



Good morning and welcome

Today we have our harvest thanksgiving, so shall we begin by reading psalm 126, which is a reminder that only when we sow will we have any hope of a harvest.

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negeb! Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Amen

## Mission Praise 1209

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not,  
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

*Great is thy faithfulness,  
great is thy faithfulness;  
morning by morning  
new mercies I see;  
all I have needed  
thy hand hath provided -  
great is thy faithfulness,  
Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and spring-time and harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

*Great is thy faithfulness,*

Pardon for sin, and a peace that endureth,  
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*Great is thy faithfulness,*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4ox4es1jo8>



Let's pray

Gracious God and great father of us all, you are all things to us because you have done all things for us. We are your hopeful people because you are our faithful God. We sow seeds in hope, and sometimes in tears, because seed is precious, and we reap with joy and thanksgiving. Today, we remind ourselves that all good gifts around us are sent from heaven above, and the greatest gift is your own Son, who came from heaven into our broken and fallen world. We thank you that he who was rich beyond measure, became poor, that we who are poor might become rich beyond all imagining. So, on this day of thanksgiving let the week say 'I am strong' and let the poor say 'I am rich' because of what the Lord has done for us. We pray in the name of your Son who taught us to pray together: Our Father....

I'm sure, like me, you have noticed over the last few years even decades, there has been a growing antagonism to religion in our society. 'Religion is responsible for many of our worlds ills, and we would be better off without it,' so the rhetoric goes. This, of course, has become particularly fashionable since the rise of Islamic extremism.

I agree with this sentiment up to a point, religion is responsible for many of the worlds ills, as long as we realise that everyone in one way or another is religious; we all have our gods and temples, whether it's the shopping mall, football stadium, mosque or cathedral.

The word Religion comes from the same word as ligament and carries with it the idea of binding and connecting; in other words, without religion society would, in fact, fall apart, like a body without ligaments. Regimes that have tried to obliterate religion have found this out to their cost. So they try to replace traditional religion with a religion of the state, which is what communism is (just as capitalism is the religion of wealth). We all need something to believe in, that's how we function; the human mind is a belief engine: we stand up on two feet because we believe we won't fall over; we take to the road in our car because we believe the person coming the other way will keep to the left side of the road; we go to the shops because we believe they'll be open.

It's not faith that is the problem, it's what or who we have our faith in that matters. But more than that, the real problem is in fact a lack of faith, as our reading this morning clearly demonstrates.

## Reading: Exodus 16: 13-36

In the evening a large flock of quails flew in, enough to cover the camp, and in the morning there was dew all around the camp. When the dew evaporated, there was something thin and flaky on the surface of the desert. It was as delicate as frost. When the Israelites saw it, they didn't know what it was and asked each other, "What is it?"

Moses said to them, "This is the food that the LORD has given you to eat. The LORD has commanded that each of you is to gather as much of it as he needs, two quarts for each member of his household."

The Israelites did this, some gathering more, others less. When they measured it, those who gathered much did not have too much, and those who gathered less did not have too little. Each had gathered just what he needed. Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it for tomorrow." But some of them did not listen to Moses and saved part of it. The next morning it was full of worms and smelled rotten, and Moses was angry with them. Every morning each one gathered as much as he needed; and when the sun grew hot, what was left on the ground melted.

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, four quarts for each person. All the leaders of the community came and told Moses about it, and he said to them, "The LORD has commanded that tomorrow is a holy day of rest, dedicated to him. Bake today what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil.

Whatever is left should be put aside and kept for tomorrow.” As Moses had commanded, they kept what was left until the next day; it did not spoil or get worms in it. Moses said, “Eat this today, because today is the Sabbath, a day of rest dedicated to the LORD, and you will not find any food outside the camp. You must gather food for six days, but on the seventh day, the day of rest, there will be none.”

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather food, but they did not find any. Then the LORD said to Moses, “How much longer will you people refuse to obey my commands? Remember that I, the LORD, have given you a day of rest, and that is why on the sixth day I will always give you enough food for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day and not leave his home.” So the people did no work on the seventh day.

The people of Israel called the food manna. It was like a small white seed, and tasted like thin cakes made with honey. Moses said, “The LORD has commanded us to save some manna, to be kept for our descendants, so that they can see the food which he gave us to eat in the desert when he brought us out of Egypt.” Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, put two quarts of manna in it, and place it in the LORD's presence to be kept for our descendants.” As the LORD had commanded Moses, Aaron put it in front of the Covenant Box, so that it could be kept. The Israelites ate manna for the next forty years, until they reached the land of Canaan, where they settled. (The standard dry measure then in use equalled twenty quarts.) Amen.

When we pray, 'Give us today our daily bread', we are praying that God would meet our needs for today; but there's no mention of tomorrow in that prayer, nor need there be. The problem most of us have is that we have enough faith to believe that God can provide for us today, but not enough faith to believe he can provide for us tomorrow.

Like the Israelites who kept some of the manna for tomorrow (and it bred worms and became putrid), we all want some insurance, in case God doesn't provide for us tomorrow. So we take more than our daily need, we hoard, money, clothing, almost anything, as well as food, just in case. And isn't that the root cause of so many problems in the world, greed, which is really a lack of faith that God can provide for our needs on a daily basis. Of course, even in God's economy, there is sometimes a need to gather for more than one day, but only so God can see to another human need, rest.

This lack of faith is not only hugely disrespectful to God, it's also irrational; we know that God has provided for our needs over the years, and blessed us with more than we could ever ask for, but we still doubt and insist on hoarding.

Jesus taught his disciples to get rid of everything, wealth, possessions, even grandiose ideas, and learn to trust God; this is faith, the faith that transforms the world, the faith of those to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs. Thankfulness and hopefulness are the fruit of exercising faith, as we come to a deeper understanding of God's faithfulness.

## Mission Praise 1209

My heart is filled with thankfulness  
to Him who bore my pain;  
who plumbed the depths of my disgrace  
and gave me life again;  
who crushed my curse of sinfulness  
and clothed me with His light,  
and wrote His law of righteousness  
with power upon my heart.

My heart is filled with thankfulness  
to Him who walks beside;  
who floods my weaknesses with strength  
and causes fears to fly;  
whose every promise is enough  
for every step I take,  
sustaining me with arms of love  
and crowning me with grace.

My heart is filled with thankfulness  
to Him who reigns above;  
whose wisdom is my perfect peace,  
whose every thought is love.  
For every day I have on earth  
is given by the King.  
So I will give my life, my all,  
to love and follow Him.

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

Amen.