

Harvest Thanksgiving

Everything starts with the seed

I have some different kinds of seeds: some sunflower seeds, some bean seeds, a seed potato – *do you recognize them?*

Everything on the tables starts off life as a seed of some kind; sometimes seed looks just like what we pick at end; sometimes it looks totally different.

Here's what happens: we take the seed potato and we plant it in the ground; some people grow them in their gardens, the farmer grows them in his field. The seed gets buried in the ground and then it starts to grow and grow and grow, for months maybe, until the time comes to harvest the potatoes; the farmer comes along and digs up lots of potatoes from that one seed, The seed itself has almost disappeared but in its place there are maybe 10, 12 potatoes, maybe even more. The bag of potatoes that we eat and enjoy all starts off as a seed. It is the same for everything else on this table.

We can't make seeds grow; all we can do is plant them. The seed need things we can't give; it needs sunshine to grow, it need water or rain to grow which we can do, but not so well; when God gives us sunshine and when God gives us rain, there's something happens inside seed to make it grow and God makes it grow until it is ready to give us a crop of potatoes.

We remember what God has done when we have Harvest Thanksgiving service. We buy all of this food from shops or supermarkets, and sometimes we forget that God has anything to do with the food we buy and eat. Today we remember that these are God's gifts to us; it all starts with the seed and we plant it and God makes it grow; we say thanks to God for the gift of our food; we remember that this is something that God does; today we remember to say 'thank you' to God for all this food.

"Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts." (Psalm 105:1,2) This is what we are doing this morning, singing praise to God because He is the One who made the world and everything in it; He made the seed we plant; He gives us the sunshine and the rain to make these seeds grow; these are His gifts to us and to the world. These gifts we share with others today to tell them that God is good and great.

We are part of all of this; as people we begin with a seed and God gives to us everything we need for our bodies to grow and to live; God loves us and cares for us; we are part of God's great creation and we give thanks that God has made us too.

Fruit! Fruit! Fruit!

5 a day! What's that all about? How much fruit and vegetables we eat every day, 5 portions! Do you eat 5 portions of fruit and veg a day? Why 5 portions per day? They say it is good for us! We now see packets which say "1 of your 5 a day!" just so that you'll buy it and it will be good for you! What about Mars bars – should we eat 5 of them a day? Or drink 5 cans of Coke? I don't suppose these would be as good for us as 5 portions of fruit & veg, would they? But some of us would perhaps rather it was Mars Bars than apples or bananas, wouldn't we? We don't always do what it good for us! We might want to do what is good; we might mean to do what is good; but we might just never get round to it!

Jesus was sitting on a boat by the shore of lake and some people think He was watching a farmer at work in his field, watching him sow seed in his field, but not in the nice neat rows we use. The farmer was walking up and down the field, taking handfuls of seed from the bag over his shoulder and throwing the seed out onto the field. As he threw the seed it went in all kinds of ways and in the story Jesus told to the crowd, the seed landed in four places: first, it fell on the path, but the path was so hard that it just sat there until the birds came and ate it up; it was gone; secondly, it fell amongst the rocks and stones – every field has a pile of stones in the corner – and the seed fell there and there was a little bit of soil so it started to grow, but there were no real roots, so when the sun came along to be very hot, the little plants just shrivelled up and died. Thirdly, the seed fell among the weeds and the weeds grew more strongly and choked out the plants and they died. Finally, the seed fell on good soil and these seeds grew and grew and produced a crop, 30 times, 60 times, 100 times the seed that was sown.

This is a story about us. When we read the Bible or listen to the Bible, God plants a seed in our hearts or minds; He plants a seed about Jesus, about life and how we live. What happens to that seed? Well, there are four options: first of all, nothing happens to it because we just ignore it and forget about it and the devil takes great delight in taking the seed away again. Secondly, we like what we hear about Jesus, we think He's great, but then life becomes hard and we give up thinking about Jesus and the seed dies. Thirdly, we like what we hear and we start to believe, but other things, money, possessions, other things become more important and we stop believing and the seed dies. Fourthly, we like what we hear about Jesus and about life and we start to believe and keep believing and we do what the Bible tells us and our faith grows and grows and we become people who love Jesus and learn to follow Him.

Here's another 5 a day! We can spend five minutes a day reading the Bible and learning about Jesus. That will do us so much good. It will plant the seed of faith in our hearts and allow that seed to grow. It starts with a seed, but the challenge for us is to let the seed of the Word bear fruit in our lives; to be the kind of people Jesus wants us to be! Just 5 minutes a day reading something about Jesus, about faith, about life. Sometimes it is hard to read and listen; sometimes we find the Bible hard to read and understand; but it does us good. It makes our faith stronger; it makes our love for Jesus and for one another deeper; it helps us to be better followers of Jesus. Read, listen, be what it says! It starts with the seed, but here is Fruit! Fruit! Fruit!