.

Living more simply, recycling not only our waste but clothes, furniture and products which are becoming scarce. As part of our celebration of harvest we can decide to be better stewards of all that is in our care to help preserve the planet. It’s an important choice.

**Then in our second reading Matthew 6: 25 – 33**, we hear Jesus telling us about life in God’s Kingdom – living God’s ways – yes, Jesus actually encourages us all to live more simply and even suggests that we can learn from nature itself by not getting worked up about what we have.

I have plenty of clothes and periodically things go to a charity shop. In recent years I have occasionally not just taken stuff to a charity shop – I have bought the odd thing too. This is the poshest make of shirt I own and I got it from a charity shop. Now that perhaps means I am not such good news for clothes shops but I think I am learning that recycling and upcycling have a part to play in how we all take care of God’s creation…and one another and all future generations.

And today our harvest gifts are part of another vital way in which we play our part for caring for one another and creation too. One way in which we can downsize the larder is to support our foodbanks and those who use them. Those who work there will remind us that they are being used by more and more – I actually wish that food banks didn’t need to exist, but they do as economic fortunes and fuel poverty become more and more of an issue for folk around us.

What you may not know is that the Trussell Trust is a Foodbank organisation which is linked to our Wirral Foodbanks. It is a Christian foundation and starts every day at the shop and office with prayers underlining our dependence upon God for every element in his Creation. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Creator God,

We thank you for the gift that is creation –

For the beauty of the earth and how

you have created us to care for it.

We are sorry for the ways we have neglected this,

Help us to work together to repair the world.

Lord of the Harvest, hear our prayers.

Generous God,

We thank you for the gift of food –

For how it brings us together and nourishes us.

We pray for those without, whose harvests and

store cupboards are empty,

Help us to work together to share the world’s resources

so that everyone can be fed.

Lord of the Harvest, hear our prayers.

Sustaining God,

We thank you for the gift of those who farm

and prepare our food –

For their labour, their innovation and their care.

We pray that everyone will be able to work with dignity,

that there will be no more poverty,

Help us to work together to call for just and fair systems

of pay and working conditions.

Lord of the Harvest, hear our prayers.

All-powerful God,

We thank you for the gift that is creation –

For the beauty of the Earth and how

you have created us to care for it.

We are sorry for the ways we have neglected this,

Help us to work together to repair the world.

Lord of the Harvest, hear our prayers.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**