

11th October 2020

Hearsall at Home

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.

Today is our Harvest Festival, and many of us have been able to bring harvest gifts to the church during the week. The food we have collected is for the food bank.

Thank you for all your gifts.

Our time of fellowship this Sunday is on Zoom from 11:30am.

Please go to:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85454368639>

Meeting ID: 851 6681 8535

No password is required for this session.

And now we wait on God, the giver of every good gift...

Order of Service 11th October 2020

A harvest for the world

Call to Worship

Psalm 85: 8 - 13

I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants –
but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.

The Lord will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.

Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.

Our land continues to yield its harvest. May we share it with love and faithfulness, with righteousness and peace. We sing together, *We plough the fields and scatter*, remembering in the words of James, that all good gifts around us are sent from heaven above...

Hymn (BPW 135) **We Plough the Fields and Scatter**

We plough the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land
but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand;
he sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain:

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above,
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

He only is the Maker
of all things near and far;
he paints the wayside flower,
he lights the evening star;
the winds and waves obey him,
by him the birds are fed;
much more to us, his children,
he gives our daily bread.

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above,
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

We thank thee then, our Father,
for all things bright and good,
the seed-time and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
for all your love imparts,
and what you find more precious,
our humble, thankful hearts.

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above,
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

Opening prayers

Creator God, we bless you for the elements that make up the vast array of physical reality...

Through these, you cause every bright star and every burning flame; every distant planet and every grain of sand. The stuff of our own bodies was fashioned in the stars and we are fed from an abundance of provision that grows in our fertile planet. Praise you Lord.

We thank you for the work of farmers across the world, and we praise you for the harvests they have reaped this year. Thank you for the harvests from our gardens and allotments, and thank you for the free availability of so much food in our markets, shops and supermarkets.

Forgive us when we are selfish, and when plentiful harvests leave some hungry. Forgive us for our mismanagement of the earth's ecosystems, and show us the way to steward the earth well. Bring forth justice in the earth, teach us to care for all your creatures, and may we learn to share food fairly and bring a harvest for the world.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is 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 forever. Amen.

The earth still spins; the sun still shines; plants still grow; animals still roam; birds still sing; fish still team in the oceans. Let us celebrate the dawn of each new day as we sing, *Morning Has Broken*.

Hymn (WT 297) **Morning Has Broken**

Morning has broken like the first morning;
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven;
Like the first dew fall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden;
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning;
God's recreation of the new day!

Morning has broken like the first morning;
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word!

For **Doors Ajar** this week I went up to meet our dear friend Harold Croft and asked him a few questions...

Well, I'm here with my good friend, Harold Croft. Harold, it's really good to be with you this afternoon. How are you doing?

I'm good, and it's nice to have a little bit of company.

Excellent. Well, it's not only me and you, we've got a third creature here, haven't we?

Yes, we have; we've got Max, my little Jack Russel Terrier.... love of my life, aren't you Max?

Do you find it helps when you're living on your own to have a dog with you?

I certainly do, yes. It takes your mind off other things. It gives you a different perspective, actually. You've got someone to look after and I think that's the main thing for us all, like when Ellen was alive, before she'd died, she wasn't very well, same as Ruth. You're always doing something; looking after someone else; you're occupied. On your own, apart from doing your housework, looking after the dog – there's not much else to do.

So it helps to have a dog to look after then?

I think so, yes.

What about company; is the dog company for you?

Yes, he is immensely; even when I speak to him, he sometimes answers me back.

Well, it's been a strange old time with Covid, hasn't it? What's helped you to cope during the last six months?

Just keeping myself busy. I've got a small property here but a large garden. I have plenty to do in the garden. I don't work myself to death but at this time of the year work's slackening off but it keeps me busy. I clean my house, I do my own washing and ironing; there's always something to do. There are times though you have a tendency to ... for instance, you get a good book, you sit and read... you might not vacuum today – "I'll do it tomorrow." So there's no pressure, actually.

So, would you say that you are enjoying your life at the moment?

Yes, you know, I get out. We have a bubble; there's Eric and Barbie, Val Grecu, Jean Whitlock, myself and sometimes you, so we get out. We might go to Packwood House or...it's a few hours out of the door; it gets you out of the house and I find it's important.

It's good to just see other people and chat to them and so on.

Yes, and it's people that you are comfortable with as well; people that you see on a regular basis. I think life's good.

That's good to know. What about your family? Do you have much family locally?

I have my daughter lives over in Wolvey, I have a sister lives in a home up in South Yorkshire. I only see Pauline every so often; she's mentally retarded, actually, and she was in sheltered accommodation; she is now. There are about twenty other people there and she's happy there. I go up every so often and visit her... and I have family up in Wath-upon-Dearne in South Yorkshire and I drive up there and see my brother. 'Cos me and my brother, Lol, we married two sisters so we've always been very close, actually.

And you lost one of your sisters recently, didn't you, I think?

That was Pat; she was just a little bit older than... she was 18 months older than I was, and she was the same as a lot of people these days. Her husband died; she's left on her own. She lived out in a lovely bungalow in the country with lovely views. That wasn't enough; she came also down with dementia and, I think, that was living on her own. There were old people either side of her and, as I say, her property was a bungalow but it was quite big but it was lonely. From her kitchen through the

windows and glass doors you could see for miles... but it was lonely and I think that's the killer.

What do you miss about church at the moment?

Seeing people that I know every week. It's an expectation; it's something to look forward ...and, you know, for years I wasn't much of a church-goer but now I look forward to it because I see people I know and I find it a nice community in there.

I think you were a regular member of Luncheon Club, weren't you?

I was and I miss that as well.

You still are a member of Luncheon club, 'cos it's still there, isn't it? It's just that we're not actually meeting.

You see, Wednesday I did Luncheon Club; Thursday, in the eating hall, I volunteered for an Alzheimer's Group which was very interesting and I've had a few laughs in there.

What do you think about all this social distancing and wearing masks?

It can be a bit of a pain but it is essential. On a Saturday night I go up to my local pub; it used to be The Bell. They've changed its name, I think. It's the Post House or something like that. Saturday night, my next-door-but-one neighbours, they go, so I go along with them. There is distancing and people sit at tables, obviously, but I went to the gents' toilet – I was the only person moving and the young guy behind the bar called me by name and he said, "Harold, put your mask on."

"Okay, sorry." Those things, I didn't think walking through the place, 'cos it wasn't crowded, wasn't much of a necessity, but they think it is. "Put your mask on." And yet we're sat at the table, four of us, without masks.

So the rules, it's hard to kind of make sense of them sometimes, isn't it?

Well, the thing is, you know, you sit there, you're with friends, you don't think about rules and regulations, so you get up and walk and that's when you think, you should think there's other people in these places.

So what would give you hope for the future or hope for humanity at the moment?

I think eventually it will get back to normal. I don't know how long it's going to take but it will get back to normal. I'm quite positive of that. I mean, you look around; just walk around the streets, it's normal. There's not as many people in the street, or whether it's just this area, but people are still talking, so I am quite positive that we will get back to normality.

It would be helpful if they could find a vaccine, wouldn't it?

It would, yes.

Do you have any messages for your friends at Hearsall who might be listening to this?

Yes, be positive, get out, meet people, knock on your neighbour's door if you have to, talk to someone.

Thanks Harold for sharing your thoughts with us all.

In the privacy of your own home you might like to get up and jig a little as we celebrate God's goodness to us in a couple of happy choruses... *Praise Him on the Trumpet and O give Thanks...*

Songs (WT 349 & 316) **Praise Him on the Trumpet** followed by **O give Thanks**

Praise Him on the trumpet,
The psaltery and harp.
Praise Him on the timbrel
And the dance.
Praise Him with stringed instruments too.
Praise Him on the loud cymbals,
Praise Him on the loud cymbals.
Let everything that has breath
Praise the Lord!

Chorus

*Hallelujah, praise the Lord,
Hallelujah, praise the Lord;
Let everything that has breath
Praise the Lord!*

(Repeat from the beginning)

O Give Thanks

O give thanks to the Lord
All you His people!
O give thanks to the Lord for He is good.
Let us praise, let us thank,

Let us celebrate and dance!

O give thanks to the Lord for He is good!

(Repeat)

Offering

Let us pray.

Loving Lord, many of have been able to share gifts for Coventry food bank this week.

We offer these gifts to you and we pray for the work of the food bank. May our simple gifts bring hope and nourishment to people in need, and may our society learn to structure itself so fairly that food banks in the future are no longer needed. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Our prayers this week are led by our dear friend, Sandra Noel...

Father, as we worship you today from our homes, most of us I'm sure know or have even prepared the meal we will have later on. Our cupboards are full, as are our fridges and freezers, so as a result very few of us have ever felt real hunger. We pray for those who always feel hungry, never knowing when they will have the next meal.

Bless those who work so hard to get our provisions ready for us to use — the agricultural workers , those who work in factories preserving food products and shop keepers who stay open quite late so that we may purchase what we want, though not necessarily need.

We know that climate change is having devastating impacts in many countries. We pray for countries like Ethiopia where rain now only falls in August and they do not have enough to survive. We turn our taps on without thinking and yet some people have to walk miles for clean water. At present we also pray for France and Italy coping with dangerous floods, causing death and destruction. Bless all charities who work so hard to provide aid and resources for those in need.

We know that throughout the world the Covid pandemic has had devastating effects on people's livelihoods. Many folk have lost their jobs and so are unable to feed their families. We ask your blessing on all those who volunteer to work in Food Banks in

this country and in our city. May the donations that we have given be used wisely and well so that needy families will benefit at this time. Bless those who have never been in this situation before and feel guilty and embarrassed about having to use Food Banks. May they be treated with sympathy and understanding at this difficult time for them.

We pray for our fellowship here at Hearsall. We realize even more now how important fellowship is, binding us together in love. We give thanks for all those who work so hard each week to provide the "on line" services which are a great blessing. We ask you to bless the deacons who will hopefully make decisions about when and how we will meet together again. May the Covid restrictions at present be managed so that our congregations feel safe.

Now we will have a time of quiet as we bring individuals and issues to God for his guidance and protection.

Lord hear our prayers, for we ask them in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

Thanks Sandra for those thoughtful prayers.

We hear our principal Bible readings: from Deuteronomy and from James.

Deuteronomy 24: 10 - 22

¹⁰ When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbour, do not go into their house to get what is offered to you as a pledge. ¹¹ Stay outside and let the neighbour to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. ¹² If the neighbour is poor, do not go to sleep with their pledge in your possession. ¹³ Return their cloak by sunset so that your neighbour may sleep in it. Then they will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the LORD your God.

¹⁴ Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. ¹⁵ Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

¹⁶ Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.

¹⁷ Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. ¹⁸ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

¹⁹ When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. ²¹ When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. ²² Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this

James 5: 1 - 9

Warning to rich oppressors

5 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ² Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Patience in suffering

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

The book of James speaks for itself! Let us be those who remember the rights of poor workers, who hear the cry of the needy and who speak out for justice. Let's sing, *I Will Speak Out*.

Song (WT 199) **I Will Speak Out**

I will speak out for those who have no voices
I will stand up for the rights of all the oppressed
And I will speak truth and justice
I'll defend the poor and the needy
I will lift up the weak in Jesus' name

I will speak out for those who have no choices
I will cry out for those who live without love
And I will show God's compassion
To the crushed and broken in spirit
I will lift up the weak in Jesus' name

(Repeat Verse One)

Loving Lord, speak through my words to bring your comfort and challenge to us all.
Amen.

Sermon

A harvest for the world

Last year foodbank charity the Trussell Trust gave 1.6 million packs of food supplies, a 19% annual increase on 2018. What sort of people needed this food, do you think?

A BBC story highlighted people like:

a pensioner who was hit with an absurdly high bill, but just paid it rather than complaining, and had little money left for himself;

or a woman whose financial problems began because she was fleeing from domestic violence.

Researchers tried to identify the typical users of food banks in a major study a couple of years ago. They found that the most frequent recipients were single men, lone mothers with children and then single women. It was usually people of working

age, middle-aged rather than young or old, mostly those living in rented accommodation. Almost nine in ten were born in the UK.

These food bank users were living in "extreme financial vulnerability" and might have a life of missing meals, often for days at a time, going without heating and electricity. About five out of six were without a job and depending on benefits - and those in employment were usually in insecure, low-paying work.

According to a story last month in the Independent, tens of thousands of people have been forced to rely on food banks for the first time in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, and demand for food parcels is likely to rise by as much as 60 per cent this winter compared with last winter. The Trussell Trust estimates that 846,000 food parcels will be distributed in October to December this year – with six given out every minute – as furlough comes to an end and unemployment is set to grow.

In one story, parents Leah Gale, 25, and Carl, 28, from Sherborne in Dorset, found themselves struggling to afford the basics for their three children – Jayden, six, Colby, four, and Evelyn, two – when work dried up for Carl, a self-employed painter and decorator, during lockdown.

The family were forced to turn to their local food bank for the first time, and they have also been supported by funds from a special coronavirus appeal, which helped them pay for gas and electricity as well as buy summer clothes for their children. That came through another charity.

"We were doing OK before the pandemic – just. But everything went downhill rapidly after lockdown," Leah explained.

One food bank recently reported a 700% rise in demand since lockdown began. Some foodbank users had lost work and weren't offered furlough, and did not have recourse to public funds. With some people on reduced hours, some finding the benefit system to be inadequate and some rough sleepers now leaving hotels, many people are in need of food.

A worker in Brent, London, described it in these terms: "People turn up and break down into tears. They never thought they would end up in a situation where they

would need to ask for help to eat. Sometimes they've already gone without food for days. It really is heart-breaking."

Deuteronomy chapter 24 may have been edited during the time of King Josiah in Judah in the 8th century before Christ. At a time of occupation by the Assyrian Empire, the young and righteous king was told that a book of the Law had been discovered in the temple. He read the book aloud before his people and led a time of dramatic reformation for them all, turning aside from false religion, some of which was associated with child sacrifice.

The section we heard is part of a second sermon attributed to Moses. It deals with civil law, including arrangements to help the poor and the stranger...

Integrated into the ordinary business of life we find thoughtful provisions for the poor. If an Israelite made a loan to a poor person, he should not invade that person's privacy and charge into the house for collateral. He should respectfully wait until the poor person finds what he needs to secure the loan. In an almost comical twist, if the loan is secured by a poor man's cloak, well that collateral must be returned to him every night to keep him warm. That would be such an irritant for the rich man - every morning having to collect the cloak and every evening having to return it - that it seems a ridiculous arrangement.

But that may be the point - that if a man is so poor as to have to pawn the coat on his back, isn't that a shameful indictment on the whole society in which he lives? So, in this case, if the loan provider wishes to be righteous before the Lord, well then he jolly-well must come for the cloak every morning, and he jolly-well must return it every evening.

The laws we read include a general statement not to take advantage of the poor worker on a zero hours' contract. Make sure they get fairly paid every day - whether they be local or migrant workers.

Foreigners and orphans must be granted justice, say these laws. Don't abuse the power of wealth or status to deny such people a proper hearing.

Oh, and when you harvest, well these were the rules:

If you miss a sheaf of wheat the first time, just leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow to pick up. When you shake olives from your trees, only do it the once, so that a few are left for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. Oh, and when you harvest your grapes, only go through your vines once - anything you miss is for, you've guessed it, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. So in your harvesting, don't be over-thorough; err towards generosity and leave something for the poor.

I want to highlight two things about the motivation the text offers for these laws.

The first is, **memory**. '**Remember** that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.' Now the people of the time of King Josiah, when the text of Deuteronomy was rediscovered and edited, lived centuries after the time of slavery in Egypt. Yet the ancestral memory of being utterly poor - powerless living tools existing for the convenience of a host nation - that memory is meant to give God's people a deep empathy with anyone who is poor, powerless, weak. *Remember...*

The second is, **spirituality**. When the cloak, claimed as loan collateral for a poor man, is returned every night, that is a righteous act *in the sight of God*. When wages are not paid to the poor zero-hours contract worker, that is a sin *before the Lord*. If the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow are left food in the field, that is the way to attract *the blessing of God* on the work of their hands. So these acts of building into the system some little tricks that benefit the poor - well that isn't only morality, it's spirituality. It's a way of pleasing God, and being blessed in his sight.

The whole book of Deuteronomy was a call to spiritual fidelity. At chapter 6 and verse 4, the nation were being challenged to lay aside the worship of other gods and unite behind a celebrated and solemn declaration called the Shema:

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

The national laws rediscovered in Josiah's time regarded justice for the poor, the weak and the disempowered as a litmus test of true devotion to God. This may have echoes in our own country today, though we are a nation of fragmented religious observance and uncertain spirituality. The echo, though, for any community of faith is clear.

We are a part of a society in which, for a whole host of reasons, some are going hungry. It's clear that we who claim to worship God must play our part.

I know nobody who ploughs the fields and scatters the good seed on the land. But we all draw from the abundance of global harvests every time we buy groceries. As the ancient farmers of Israel were told to leave some food in the fields, to leave some olives on the trees, to leave some grapes on the vines for the widow, the fatherless and the foreigner, so we can each get into the habit of buying more groceries than we need, and donating to a food bank for those in the UK today who cannot manage to buy food.

What motivates us? Remembering and spirituality!

Some of us, like those ancient Hebrews, might **remember** times in our national history when people had to dig deep, when rationing was in place, when cupboards were bare. This is especially true for the people of the great city of Coventry, ravaged and reeling as we were from the blitz. But this remembering should give to the whole national British psyche a natural empathy with all those who are in “extreme financial vulnerability” today.

And those of us who worship God learn that caring for the needy is a key aspect of our **spirituality**. A worship of God which consists only in saying prayers and singing hymns, however beautiful the prayers, however glorious the music, is a church whose worship is a kind of holy pantomime, a play-acting of a renewed life.

Romans 12:1 makes it very pointed: *Offer your bodies to God as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God: this **IS** our true and proper worship.* Eugene Peterson translates it thus:

Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.

And James, the brother of Jesus, writing to Christians here and there in the ancient world, clearly expects justice for the poor to be central:

The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Almighty. Selfish greed is condemned, and James calls the Christian church to be like a farmer awaiting the harvest to come: a harvest of peace and justice.

We await the coming Kingdom of God, which is a harvest for the world, a harvest for the whole world. We await the day when no child will be left hungry at night time. In the meantime, we bear witness to God, we express his coming kingdom, we complete our worship, by doing whatever we can to feed the hungry people of Britain and the world today.

Amen.

In our world-wide task of caring for the hungry and despairing, in the harvest we are sharing, God's will be done. We sing, *For the Fruits of His Creation...*

Hymn (BPW 123) **For the Fruits of His Creation**

For the fruit of all creation,
thanks be to God;
for his gifts to every nation,
thanks be to God;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
in the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;
in our worldwide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God;
for the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God;
for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,

most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;
And the love of God;
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all,
Evermore.
Amen

Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you
Wherever he may send you;
May he guide you through the wilderness;
Protect you through the storm;
May he bring you home rejoicing
At the wonders he has shown you;
May he bring you home rejoicing
Once again into our doors.

Harvest for the World

Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world

All babies together, everyone a seed,
Half of us are satisfied, half of us in need.
Love's bountiful in us, tarnished by our greed.
When will there be a harvest for the world?

Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world
A nation planted, so concerned with gain,

As the seasons come and go, greater grows the pain,
And far, far too many feelin' the strain.
When will there be a harvest for the world?

Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world

Gather everyman, gather everywoman;
Celebrate new life, give thanks for your children;
Gather everyone, gather all together,
Overlooking none, hopin' life gets better for the world.

Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world

Dress me up for battle, when all I want is peace.
Those of us who pay the price, come home with the least,
Nation after nation, turning into beast.
When will there be a harvest for the world?

Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world
Harvest for the world