

HARVEST THANKSGIVING

GOD'S WORLD, OUR HARVEST

Thank you for all your gifts; the display is fantastic and the produce will be taken to Bethany after the service. Even the flowers are worthy of note – the display was created yesterday morning at the Coffee morning by members of the congregation; I can show you the rose that I added!

What can you see? Is your favourite food here?
Where does it come from?

The world belongs to God. The Bible tells us that God made the world; it doesn't tell us how, but tells us that the whole universe belongs to God; the sun, moon and stars, the sea, land, plants, animals and people – everything is part of the world that belongs to God. From the very beginning, people have written songs to say 'thank you' to God for the world that He has created and to praise God that He is the creator of the world that we live in. They praise God that He has made us. Psalm 104 is one of these songs: it starts off by telling us that God is very great, greater than anyone else we will ever know, a great King, the king of the universe; so we praise God because He is great and we thank Him for all the ways in which He has blessed us; today, we thank Him for the food we eat.

Is there anything on the table that you think doesn't belong? Can you see something that you might think is an odd thing out on the table? (*2 tractors and a book about tractors!*) Why do you think that these out of place? (*Because they are not food; you can't eat them!*) But in fact, tractors help us bring in the harvest; people drive tractors and combine harvesters and other machines to bring in the harvest for us. So as well as thanking God for our food, we need to thank Him for farmers, shepherds and others who bring in the harvest for us; by their hard work we have food to eat.

God's world and our harvest: both of these belong together. Without God creating the world and providing for us, there would be nothing; we would not even exist. Without farmers and their hard work, the food that does grow would not be on our plates. So we thank God for His love and for the people who work hard to bring us the food we enjoy.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

Sandwiches: (*the children and a few adults took 5 minutes to make their favourite sandwich*) Who made their favourite? What is on it? *Ham and cheese; jam and peanut butter; jam on its own – some of the fillings!* You're eating them now!

Look at the Post-it notes on the Prayer Tree! (*people were asked to write on a post-it note something for which they wanted to give thanks to God.*) What to give thanks for – whole variety of things for which you want to give thanks to God today: *family, friends, food, health, church, God's grace and deep love.*

Who do we depend on? There are all kinds of answers to that question depending on where we are and what we're doing. We depend on our parents: parents take us to school, play with us, read us stories; build shelves, help us move house, fund weddings; yes, even adults still depend on their parents. We depend on other people: friends, teachers, husband or wife; church group leaders. Today, we remember that we depend on farmers for our food, and on shops, supermarkets to deliver and sell food for us. Some people around here depend on foodbanks for food because they can't always

afford to buy it for themselves. Harvest Thanksgiving and our post-it notes tell us that we also depend on God. We said earlier, this is God's world and our harvest depends on God giving rain and sunshine to make the crops grow and farmers bring in these crops that have grown in God's wonderful world.

Sometimes we forget that we depend on God. We don't always understand that God still has a part in our world and sometimes we forget that we depend on Him. We're rich and if we need something, perhaps we just go out and buy it. The film that was showing earlier was called *The Choice* and was about someone called Sine, living in Cambodia, making choices about her life and the church in her village was helping her make good choices, learning to depend on God for food for herself and her family and depend on God for all sorts of other things too. She is not always able to make choices or to know which choices lead to a good life and which to a bad life.

Jesus said "*I am...*" (*John 6:35*) Some of you were making sandwiches and they all different kinds of fillings, but one thing was same – the bread! Bread is the basic food of our lives, whether we have it as a sandwich, or as toast, or in all sorts of other ways. When Jesus calls Himself "the bread of life" He uses that picture to talk about Himself. He gives us everything we need for living life in best way possible. He is the One on whom we can depend for the deepest things of life. He gives us grace to be the right kind of people; He forgives our sins; He listens to and answers our prayers; He knows us and loves us; He is with us always and everywhere. When we're frightened He gives us peace and courage. When we're loaded with guilt, He reminds us that God forgives. When we're weary and tired He says "Come to me". When we feel lost and lonely, He is our friend who rescues and saves us. The "Bread of Life" gives us everything we need for life and faith, absolutely everything.

We learn to depend on Jesus; we can't always do everything by ourselves; we can't be Masters of the universe. We learn to depend on Jesus, learning to trust Him and to live by faith in Him. He gives us everything we need; He is bread of life.