

## HARVEST – WORKING TOGETHER

Harvest is time to say “thank you” to God for all the good things He has given us, the food we enjoy eating and so many other things; we celebrate the God who is generous; more of that in a moment. But Harvest is not just about God making things grow; harvest is all about the people who work hard to bring food to our plates! Here is some raspberry jam - What has someone done to bring this food to our plate? *We asked the same question about a bag of pasta, a time of rice and a pineapple.* God makes things grow and people then do things to the harvest to bring the food to our plates! It is not always an easy job; lots of farmers are finding life really hard just now!

Jesus told a story about harvest. A farmer had a crop of grapes that needed harvesting; when they are ready and the weather is good, he has to go for it; he has to do it all in one day; so out he goes to the market-square, the Job Centre of the day and hires some men who would work all day and he promises them one denarius, the fair wage for a whole day’s work. But then later, he needs some more men and goes back to the Job Centre to see who else is left and he hires some more men. In the whole day, he goes to the Job Centre five times; some people worked twelve hours, some nine, some only work one hour, but the whole harvest is done. This is the harvest – God makes the grapes grow and people pick them and work to bring them in and then use fruit to make wine etc. God and people working together produce the harvest!

Then owner of the vineyard then came to pay the men for their work and this is the point of the story. He took those who came last, who had only worked one hour and he gave them a denarius for their hour! So when the men who had worked twelve hours came, they expected more, but they’d been promised one denarius and that’s what they got! They got the same as everyone else. They complained – “we’ve worked more!” But the farmer said, “I gave you what I promised; I just want to be generous to all these others.” At the end, Jesus said “*So the last will be first and the first will be last.*”

God is generous to everybody; God loves everybody in the same way. Today, we thank God for our food and we have plenty of it; later, we will think about people who don’t have so much. We thank God for His love for us and we tell others that God loves them in the same way too. Sometimes we think that we’re last, that we’re people at the end of the queue when God is giving out His love, but Jesus surprises us with this upside-down story. Here is God who cares for all of us; here is God who is amazingly generous to everyone. God gives us everything we need; thank God for our food and for the people who work to bring it to us. It is not always easy being a farmer!

## HUNGER STEALS

What is strange about this paragraph?  
We’ll come back to question at end!

“Hunger is a thief. It robs people of their freedom, ruins their self-esteem and wrecks their dreams.” (Tearfund website) Here are some things that hunger steals from people; here are some stories of people who are hungry. When we are hungry, we lose all sorts of good things.

This paragraph is unusual,  
but can you say why?  
Maximizing this autumn  
thanksgiving, thank God  
today for good gifts such  
as quinoa, jam and milk.

**Hunger Steals dreams – the church gives opportunity**

Talia and her husband used to argue and bicker all the time. Their life was hard and they felt like they had no control over it. Their land only produced a tiny amount of food. To make ends

meet they had to take casual labour. It left them exhausted and frustrated. Then Talia heard about the Foundations for Farming course run in her local church. It showed her how to get nearly 10 times as much food from their plot of land. They had surplus food to sell. And they started planning for the future. Talia and her husband learned how to start their own business. They decided that what their village needed... was tea and scones. Now Talia's tearoom is doing a roaring trade. Her scones are the talk of the village. Talia and her husband don't bicker so much anymore; they've taken back control of their lives.

### **Hunger steals innocence – the Church gives childhood**

A few years ago, if you had a mango tree in Chagunda village, Malawi, you would guard it carefully. Mangoes weren't for sharing! The climate had changed and people's crops were failing. Everyone held onto the little food they could grow. But then the village was thrown a lifeline. Tearfund's partners in the region, AG Care, trained them in some amazing farming techniques. It showed them how to grow nearly 10 times as much food from their land. Now the people of Chagunda have got more than enough food. They can sell their spare food and pay for precious things like education. As for the mangoes... now the local children are free to climb the trees and help themselves whenever they want.

These Tearfund stories are from Africa. But there are stories from the UK

**Josh's Story** comes from The Trussell Trust, the Christian group which runs most of the foodbanks in the UK. His growing up was not easy, being in foster care at 16, and he ended up living in a hostel. "I was starving for about a week. I didn't have any food and had really bad anxiety, but it came to the point where I had to ask for help from the foodbank... I was a bit nervous and I was only 16 but when I got to the foodbank the people were really nice. They sat down with me, we had a chat and they made me feel welcome." They helped him with food and in other ways too; he got his life back on track.

Hunger is a thief – it steals dreams, innocence, and strength, but here are stories of the church giving people opportunity, childhood, and hope.

Hunger is all about something missing. Go back to the paragraph; did you see what was wrong – there is no letter 'e' in this para! The most common letter in the alphabet is missing. Hunger is all about something missing – there is no food; we have lots of food, most of us, but we've told stories of people who are hungry, who at one time had no food. The Church has helped them, has given them back what was missing and they are no longer hungry; they have hope, because Christians have cared enough to share what we have with others and their lives have been changed. We talked about a generous God in the parable; we talked about Jesus and His disciples and a little boy feeding 5000 hungry people with only five loaves and two fish. We have brought food today for Bethany to share with people who are homeless and who are starting life all over again. We say "thank you" to God for what we have and we pray that God will use our gifts to help others and bring hope back to their lives.