

Time for Reflection

I suppose the most basic harvest question of all is: was it worth it? It's a question that is usually related to investment and choices. Did I sow the right crops, invest in the right soil nutrients, weedkillers, machinery, labour resources; did I buy the right quality of seed? Harvest is a time for reckoning. Did it pay off, was it worth it?

These questions are relevant to a host of situations that have nothing immediately to do with fields, weeds and crops. They are central to economic and commercial life. They are relevant to political life, and indeed to life itself. And it is this that makes the harvest language and imagery so compelling and contemporary for every generation in every place. The fact that the Bible uses this language is in a sense fortuitous – there was not the range of images, perhaps, available to its writers as is available to us – but also inspired, in the universal applications it can have.

It describes two kinds of initial investment; two kinds of nurture and two kinds of reckoning. The Old Testament is essentially about God's investment in us. Time after time it invites us to put ourselves in God's place and assess whether that investment was paying off. The investment in question was seen by the Old Testament writers as creation itself and all its positive consequences. It was also seen as the gift of the 'how' as well as the 'what.' In other words, God's investment was to do with providing the means for civilised society to prosper through the application of justice and the treasuring of concepts such as truth, peace and love.

The New Testament continues that theme with the added 'top up' investment of Jesus himself and all that his life ministry and death achieved. But it also explores our investment in God. When religion is freed from a strictly ethnic straightjacket and has to be argued for in an international melee of cultures, it is not sufficient to simply

appeal to national identity to commend it. There has to be some kind of response to the question: why should I believe? and the New Testament has much to say about that in terms of what the Eucharist prayers describe as 'the benefits of His passion.'

For us today these two investments are still hugely relevant. God's investment in us through creation, liberation and civilization still needs to be recognized, responded to with thanks giving, overseen and stewarded carefully. Harvest is also a time to think about our investment through our faith.

Financial advisers are always urging us to invest more and to look at our overall wealth and what it might produce in the future. Religious investment (if we can call it that) is not quite like that – it's not about storing up a bigger pension pot in heaven - but it does involve self-enquiry, asking the question, am I giving enough; am I valuing the gifts that I have and the resources that I have garnered, by using them to their fullest extent, would someone looking at my life from where we might think God sits, decide that the investment in me was worth it? In the New Testament, these questions are clothed in harvest imagery and describe what, in the picturesque language of the past, we have called, the last Judgement. Matthew chapter 25 gives us a fair checklist to get us started.

And what of our investment through our faith? When I think along these lines myself, I often reflect on words of former bishop of Durham, David Jenkins. He was challenged to state the essentials of his faith in words of one syllable, in one sentence. He almost managed it, but used two sentences. They are both about investment. "God is; he is as he is in Jesus so there is hope. God is; he is for me, so it is worth it.

John Holdsworth

St Helena's Church Larnaca

Some Forthcoming Events:

Harvest Festival

Friday 6 October 6.30 pm Harvest Service at our Perivolia shop

Sunday 8 October 9.30 Harvest Eucharist Service St Helena's Church

Monday 9 October 7pm Harvest Supper Upper Room St Helena's Court

Goods donated for Harvest are distributed to the needy through local charities

Book sales restart on Wednesday 27th September, and thereafter on the last Wednesday of each month.

Luncheon Club restarts on Wednesday 4th October and thereafter on the first Wednesday of each month.

Our main fundraising event of the Autumn will be our Autumn Fair on Saturday October 28. This will be a great event with a local choir and lots of attractions. Further details available on a separate handbill.

Everyone is welcome at St Helena's, regardless of age, ethnicity, religious background (or none), or any other individual identifier. We meet at 9.30am each Sunday.



Harvest Pastoral Letter

September 2017