

Today is Harvest Sunday a tradition that while I am unaccustomed to it, I have been delighted to participate in and learn more about this year. Last year I was on holiday for Harvest Sunday and I was pleased to learn various stories from our worshipping friends at the day centre this week on Wednesday.

From what I understand, Harvest Sunday is a day in the year when we set aside time to appreciate all that God has done for us in our lives using the harvest as an example of something very physical and tangible that is happening right now that showcases the multitude of ways in which God blesses our lives.

There are many ways in which we have our lives blessed by God, and many ways we are fortunate compared to many other regions of the world. It can be difficult to recognize these blessings when we find ourselves living in a society that is currently focused on capitalist values.

It can be difficult to recognize that the weather we receive is a blessing on days when all we want is a little more sunshine to dry the wash. It can be difficult to notice the ambient level of safety here in Kinross unless you are have lived somewhere else where the police presence we had for Kings arrival is a normal part of every day life. It can be difficult to notice the general kindness and niceness of your fellow Scots you see in the streets, meet at church, and chat with randomly in a coffee shop.

Unless perhaps you're an American, or from another part of Scotland that feels different from here. Without setting aside time to be thankful for the various aspects of our lives we can find ourselves wallowing in ungratefulness when we are in fact surrounded by blessing.

This is the genius part of Harvest Sunday, I feel. After all, it can be difficult to appreciate quality of produce we receive here in Kinross as a blessing unless we set aside a specific time of year to recognize the difficulty it takes to grow on a commercial scale, deliver to distributors, who then send out to various corner shops and grocery stores, and shop workers who carefully set out displays of fruit and veg, so we can see what is truly the best of the best. The amount of work and effort it takes to feed us is truly staggering and monumental.

I think setting aside the time on Harvest Sunday to recognize the role God plays in our lives, keeping us fed and caring for us is important. We know that God takes care of us in ways we often do not see, but on days like today we can see the tangible physical ways in which God cares for us through the produce that is brought in from the fields.

So, in the spirit of thanksgiving and reflection I would like to invite you now to please take the next 3-4 minutes, to talk with someone nearby you about a memory from Harvest Sundays gone by, or about a blessing you feel that you are experiencing in your life right now. Take a few minutes now and chat with someone nearby. Or give someone you love a call and share in the memories together.

I'll share one of my own. Yesterday, we had a fantastic concert to celebrate Lindsey's birthday as well as a hugely successful fundraiser for both Prospects Scotland and KYTHE. It is such a blessing to have a musical community to put on a wonderful performance, even if it may have cost me my voice today.

But it is our privilege to care for each other, and our call as Christians to do so. This can take many forms including fundraising efforts for programs who are doing excellent work already, and facilitating donation drives.

It is this call to our Christian mission, to care for each other, and to spread the blessings of God almighty, that we find in our Psalm today. It may not have been immediately apparent to you in the first reading but I assure it is there.

As I was reading this scripture and studying the various notes from other theologians I learned a few things. I already knew that the psalms were poetry, and that a good number of them were written by David. This one Specifically is a Psalm that David wrote. Now it is worth noting that David wrote a wide variety of psalms including lamentations, he did not exclusively write psalms of praise.

What makes this one so interesting and relevant to us today, is the poetic structure that is completely missed on the English reader. The focus of this psalm very easily determined by us is about God, and praising God. But there is a set of verses from 11-13 where the focus of the verses is about

God's kingdom, and in Hebrew the first letter of each line spells out, Malach. Which of course means KING.

And while many of you might not flinch at the thought of referring to God as King or Jesus as King. For a Jewish audience listening to a psalm written by their king David or soon to be king, they would have made the connection to God's kingliness and the following lines. The Lord supports all who fall down, God give them their food, God opens their hand and satisfies the desire all living things.

This connection would have been solidified because as you all know, a King is supposed to care for the needs of his subjects. Kings, leaders, government officials, whatever we might call them now, it is the responsibility of the ruler to provide for the needs of the people.

Rather than get into the politics of the level of care being offered by our current government and the role the monarchy plays in caring for the citizenry, let's set that all aside for just a moment and focus on the Kingdom of God, and focus on the King of Kings.

In the Kingdom of God, we as Christians recognize along with our psalmist today that God is responsible in many ways for providing for us and caring for us in our day to day. Our current political and sociological climate would tell you that you do not have enough. You need more. You need cooler, better, more expensive stuff!

But on days like today, we use Harvest Sunday to recognize that God does care for us and provides plenty for us. God is the one who guides the wind and rain, God guides the sun and clouds, God who made the earth and all that is within it. Without God we would not have anything to eat.

Nor would we have anything to eat without our hard working farmers.

Which is to say, that even in a kingdom where the King of Kings is responsible for us, we still have our roles to play in God's kingdom. We are still called upon to act and care for others. Which we are putting on full display this morning with the food that will be sent to Broke not Broken for distribution, and the financial offerings to Shelter Box to help people from all over the world.

Today is Harvest Sunday when we give thanks to God for the crops that have been carefully grown and harvested. We give thanks for all the immeasurable ways in which God continues to provide in our lives. We also recognize God's calling to us, to share that harvest, to share in the blessings and bounty we have with everyone around us. As servants of the King, we are also called to care for his people. And so we shall.

This is the word of the Lord,
Thanks be to God,
Amen.

Rev. Austin Wicks