

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Harvest

Please read through these passages slowly and reflectively before reading my sermon.

Deuteronomy 8:7-18

Ps 65

2 Corinthians 9:6-end

### **Luke 12:16-30**

In writing and reading, speaking and listening, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

A fable:

The industrialist was horrified to find the fisherman lying beside his boat smoking a pipe:

Why aren't you fishing? Said the industrialist.

Because I have caught enough fish for the day

Why don't you catch some more

What would I do with them

Earn more money. Then you could have a motor fixed to your boat and go into the deeper waters and catch more fish. That would bring you more money to by nylon nets, so more fish, more money. So you would have enough to buy two boats, even a fleet of boats. Then you could be rich like me

What would I do then?

Then you could sit back and enjoy life

What do you think I am doing now? – said the fisherman!

In the village churches of our Mission Community Harvest Festival has remained one of the big community events of the church year and it is a time when we can make a public thank you to those amongst us who farm the land which surrounds us. You who farm hold us with a very present understanding of our dependency on land and sea, with a very real connection with

weather patterns and seasons, and with priorities of caring for animals that depend on your sense of responsibility day in and day out. And these things in turn help us, at harvest, have a very real, connected sense of our dependence on the God who creates the land and the sea, and who is our Creator, on whom we depend for all that we are.

So this is a time of real gratitude to all who fish and farm and garden around us for your work, your example and all for which we depend on you.

And it is a time of recognising our dependence on God as our Creator. Our first and deepest relationship with God (which we share with the whole of the creation around us) is that we are brought into existence, by God and we are held in existence by God.

Right now as each of us sits here we do so because God holds us in existence. And the cattle and sheep around us are created and held in existence by God, any pets at home, the birds around us: all are held in existence by God, and the trees, the flowers, even the grass of the church yard – all held in existence by God. This means that our first and deepest relationship with the rest of creation is that we share with everything around us our dependence on God for life.

As we deepen our own awareness of our creaturely relationship with God, perhaps allowing ourselves to stop what we are doing and realise that God is the source of our being (a very simple kind of prayer) we learn to see ourselves as fellow creatures with all the life around us. We begin to realise that if God loves us enough to hold us in existence, then God loves all the life around us deeply too.

In the parable we heard in today's gospel, the rich man with abundant land faces a stark reminder that it is not by his own efforts that he lives, but that he has forgotten his creaturely dependence on God that we have been thinking about. His success has led him to focus on capitalising on his abundance

and putting his efforts in to hoarding for a mythically comfortable future. In his wealth, he has failed to be "rich towards God".

Perhaps, in other words, he has failed to put his creaturely dependence on God at the heart of all that he does.

Jesus sets the story of a man set on hoarding his abundance in contrast with the patterns of dependence in the natural world: the birds of the air and the lilies of the field that just receive what the created world God has made provides. Dependence as creature is hard wired into their way of being.

Human beings have the additional capacity of being able to remember and imagine. Our history and our culture show us that these so often tempt us all into trying to behave on a mass scale like the abundant land owner – finding so many ways we can gather up the riches of creation to hoard, in the chase for a mythically comfortable future:

- The many detaching from providing for themselves with the basics of life and from the understanding and responsibility of care for land and animals and leaving it to the few, in order to chase other riches.
- Intensive farming and food distribution systems which can be cruel, polluting and destructive of local long held family farming
- The creation of trade systems which favour single crops to be grown for export in places where the local occupants cannot afford to feed themselves well
- The development of convenience products which leave a legacy of waste to contaminate land and water

We know this picture.

By I wonder if we can become familiar with a new picture?

I wonder what our earth could be like if we could follow Jesus' call to seek God's way first:

I wonder if we could use our gifts of remembering and imagination to respond to Jesus' invitation to humans to a conscious way of deepening our relationship as creatures by

sharing his relationship as God's child revealing God's love for the world, revealing the Kingdom of God.

How might we begin to change the world if in all our decisions about what we eat, what we wear, how we consume, we remembered

that we are dependent on God for all that we need,

and that the love with which God's us in being, is what holds all other things in being too, and they are precious in God's sight

that our choices can contribute to the life of the Kingdom of God or they can diminish God's creation?

How might we begin to change the world, if we asked God to fire our imagination with a future in which all creation is flourishing: the future Jesus calls the Kingdom of God?

It might be worth recalling the story of another conversation between a visitor and some fisherman with their boats. It is the first story of Jesus' ministry in Mark's gospel. Jesus sees Simon and Andrew fishing, James and John mending nets. His invitation is

Follow me! And I will make you fish for people.

He calls his first disciples to learn with him how to depend on the God who loves them; and to give their energy to sharing that love with others. And not just his first disciples:

he calls us today to renew our dependency on our Creator in thanksgiving and praise for all we have received,

to recognise anew that the love in which we are Created, is the love in which God holds all creation

and to find in that common dependency renewed energy to share the love of his Kingdom with all those who need to discover it

May God redeem our remembering and our imagining that we may lovingly become God's co-workers in renewing the face of the earth. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Quoted from the frontispiece of "Timeless Simplicity" by John Lane