

Harvest Festival - 4th October 2015

Readings: Joel 2:21-27, 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Matthew 6:25-33, Psalm 126.

"The earth has yielded its fruits, the Lord our God has blessed us."

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

My dear friends,

The above quotation and the prayer we said together today is an indicator to the nature of our reflection today. This Sunday is special because it is different from every other Sunday. It is different because it is a day when we show our gratitude to God with what he had given to us.

The first reading today from the book of the prophet Joel asks us to rejoice and not be afraid because the Lord has done great things. Not only to us as human beings was this addressed to, but to all creatures of God. It goes on to narrate some of the things the Lord has done.

The Psalm is typical of what we all know regarding sowing and reaping. It talks about the joy that flows from reaping when the sowing was hard going.

Paul, in his letter to Timothy, urges the people of God to pray and give thanks to God for the wonders of his creation. Taking it further, the Gospel asks us to have faith in God as our Provider. It goes on to say that worrying about things in life is of no use because all is in the hand of God who knows what is good for us before we know it.

I began this sermon by saying that this day is special. The question is, why it different from every other Sunday? It is special because it is the one day we say thanks to God for the wonders of His creation. Today we bring to God the things he has blessed us with

In the early years when the people of God were an agricultural people, the advice was that they bring to God a part of the Harvest from their land. We know equally that the first fruits of the womb of man and beast belonged to God. This was part of the Covenant God made with his people. In Exodus 23 it says:

"Celebrate the Harvest Festival when you begin to harvest your crops..." (Exodus 23:16)

"Each year, bring to the house of the LORD your God the first corn that you harvest." (Exodus 23:19)

The book of Numbers 23:16 is a further injunction regarding harvest, ***"When you harvest your fields, do not cut the corn at the edges of the field, and do not go back to cut the ears of corn that were left; leave them for poor people and foreigners. The Lord is your God."***

My dear friends, God was speaking to the people God in their historical situation. They lived on the products of the land and what was demanded of them was the product of the land. They were equally reminded to remember the poor and the needy as they harvest their crop. This message is for our reflection as we celebrate this festival.

Today, we have diverse occupations and the same demand is made on us as the people of God. Since we must respond in our historical situation, we are expected to show this gratitude in different ways. If you have grown flowers, food, etc in your garden bring them as

part of your offering of gratitude. Whatever your occupation is, what God wants is a fruit of your labour. If it is not possible to bring direct fruit of your labour remember to redeem it with money or something else. At the end of the day, it is up to you to know or choose how to show your gratitude to God. You could be liberal in your interpretation or literal -like the carpenter/joiner who brought in a coffin as the fruit of his labour and ended up causing stampede in the church.

What you do today is up to you. While it is laudable for people to go out of their way to buy things to present during Harvest, it is preferable for you to give the product of your labour or redeem it with whatever you can.

Let us reflect on these.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.