

Reading: Psalm 65:1-13

Theme: Harvests

By all accounts this year's harvest is not forecast to be a very good one. Over the years the BBC dedicated programs to Harvest this is the start of a programme in the 2013 series (*that's the best part of this message over!*) With our harvests, especially with rural areas around Doncaster, we so often focus our attention on the produce grown on the land. That is right as there are so many necessary foods grown on or in the land. There is a lovely array of fruits, cereals and vegetables. This is big business in our part of the world. Yet there are other harvests too. In recent years there have been concerns about honeybees, not only producing the honey that some of us really like, but their role in fertilising so many necessary plants for our food. As a youngster growing up in South Wales, it always amused me at our chapel's harvest thanksgiving, that one of the miners always made sure there was a large lump of coal prominent at the front of the display table! It was necessary for their lives and livelihood and enabled them to put food on the table.

We've only to drive a hour or so and we will realise the importance of the harvest we get from the sea with the fishing ports of Hull and Grimsby. Great to have potatoes from which you can make chips, but they are much nicer with fish. So many communities have been dependent upon the harvests that they bring in from the sea day by day for their lives and livelihoods. Yet we can harvest benefits from the sea in other ways - tourism is an obvious way for seaside resorts to prosper, but many are looking at wave power to generate electricity to benefit communities within the UK. We also

benefit greatly from the sea with goods being taken from and brought to our island from many countries. We can have tropical fruit almost all year around shipped in on a regular basis and buy them from the market. Think of the major oil and gas fields that are under the North Sea and that provide for our energy needs. These are incredible resources laid down in God's wisdom and grace for us to harvest and use, and even though it is difficult and dangerous, it is still worthwhile and profitable to do so.

We can also harvest something that is invisible and yet it can be turned into electricity - the wind. The force of the wind can be used to drive turbines of various sizes. It does seem it has to be the right type of wind at the right strength, as on very windy days to run them would prove impractical. Another source of energy that we can harvest is solar power, whether in special solar farms or you have the panels fitted on your house and so get benefits to your bills and heating, and be able to sell some on to the National Grid. Designs and thinking are going on at the moment to combine both solar and wind power in useful and practical structures - this picture shows a proposed design for solar wind bridge by Italian designers. It is designed with solar panels embedded in the road surface that would provide 11.2 million kWh per year. Also, the wind turbines can provide 36 million kWh per year to produce, in total, enough energy to power 15,000 homes. Yes, there are restrictions to where it can be used; needing plenty of sun and plenty of crosswinds, but it is stunningly more eye-catching than traditional wind farms!

There are other items that are crucial to harvest for our lives and livelihood. This needs to be harvested, but what is it? It is silicon - the element and not silicone which is polymers that incorporate silicon together with carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and sometimes other elements (*or so Wikipedia tells me!*) The use of silicon is so important in modern society in the form of silicon chips and so much that is useful and beneficial utilises it. Consider computers and how they've changed over the decades. At one time something with the power of modern calculator would need a room or 2 for its electrical systems and circuits. They have changed and developed and we carry around powerful computers in our bags and pockets. Can we remember life without a mobile phone? They have changed over the 45 years since they first come out - from a heavy brick, to be an essential planner, diary, address book camera, music centre, phone and a host of other things all in a small lightweight electronic gadget.

Perhaps we should call this a Harvests Thanksgiving service as we have already touched upon so many things we can harvest from the earth, air, sea and sun. Just considering those things should cause us to be thankful people, and not only at harvest time, but throughout the year as we use all the good things of God has given us richly to enjoy. How much poorer would our quality-of-life be if we didn't have gas, oil, electricity or computers and, horror of horrors, no mobile phones! It is good and right for us to thank God for all the things that He has put into creation that we can use for our lives and well-being.

That isn't the end of God's kindness and goodness to mankind, including us here this morning. He has provided things much more richly to harvest for our spiritual life and well-being.

Harvest from the Son.

The planet earth is placed strategically in the solar system so that the benefits from the sun allow life to be sustained, maintained and flourish. It is not too hot for life, nor too cold for it. Scientifically we need the sun, its light and warmth and through these life goes on. Spiritually we need the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ for our life – He is our Creator. Jesus is not only the source of physical life, but eternal spiritual life, which He also gives to us. He has done everything we need to have this eternal life through all He did and accomplished in His own life, and especially when He laid down His life for us there on the cross of Calvary.

The Bible tells us we have to go to Him to get this eternal life and we do so by trusting, believing in Him as our own Saviour. When we do that He takes all our sin and guilt away, He gives us this eternal life and an everlasting peace with God. Eternal life is not just about living forever, but it is about an incredible quality of life that is provided by the Lord Jesus and we will enjoy forever in eternity.

As well as being the source and the giver of eternal life, He also is the light of life for all who trust Him. This means that we do not grope blindly about hoping to find a way to live our life, or a meaning for our life, but He will guide us and help us in our life and all the situations we go into and through. In the light and direction He gives in our lives we will know the

warmth of His love, care and attention in everything we go through. In fact, He tells us that He will never leave us or abandon us. We're not subject to the forces of random chance happenings, but He is in control even of the little details in our lives. One day when He chooses, He will take us home to heaven where we will know and enjoy these things fully.

Harvest from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is also God, and on one occasion Jesus pictured Him as wind, referring to the fact that He is unseen and yet His effects can be seen as powerful at times, at other times gentle. He is powerful and gentle in our lives as He comes to help us, comfort and encourage us. He gets alongside us to do these things and He would do as Jesus wants Him to do. He is the one who will refresh us when we are tired and weary, and strengthen us when we feel weak and feel like giving up in the Christian life.

God communicates with us.

Not using Silicon based technology, but much better! God does not need progressive technological advances to be able to communicate with us. He has provided a way that will not become out of date, or obsolete, through which He will always communicate and tell us of the great things He has done. It is by His word and now it is complete with both OT and NT, and we refer to it as the Bible. It can be transmitted in various formats - one-time written down, transcribed in many ways and into many languages, then into print and now electronically. No matter how we read or hear it, we will need the Holy Spirit who will also come and energise it by His power and working, else it would be like a marvellous toy

given to a child, but with no batteries or a power lead - which will look impressive, but not do anything.

We will need God the Holy Spirit to help us understand His word and learn about living our lives and also learn about the Christian life and how our eternal life is to show out in our lives on a day by day basis. One of the things we will learn is that we are able to communicate with God in prayer and part of that is to give Him thanks.

We have touched briefly upon some of the **Harvests** that God has richly provided for our physical lives and well-being – He has given us all things richly to enjoy. We can daily use and enjoy these physical blessings. Yet we have also touched upon some of the things He has also provided for our spiritual life and well-being. Do we daily use and enjoy the spiritual harvest as well as the physical harvest He has richly provided?

The God of all Creation has provided so much for us on both the physical and spiritual levels and it is right that we thank Him for these - not just at harvest time, but at all times.