

Service – Harvest Thoughts based on the Bible,

Based on Lectio 365

All worship songs from Hymns and Psalms

Intro: today's Service came from reading an app called Lectio 365, which is a series of daily readings and prayer. It gives the reader three daily times of prayer and reflection, so that you can have different readings each time throughout the day to meditate on and also to hear God speak to you in the quiet times.

No Service around the time when we celebrate our Harvest Thanksgiving would be considered a proper Thanksgiving Service without the traditional harvest hymns, so we start our Service with:

Hymn: H&P 352

WE PLOUGH THE FIELDS and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand;
He 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;
Then thank the Lord, O thank the
Lord,
For all His love.*

He only is the Maker

Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey Him,
By Him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, His children,
He gives our daily bread.

We thank Thee, then, O Father,
For all things bright and good;
The seedtime and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer
For all Thy love imparts,
But that which Thou desirest,
Our humble, thankful hearts.

Prayer

Hymn H&P 305

Let every Christian pray,
This day, and every day,
Come, Holy Spirit, come!
Was not the Church we love
Commissioned from above?
Come, Holy Spirit, come!

The Spirit brought to birth
The Church of Christ on earth
To seek and save the lost:
Never has He withdrawn,
Since that tremendous dawn,
His gifts at Pentecost.

Age after age, He strove
To teach her how to love:
Come, Holy Spirit, come!
Age after age, anew,
She proved the Gospel true:
Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Only the Spirit's power
Can fit us for this hour:
Come, Holy Spirit, come!
Instruct, inspire, unite;
And make us see the light:
Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Reading – Leviticus 23:19-22

¹⁹ Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. ²⁰ The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the first fruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. ²¹ On that

same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ²² **“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.”**

Hymn H&P 342

For the fruits of His Creation,
Thanks be to God;
For His gifts to every nation,
Thanks be to God;
For the ploughing, sowing,
reaping,
Silent growth while we are
sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safe
keeping,
Thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
In the help we give our
neighbour,

God's will is done;
In our world-wide task of caring
For the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of His Spirit,
Thanks be to God;
For the good we all inherit,
Thanks be to God;
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound
us,
Most of all, that love has found
us,
Thanks be to God

THE MESSAGE

Gratitude and generous justice are inextricably linked. It was not enough for the people of Israel to perform rigorous rituals to express their gratitude for all God had provided, their whole lives were to demonstrate God's mercy, justice and generosity to those more in need than themselves. Centuries later, the prophet Micah took up this call, reminding a new generation of God's priorities.....

*"Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:7-8).*

Let's pray – Holy Spirit, what would it mean for me to “not reap to the very edges of my field” but to leave something for others? Are you inviting me to rethink my finances, freeing up more money to respond as I see need, or to increase my giving to charities or food banks?

Let's just pause and pray for a while, to feel the Holy Spirit's presence and await for Him to speak to us.....

In 2023, one in eleven people around the world faced hunger. In Africa, it was one in five. The UN reports that over 2 billion people live with moderate or severe food insecurity despite the fact that “today’s global food production is enough to feed everyone on the planet.”

We pray, Lord it can feel overwhelming to pray for such a massive problem, but nothing is impossible for You. I pick one nation I know where food scarcity is putting lives at risk and I ask You to mobilise Your people to meet this issue with justice and generosity, Amen.

As we return to our Reading from Leviticus, I pay particular attention to my feelings as I hear these words “¹⁹ Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering^[c] and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. ²⁰ The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the first fruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. ²¹ On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ²² “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.”

I now take a few moments to reflect on any particular feeling or thought which was stirred within me in this Reading.....

I think about the time I have, as the field I harvest. Am I reaping my time, right to the edges, leaving no margin for the unexpected, the interruption, or the person who may need my attention? What would it look like to leave the edges of my time available for God and others today? Pause.....

Let’s pray – Lord I want my whole life to worship You and emulate Your character. I surrender my finances, possessions, my skills and my time to You today. Use me as You will. Teach me to be habitually generous. Open my eyes to notice the people for whom I could become part of Your answer to prayer, amen.

And now as I prepare to take this time of prayer forward in my life, the Lord who loves me says in Luke’s Gospel: “³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

(Luke 6:38).

Our closing prayer:

Father, help me to live my life to the full, being true to You in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Holy Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. Amen.

Hymn H&P 355

**COME, YE THANKFUL PEOPLE,
COME,**

Raise the song of harvest home!
All is safely gathered in
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide
For our needs to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of harvest-home.

All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto His praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown;
First the blade, and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear:
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come
And shall take His harvest home,
From His field shall in that day
All offences purge away,
Give His angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast,
But the fruitful ears to store
In His garner evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come,
Bring Thy final harvest home;
Gather Thou Thy people in,
Free from sorrow, free from sin;
There, forever purified,
In Thy garner to abide:
Come, with all Thine angels, come,
Raise the glorious harvest-home.

Let's say The Grace to each other:

May the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of The Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more, *Amen*.

This Service has been prepared by: Christopher Stirling of Steeple Bumpstead Congregational Church, Haverhill, UK.
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