

## Remember God's Goodness

OT Reading: Deuteronomy 8:7-18

NT Reading: 2 Cor. 9:6-11

### Harvest Festival

Our first reading from Deuteronomy tells of the time when the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, where they would find a rich land, with plenty of water, wheat, barley, figs and wine, milk and honey. God speaks to them, telling them now that they are about to "have it all" they mustn't forget him - the one who gave it all to them.

The Israelites had spend the previous forty years wandering in the wilderness, where water was in short supply, and their diet was anything but exotic: Manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for supper. Occasionally, when they were lucky, they managed to get a few quails. They spent a lot of time grumbling and complaining, particularly when they remembered the gourmet food they had enjoyed in Egypt – there's a wonderful passage in numbers when they rail against poor Moses for bringing them into this terrible place, and go on for a long paragraph about the cucumbers, the melons, the onions, the leeks and the garlic that they had left behind.

But it must be said that while in the wilderness they never forgot about God. They knew they needed him. But now that they are about to have everything they can imagine in the Promised Land, God is feeling a bit vulnerable.

It's true that when times are hard, most of us have a sense of God's near presence; but when things are going well, we tend to push him into the background. This is one of the reasons why faith in Britain and other affluent countries is not so apparent as it was during the war years, or the depression. It also explains why Christianity and other faiths are growing poorer parts of the world such as Africa, where people are constantly aware of how much they need and depend on God.

Today we celebrate Harvest, giving thanks to God for his goodness, and for the many blessings that he sends us throughout the year, as well as remembering those who have little or no harvest to celebrate.

From their beginnings, Harvest festivals have been about offering part of the harvest – the first fruits - to the One who first gave them to us. As we have bought gifts to our various churches this Harvest time we in

Wotton and Holmbury are offering part of our supermarket shop to the Dorking Food Bank, for the benefit of those less fortunate than ourselves. These donations are very important every day, but particularly in these times, when so many are still suffering from the effects of coronavirus. A few things to ponder: In the past 12 months, nearly 2 and a half million food parcels have been distributed from Food Banks to people in Britain, and nearly 1 million of those went to children, many of whom suffer from malnutrition. Alongside those statistics is another: Every year, an estimated 10 million tonnes of food worth about £10 billion is wasted by food manufacturers, hospitality services and within our own households. As has been said, hunger is not about lack of food in the UK. It's about lack of income and support.

Today, as many of us here are looking forward to lunch or dinner, we give thanks to God for our abundance, and for the fact that most of us don't have to spend much time worrying about where our next meal is coming from. We are also remembering and confessing how often we forget about Him. Our gifts today will help people who have no trouble remembering how much they need God, and who are grateful for every gift, every meal, and every reminder that people care and want to help them.

I hope, as they receive our gifts, that they will have a sense of God's presence in what will for them be abundance. And as we gather here to celebrate Harvest, may we also remember and rejoice at God's love and generosity, even when we stand with both feet firmly planted in the Promised Land.

**Thanks and God Bless.**

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