

AAA Harvest Sunday 3rd Oct 2021

Reading: **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

Theme Introduction -

The four corners of God's love

Start with a large square or rectangular piece of paper, and announce that this is the four corners of God's love. Say, **'It's my piece of paper, so it's the four corners of God's love for me.'** **Count them out to make sure.**

Ask, **'What would happen if I cut off one of my corners and gave it away? I have four, but if I gave one away, how many would I have?'** You may get the answer, 'three'.

Cut off one corner, give it to someone in the congregation, and count your corners again. You have five! You had four, you gave one away, and you have five. And the other person has three. **That's eight whole corners of God's love!**

Try it again with another corner. And get one of the recipients to try it with one of their corners etc.

Keep counting up the new total of corners until everyone loses count.

Reflect on generosity, abundance, giving, God's providence, blessings given and received....

Encourage everyone to take their 'corner' home as a reminder.

Main Talk

The modern British tradition of celebrating Harvest Festival in churches began in 1843, when the Reverend Robert Hawker invited parishioners to a special thanksgiving service at his church at Morwenstow in Cornwall. Harvest Thanksgiving was officially recognised in the Church of England in 1862 when it was introduced into common worship, and we began to write specific words and prayers to say within our services. Harvest services have been taking place for 178 years in one form or another

However, Harvest is at the heart of biblical worship, yes we have been celebrating harvest for many years but in fact it goes back way further. In the Old Testament, the three great festivals of Passover (*Pesach*), Pentecost (*Shavuot*) and Booths (*Sukkoth*) originated to celebrate the harvests of barley, wheat and fruit respectively, alongside remembering God's actions the exodus from Egypt, and God's provision in the wilderness. So, celebrating God's gifts in the harvest of earth's goodness is central to worship. Harvest is about God's provision for us. Our response in worship and love to God and others is that we help provide for others. It's called giving, it's our giving. It's one of the reasons that many churches encourage people to bring food and goods to church during Harvest – ready for these to be passed on to homeless shelters or other needy people in the community and church Medway Food Bank. In our reading today it says our giving should be given carefully. How we give our time, money and resources should be done with thought, with prayer and carefully consideration.

Harvest isn't just a display of fruit, vegetables, packets and tins; It should also be about recognising that our wellbeing, God's faithfulness to us and how we give back to God.

Paul emphasizes in our reading the sufficiency God's Grace in verses 8-9- "All grace," "All things," "All times," "All that you need." Paul makes it clear that as we respond to God's call to give in support of His work through his church, we will not lack anything we need! Paul tells us that we can give and still have enough to live on because God is able. While verses 8 and 9 emphasize God's power to provide for our need; verses 10 and 11 emphasizes God's power to provide for our obedience.

Harvest is about God's provision for us. Share with the person next to you something you are grateful to God for, who or what has God placed in your life that you are grateful or thankful for.

Action

Starting this harvest time, let's make it our mission to thank God daily and to be generous

people. Generous with our time and generous with our resources that God has given us, this can include food and money as offerings to God. We read in Galatians 6:

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people”.

This is telling us that we should keep doing good and not give up and in our reading from 2 Corinthians 9.8-10, God makes it clear that as we give, God will provide for us. The life of Jesus was about giving out to others, doing good and making wrong things right. This is our call too. For some it may be being kind to someone who we know is hurting, social injustice, putting things right, poverty, helping homelessness or being able to give more money to keep our church running. God calls us to seek his heart and respond in a way that he asks.

At the beginning of our service, we kept sharing the corners of God’s love and trying to keep a count of the corners, the more we shared the more out the corners the more we had so

much, so it was impossible to keep count. It's the same with God's love the more we share, we find the more generous he has been to us, the more we do for others we find the more that God has done for us.

Just as Jesus came and gave his life for us – so we are called to give our lives to God and to others. The more we give and share the more there is to go around for everyone. Today, let us make that commitment and make a difference.

In a moment of quiet reflection let us ask God what he's calling us to do and make a prayer of commitment to God now.