

# WEEKLY SERMON

[communicate@blackburn.anglican.org](mailto:communicate@blackburn.anglican.org)



## Come, Ye Thankful People Come

Some years ago, I found myself leading a mission week in Europe with a Church of England chaplaincy. It fell in October. I was expecting to be asked to think about how we might encourage people in their discipleship, or how we might help the church reach new people. What I did not expect was to be told we would be keeping a typical British harvest festival, complete with the singing of 'We Plough the Fields and Scatter'. Nevertheless, that is what happened in this most sunny of Mediterranean settings. A little bit of home, you see, for a mainly expatriate congregation.

We are in the middle of that time of year when, in Britain, we celebrate harvest thanksgiving. Gratitude for the harvest is, of course, as old as humanity. All major religious traditions have some variant on this celebration. In our own culture, it has resonances of a rural lifestyle that many do not inhabit these days. Yet, the instinctive sense of wanting to be thankful, remains important. Of course, it is right to give thanks for our food, for those who work the land and provide it. Yet, it runs even deeper than that. This is about a profoundly human need to be thankful.

For the Christian, this is embedded deep within our story. Jesus, leaving his friends, bequeathed the gift at the Last Supper of what we know now as the Eucharist. That word, from the Greek language, means thanksgiving. So, as the Church is called to recollect Jesus' command to 'do this in memory of me', we are truly the People of the Thanksgiving. Being grateful is who we are to be – it is a command from the one we follow.

This year, amid the harsh realities of pandemic, with its attendant economic impact as well as casualties, it can seem hard to be grateful. Yet, it remains a vital part of who we are. Spending time to regularly be thankful for God's love for us, those who care for us and support us. For the many blessings we have known in life. It remains one of life's challenges that, in general terms, some of the most thankful people I meet are those with least materially and who live simply. Yet, all Christians are called to be thankful, not just at harvest time.

So, why not spend a time reflecting on what you have to be thankful for. Remember whenever you are present at an act of Holy Communion, this is our chance to offer to God our thanksgiving. We could, indeed should, resolve to be people who seek to be thankful as an act of being a transforming presence in our community.

This autumn, tempting though it may feel to feel downhearted, whilst we may not be able to be happy given all that is around us, let us be a Thankful People – Come!

**The Ven David Picken**  
**Archdeacon of Lancaster**

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES