

Today is Harvest
so our readings reflect the harvest theme.

As always - an Old Testament reading
in which Moses reminds his people
that they owe all their harvest to God's generosity.

The land itself was God's gift - the Promised Land -
and possession of it was a sign of God's Covenant.
If we stand by God - he will provide for us.

Moses reminds them of the fertility of the land -
streams and springs

He lists some of the produce of the land
grain, grapes, olives, pomegranates, figs, honey,
even the iron and copper from the mines
are all a gift from God.

He says - when you enjoy all this stuff
remember who provided it - praise the LORD your God.

But he knows they will forget God
and just congratulate themselves on their good fortune.

Proud hearts - "look what I have produced"
But they will forget that it is all God's gift.

He reminds Israel of their time in slavery
how he delivered them from Egypt
and brought them to the Promised Land,
a land flowing with milk and honey.

Do not forget the Lord your God
The Rich Fool

Harvest Festival

Deuteronomy 8. 7 - 18
Luke 12. 16 - 30

So Moses says
when you enjoy all the good things from the land
*Remember the LORD your God,
for it is he who gave you the ability
to produce wealth,
and so confirms his covenant.*

God promised to provide - and he has.

But he wants his people to keep their side of the relationship.
Whatever you call it - Mother nature, the Good Earth -
it is all God-given.
Rain and sun, growth, food, life. It is God's gift.

This is what we do at Harvest time -
we remember all these good gifts
the harvest of field, and of factory,
of ocean, and of mine.
Even the fruit of commerce and the service industries -
in the end - all we have has come from God's generosity.

So here we are - to remember - to give thanks and praise
and to offer our gifts as an expression of our thanks.

The gifts are important too.

Not mentioned in our readings tonight
but they are in so many other harvest readings.
There is a sort of eternal principle at work here.
**What you get out depends on what you put in.
You reap what you sow.**

God measures our thankfulness, by our giving.

It is not like a heavenly bank account
where if you invest - God will pay you dividends.

But our ability to receive from God
is affected by our giving to God, and to others.

It is like love, and forgiveness.
God loves us and longs to forgive us.

If we have mean hearts, and choose not to love
we will find it very hard to know God's love
it will be lost on us.

If we have hard hearts, and choose not to forgive,
we will not receive God's forgiveness
even though he longs to deliver it.
The Bible is very clear.

Sometimes Jesus is so clear, he is offensive.
and the preacher can be in trouble
for pointing out what Jesus has said.

The parable of the Rich Fool is one of those stories.
It is so plain - it is offensive.
But it Jesus giving offence -
because he wants to make his point.

He wants to make his point, because he loves us.

The story he tells is of a man, who does rather well.
He has a bumper harvest, and builds bigger barns to store it.

He decides to retire and live on his accumulated wealth -
"take life easy - eat, drink and be merry."

Of course he gets the quotation wrong.

The Greek Philosophers
who believed that this life was all there was -
and any talk of eternity was foolishness -
they had a saying.

"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

This is all there is - enjoy it now.

They were the Epicureans.

And so in Jesus' story, the whole saying comes true.

The man says "Eat drink and be merry"
but that night was his last.

And on his Judgement Day - God speaks rudely.

"You Fool!" - I said it was offensive.

Jesus was accusing some of his listeners
of being fools.

Don't mis-hear me -

Jesus was not saying that all rich people are fools.

What he says of this man is

"... but he is not rich towards God"

You may have worked hard for your wealth
but it still comes from God.

The fool says, "It is mine"

The Godly man says - I will use my wealth
to acknowledge God's generosity.

Elsewhere the Bible sets out clearly
how we are to do that.

We are to give to the poor and needy.

We are to give to God's work.

We are to give generously.

"Generously" means - work out what you owe -
and then give a lot more.

Work out what you can afford - and give some more.

If you only give of what you have spare
it is not really giving, because it has not cost you.

Compare what you give, with what you spend on yourself.
Jesus said, love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Just giving left-overs is not honouring to God.

This is not me - this is Jesus - this is the Word of God
This is what Harvest is about - even Moses said so.

And then - because some of his listeners
thought Jesus was a bit unworldly.

"Doesn't he know we have to put food on our table
and clothes on our backs?"

Jesus points out the example of the flowers and the birds.

Jesus had a sense of humour.
He uses examples - silly examples - to make a point.
He didn't mean us to be like flowers or birds
but when you next see the birds or the flowers
let them remind you of the point he is making.

God knows you need food and clothes.
And a roof over your head.
And he has provided enough to go round, and more.

God has provided.

It is because people are not generous
that some have too much and some have not enough.

He knows you have to plan to provide.
But some people are so caught up
with worrying about the things of the world
they have forgotten about the things of God.

**Do not get obsessed with the things of the world.
remember the things of God.**

That includes art, and humour,
and justice, and care for the environment,
and relationships, and charity, and generosity.

Things that don't make a lot of business sense
but make our lives worth living.

And care for these things will reap a reward in heaven.

Yes you need food and drink -
but do not set your heart on it.
Don't be anxious and worry about these things,
says Jesus.

Seek the things of God's kingdom

a smile, a joke, small acts of kindness,
as well as time to remember God,
prayer and worship, and living in a godly way.

These things make life worth living.

This is something to think about.
At Harvest time - at any time.

God wants you to be happy.
That's why Jesus tells us these things.

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