

September–October 2023

Harvest Festival



Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 All things bright and beautiful (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All 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.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

God’s whole creation groans.

The land produces thorns and thistles and longs to be set free.

Our sin affects all around us.

We confess our sins in penitence and faith.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Harvest

Eternal God,
you crown the year with your goodness
and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season:
grant that we may use them to your glory,
for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being;
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.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the fifth book of Moses called Deuteronomy

When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, 'Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as

an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.' You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

Deuteronomy 26:1–11

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:4–9

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

**HYMN 2 For the beauty of the earth
For the beauty of the earth**

(traditional tune)
(different tune)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

When they found [Jesus] on the other side of the lake, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.’ Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’ So they said to him, ‘What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat”.’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’

Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. *John 6:25–35*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

I like working with young children for many reasons. But one of the greatest is the way that most things fill them with wonder, enthusiasm, and curiosity. I remember how, one spring, my daughter’s school gave out seeds—a broad bean, which we planted. Every day for a month—it seemed more like a decade—we came home and the very first thing we did was to look at the bean. ‘Daddy! Look at my bean!’ She shared her simple yet profound excitement with all of us. Sadly, few of us choose to lavish our precious busyness in looking at things as they grow. ‘Look at my bean! My bean has a new leaf!’ Even as a five-year old, she knew that a seed leads to a plant; and she knew that something was wrong when a seed does not grow. That lack of growth meant that nothing could be harvested.

Harvest festival is the occasion when we think about the gifts God has lavished upon us. Primarily, we think of material gifts, especially the fruits of the land. But we can also think about His other gifts, like security, warmth, friendship, material

blessings, and love. Taken as free undeserved gift, each is good and each demonstrates God's love and care.

But we can think about other harvests. A harvest is the product of something done before, of seeds sown previously. The outward trappings of today's service celebrate a material harvest, but the second half of the service shifts that focus away from the material toward the spiritual. Think of sitting in an optician's chair, watching the vast array of lens in the optician's cabinet. We know we will have to look through each. In a similar way, during today's service we will look through a wide range of lens to explore the ways in which God plants his spiritual seeds. That's what St Paul is inviting us to do in his Letter to the Philippians: 'whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things'—we do well to remember how the name of this service is 'Eucharist', which means 'thanksgiving'.

God has implanted a seed into the soul of each Christian—it is His mighty Holy Spirit, which He implants in our soul at baptism. The Spirit will lie dormant and unseen if we pretend it is not there. But as soon as the seed is nourished, it shows signs of growth. Material seeds come to life when nourished with material things such as warmth and water. And in just the same way, the seed of God in our soul will come to life when nourished, but this time with spiritual food: not water or warmth but our accepting Him, accepting that He exists. We call such an acceptance 'belief' and 'faith.' The Holy Spirit is enabled to grow in our lives when we believe in God and nourish that belief.

Having planted that seed of Himself, God desires a crop, a harvest of tangible fruit in our lives. The idea is obvious: plant an oat seed and you harvest oats; plant a cress seed and you get a cress plant; and if God is planted in a soul then we should expect Godliness.

The verse which ties together these themes comes from today's Gospel reading, from John 6:29, 'The work of God is this, that you believe in the one whom God has sent.' Having planted the seed of His Spirit in our soul, God watches how we grow in faith, how our beliefs change and mature, and how they affect the way we behave.

As we think about a harvest in our innermost soul, this verse gives us three factors to consider. Firstly, 'the work of God is ...'—such growth into a mature belief constitutes work. It simply will not do to say that we can sit there and such belief just 'comes' from somewhere in a form of osmosis or sheer accident. I hear people say to their friends, 'I wish I had your faith,' as though it was some biological gift, like the colour of their eyes or a head of flowing hair. No: growing in belief is work, for we to battle their human nature. Such growth can be scary, for we will continually

need to move out of our comfort zones, facing situations and possibilities we've never met before, and which (if we are honest) we know will change us forever.

Secondly, 'the work of God is this, we are to believe in the one whom God sent': Jesus was sent by God. In today's world, most people (if they even believe in a God) think of Him as somehow 'up there,' remote and uncaring. He is far removed and utterly untouchably irrelevant. Jesus says 'no.' This God does things and gets involved. His involvement is neither whimsical nor irrelevant, for He came down to earth in the form of flesh and blood: Scripture teaches that He came in the form of His Son. 'As it says in John chapter 1, 'God became flesh and dwelt among us.'

This thought leads inexorably to a third: 'the work of God is this, we are to believe in the one whom God sent': we look at this Jesus. Careful and prayerful consideration of Jesus is a principal engine of growing in faith, for he is God. We see God when we look at Jesus. And if we see God, we can see what He is like, and what He wants of us. Indeed, if we are serious about growing in faith, we will continually gaze upon Jesus, seeking to follow and copy Him. He will become more important than anything else in our lives. We start to understand that our whole destiny is wrapped up in this man: no wonder Jesus could call himself 'bread.'

Many years ago we were given a seed. We planted it and, day-by-day, we watched the plant as it grew. 'Daddy, look at my bean!' Christian, far more than the seed of a bean, God has implanted in you a precious seed in the form of His mighty Holy Spirit. As we nourish him, so he enables us to come to life, by which we mean that we grow in faith. Ultimately, we will die. All of us. And we will stand before God's throne in judgement. He will say, 'Well my child, to what extent did you let your faith grow?' If you like, we will be harvested.

What is the fruit in our Christian lives that emanates from the seed of God's Spirit? Is it fruit that will last? Is it worth harvesting?

Blessing the Harvest gifts

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
you bring forth gifts of food from the fields and the sea,
and give us the fruits of the world in their season.

Accept this food that we bring before you,
made from the harvest of your goodness.

Let it be for us a sign of your fatherly care.

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
worthy of our thanksgiving and praise.

Blessed be God for ever.

All Amen.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

The prayers are inspired by the story of creation in Genesis 1.

Let us pray to God the almighty, the King of creation.

God said, 'Let there be light.'

Eternal God, we thank you for your light and your truth.

We praise you for your fatherly care

in creating a universe which proclaims your glory.

Inspire us to worship you, the creator of all,

and let your light shine upon our world.

God of life:

All hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the heavens.'

We thank you for the vastness of the universe
and the mysteries of space.

We pray for all scientists and astronomers
who extend the boundaries of our knowledge.

As we contemplate the wonder of the heavens,
confirm us in the truth that every human being is
known and loved by you.

God of life:

All hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let the waters be gathered together,
and let dry land appear.'

We thank you for the beauty of the earth,
for the diversity of land and sea,
for the resources of the earth.

Give us the will to cherish this planet
and to use its riches for the good and welfare of all.

God of life:

All hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let there be lights in the sky
to separate the day and the night.'

We thank you for the warmth of the sun,
the light of the moon, the glory of the stars.

We praise you for the formations of clouds,
the radiance of dawn and sunset.

Save us from wasting or abusing the energy
on which all life depends.

Open our eyes to behold your beauty,
and our lips to praise your name.

God of life:

All hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let the waters bring forth living creatures,
and let birds fly across the sky.'

We thank you for the teeming life of the seas,
and the flight of the birds.

Help us to protect the environment
so that all life may flourish.

God of life:

All **hear our prayer.**

God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind.'

We rejoice in the variety of animal life.

Grant us grace to treat all animals with respect and care;

to protect endangered species,

to preserve the variety of habitats,

and to honour the delicate balance of nature.

God of life:

All **hear our prayer.**

God said, 'Let us create human beings in our own image.'

We pray for the human family.

We exult in its diversity and giftedness,

we repent of its sins, divisions and violence.

By the power of your Spirit, restore your image within us,

through Christ who came to remake us

by his death and resurrection.

God of life:

All **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty:

open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works;

that, rejoicing in your whole creation,

we may learn to serve you with gladness;

for the sake of him through whom all things were made,

your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Merciful Father,

All **accept these prayers**

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The peace

You shall go out in joy and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. *Isaiah 55:12*

The peace of the Lord be always with you,
All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Come ye thankful people come (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is the source of all goodness and growth,
pour his blessing upon all things created,
and upon you his children,
that you may use his gifts to his glory
and the welfare of all peoples;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 We plough the fields and scatter (click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you have created the heavens and the earth,
and formed us in your own image.

In the fullness of time you sent forth your Son, your eternal Word,
who laid down his life for our salvation
and rose from the grave, the first-fruits of your new creation.

You send forth your holy and life-giving Spirit
to give life to our mortal bodies
and to renew the face of the earth.

Therefore with all the heavenly hosts,
we give voice to everything that you have made,
and sing the eternal hymn of praise.

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **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 for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Lord of the harvest,
with joy we have offered thanksgiving for your love in creation
and have shared in the bread and the wine of the kingdom:
by your grace plant within us a reverence for all that you give us
and make us generous and wise stewards
of the good things we enjoy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.