Harvest 2025

Do you have a favourite meal? One which really sparks happy memories, or which signals a very special time in our life? Maybe it's a special Christmas dinner, or the meal where your husband or wife proposed, or perhaps a special picnic enjoyed with some teddy bears as a child. These special meals all have one thing in common: food. Harvest is a time when we give thanks for God's goodness: for the fruits of the earth, and for the ways God cares for us, and of course for the food we eat. But Harvest is also a time to remember that not everyone's life is as full or as easy as we might hope. For many people, life is hard. Hunger is real. Struggle is real. And yet, the story we hear today reminds us of something remarkable: the way God provides.

Let's imagine we could go back to that day on the hillside. Jesus had been busy teaching, and a great crowd had walked and gathered around to hear him. His teaching was new, and they could relate to it, so naturally lots of people wanted to listen to him. There was a huge number of them: five thousand men, plus women and children. The sort of crowd vicars can only dream of! But it was the end of the day, and they were all tired and hungry. Perhaps there was a little bickering amongst all those people as hunger kicked in. The disciples looked at the crowd and thought something perfectly normal and relatable: "there's nothing here. How can we feed them?" Now if this were us, we'd probably say: "Send in Ali!"... but they didn't have an Ali. They had a little boy with a packed lunch, maybe that his mum had packed for him. That wasn't enough, not for this whole crowd. But Jesus took what little there was, gave thanks to God for it, and gave it to the crowd. And everyone ate. Everyone was satisfied.... and there were even leftovers. Now, five loaves and two fish is hardly enough to feed a couple, let alone thousands of people. But Jesus used it, and this tells us something important: what we have, even if it seems small, can be enough when God is involved.

Question for families: What is something small you have that you could share with others? A smile, a helping hand, a toy, some food?

The story is also about God's generosity. Jesus doesn't look at the problem and walk away, he decides to do something, because he knows that he can. He meets our hunger; in whatever form it comes. God's provision isn't always a dramatic miracle, but it is always there. Sometimes it comes in unexpected ways: through unexpected people, or in ways we might never have thought of ourselves. That flash of inspiration from a friend or family member, or the person we need just showing up at the right time.

That is what Harvest is about: Noticing, Recognising and Trusting: *Recognizing* God's gifts, whether they are big or small, and saying thank you for them. It's about *noticing* that what we have (even if it feels small) can become enough when shared. It's about *trusting* that God can multiply what we offer.

When life feels hard, it can be hard to trust that things will work out. But this story reminds us that God can make more from what we give than we ever imagined.

Question for families: Can you think of a time when something you shared made a bigger difference than you expected?

But let's also be honest, life is hard for many people. Hunger is not just something from a storybook. Around the world and, yes, including here in our own town people go without food, without security, without even any hope. The feeding of the five thousand isn't just a miracle from the past, it's a reminder that there is still need today, and that God calls us to notice it. Notice how it wasn't Jesus that thought "ooh err these people are hungry" … it was the disciples. Like them, we, as today's disciples, are called to notice the need of those around us. That's why Harvest isn't only about thanks. It's also about action. It's about asking: "What can we give? How can we share?" It might be giving food to the foodbank. It might be offering kindness or listening. It might be supporting others in practical ways, even when we feel we have little to give.

In the C of E, we love a good old fashioned bring and share supper. When everyone brings one thing and it's all laid out, there's a feast! Think of a picnic. If everyone brings just one small thing suddenly there is enough for everyone.

Question for families: What could we bring to God's "harvest picnic" this year?

This morning, as we come to the table, we remember both sides of the story. We remember the generous way that God provides for us, and we remember that he always asks us to share what we have. God gives us life, love, and hope, and calls us to offer what we have in return, trusting that it will be enough.

So, as we celebrate Harvest today, let's say a big "thank you" to God. Let us recognise God's gifts and open our hearts to the needs of others. Let us be bold enough to share, not only the things we have, but also ourselves. God's provision is not just about feeding bodies, it's about feeding hearts, being compassionate, generous, and trusting. And here's the thing about the way God works… when we share what we have, we become part of that same miracle, a miracle that still happens today.

Let us pray:

Lord, we thank you for your generous provision in our lives. Help us to notice those who are in need and give us courage to share what we have. Bless our harvest and make us channels of your compassion and care.

Amen.