

1st October, 2023

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe,

light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

We plow the fields and scatter
the good seed on the land,

but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand.

God sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes, and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain.

All good gifts around us are sent
from heaven above.

We thank you, God, we thank you,
God, for all your love.

You only are the Maker
of all things near and far.

You paint the wayside flower,
you light the evening star.

The winds and waves obey you,
by you the birds are fed;

much more to us, your children,
you give our daily bread.

All good gifts around us are sent
from heaven above.

We thank you, God, we thank you,
God, for all your love.

We thank you, then, Creator,
for all things bright and good,
the seed-time, and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.

Accept the gifts we offer
for all your love imparts,
and what you most would welcome:
our humble, thankful hearts.

All good gifts around us are sent
from heaven above.

We thank you, God, we thank you,
God, for all your love.



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Luke 12:16-30: Harvest

What harvest do you want? If you're a farmer, we want a good crop, wheat, barley, etc, or good animals. If you're an investment banker, you want more money. If you're a sports fan, you want a good match, and your team to win! If your student you want qualifications and good job. But as human beings we might also want companionship and love, or fun, or peace.

So what do we, or are we, going to invest? My younger sister, with her husband, grows acres of blackcurrants. She has to invest all year round, pruning, applying fertilizers, and spraying pests. As well as uprooting old stock and planting quality replacement bushes. There's a lot of investment, time and money, in their harvest – and it's always at risk from the weather.

Bankers have to invest money, students invest money and time, and for relationships we probably have to invest money, but also time, emotional energy, and our very selves.

Invest deep and count the risk. Paul says, 'whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.' 2 Corinthians 9:6.

We may invest, but we are reminded that the value of our investments can go up and down! In Jesus' parable, the rich man had invested well and gained a good harvest, which he didn't reinvest, he simply put it on 'ice,' only for it to lose all its value to him!

So, what harvests are we receiving and what are banking on? What are we investing in that is a good bet, and which that we risk losing our return on?

We are challenged to invest what we have, including our harvests from other places, our time, our learning, our money, in something that lasts. In the parallel passage from Matthew's Gospel Jesus says, 'seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.' (Matthew 6:33)

What are the Kingdom things we can invest in? We can invest our time, skills, possessions, and money, in relationship with Jesus, and in participation in his work. It might be, it needs to be, prayer, Bible reading, and gathering with the family of God. It might also be youth and children's ministry, worship, or pastoral ministry. It might be overseas mission. It might be friendship, compassion, or kindness, toward a 'neighbour.'

This life is just the warm-up act, the tiny taste of what is come, when all the longings of our hearts will be realised – this is the true harvest for which we are encouraged to invest. C.S. Lewis, who hated boarding school, said it's like the term has ended and school holidays have begun. And in another of his books, *The Great Divorce*, he contrasts heaven as like moving from a dull grey insubstantial ghostly like existence to a life of solidity and bright beautiful colour. Like communion compared to a marvellous feast!

So, what harvest do you long for and into what will you invest, or store things up for? The value of earthly investments can go up or down, but an investment in Jesus and his Kingdom is only going to reap huge returns, so, sow generously, so that you may reap generously.

A prayer: Heavenly father, we thank you for the sacrifice you made through your son Jesus Christ. We know we are not worthy and we are sorry for our creases, our dirtiness and our need of restoration. But by your extraordinary grace, we who believe in your son now ask that his spirit be poured out into our lives. We ask that the door be opened and your son come through and sits, eats, and drinks with us forever more. Amen.

Collect: Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity: *Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. Oct.18th at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Oct 25th at 11am, in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise, for Harvest: TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.