

## Sermon St Faiths 25<sup>th</sup> September 2016

### Harvest

When I was doing my food shopping this week, I overheard a little girl asking her mum why she needed to take a tin of soup into school for the harvest festival.

Her mum replied that it was for people who didn't have enough to eat, the school would send all the tins to the foodbank.

The child smiled and said, oh that's kind.

It wasn't until a few days later when I began thinking about my sermon for today that I gave it anymore thought.

In a practical sense giving at harvest is an example of the Christian message that we should feed the hungry, as it is an example of our Christian love and service.

Harvest festivals have been celebrated since ancient times, it used to be celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August and was called 'Lammas', which means loaf and mass,

the farmers would bake loaves of bread from their new crop and give them to the church where they were used for communion in a thanksgiving service. Albeit not exclusively a Christian festival the tradition of giving at harvest time can be found in the bible.

There will be many harvest festivals across the country in schools and churches where food is collected for those in need. At the same time, certainly in churches and possibly in schools the gospel message will be shared. Hopefully that little girl in the supermarket might even learn a bit more about harvest at her school harvest festival.

So I pondered some more on that tin of soup.

The tin of soup that will be taken to school by the little girl in the supermarket, and all of our offerings today, are so much more than just an act of kindness, so much more than just a tin of soup.

Show tin of soup

This tin of soup contains everything that we need to celebrate and thank God for this morning.

It is a nutritious meal, something in itself we should give thanks for. It's full of vegetables, carrots, onions, and peas... there is also tomatoes and pasta, herbs and flour.

Farmers have planted the seeds and harvested the crops.

Chefs have mixed all the ingredients and using God's gift of water it has all been cooked to perfection to become soup.

But the soup is not the only harvest in this tin.

The tin itself is a celebration of the earth and the minerals and ores that it gives us. So we can also give thanks for industry and all the men and women who work in industry.

Even the label is a cause for celebration...

the bright colours can remind us just how beautiful the world around us is....truly a gift from God.

The paper label reminds us that we should thank God for the beauty and usefulness of trees.

Even the list of ingredients and cooking instructions on the back....can remind us to thank God for the gift of language and the wonder of modern communications.

The barcode can remind us to thank God for the gift of technology and science in our world and the creativity of the human brain.

All this just in a tin of soup.

Of course when we eat it...we can be reminded to thank God for the gift of all our senses and for the gift of life itself. Life is precious and wonderful, we should celebrate it everyday.

So one tin of soup...that contains everything it says on the label...really is a whole lot more, and was certainly worth pondering on.

Just as harvest time is so much more than just giving, it is a celebration of the gifts God gives us, and is a time for giving thanks to God for those gifts and his abundant goodness.

We are reminded of this in our readings from this morning...the 'first fruits' of the harvest, at first glance is a ritual thanksgiving to God for the harvest and not much more. But if we ponder more carefully we see that the harvest is part of a much bigger picture, God's gift of the land to the people of Israel.

And in our gospel reading, the crowd are thinking of the bread in a literal sense, Jesus is of course speaking in a metaphorical sense, God's provision in a much bigger picture. God sent his son to satisfy the hunger of the human heart and soul. We know that God is worthy of our praise now at harvest and all year.

I wonder if over the next week you might take the time to ponder on ordinary things, to give thanks to God for them and for his abundant gifts.

Amen