

# Creation Time Resources 2014

## God, Whose Farm is All Creation



**Week Three – September 21<sup>st</sup> 2014**

### **Bible Readings**

#### **Deuteronomy 28.1 – 14**

Moses speaks to the assembled people of Israel as they prepare to enter the Land of Canaan. He has reminded them of their past (ch 1-4) and is now preparing them for their future (ch 5 - 28).

The many anticipated blessings of abundance outlined in this passage are framed in the commandments to be obedient. These are the blessings which come from a life orientated towards God. However conditional blessings run the risk of misinterpretation and can further the affliction of those for whom the rains do not come, the land is not fruitful and the barns are not full; conditional blessings make the suggestion that these are deserved afflictions of disobedience.

However these are not individual promises of blessing, these are the words of a community rule. Moses is reminding the listener that the love of God and the love of one's neighbour are interconnected. If anyone's barn or kneading bowl is empty then none of us are truly blessed. The blessing of abundance for some is to be a blessing of enough for all.

#### **Psalm 65**

It is believed that the original use of this Psalm was for thanksgiving celebrations at harvest time. Verses 6 - 13 certainly overflow with sentiments of abundance and the participation of God's creative energy bringing to bear a harvest of grain and livestock. This is a world alive with the glory of God at work in creation. Psalm 65 is an appropriate psalm for a harvest celebration where the harvest has been plentiful and abundant. It is appropriate also as a vision of how things can be in the world where the harvest has failed. The psalm celebrates the life-giving rain that God provides (9 -10). Without the water there would be no grain and no flocks clothing the meadows. The onset of the effects of climate change deny some the rain they need and give others so much rain it destroys the harvest. May it offer hope and motivation to us all as we work towards a time when all have enough.

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### 2 Corinthians 9.6 – 15

The opening verses of the chapter suggest that Paul does not need to make this point (vs 1.) but is making it just to make sure the Gentiles in Achaia live up to their reputation. These are words of both affirmation and motivation. According to Paul they had been ready for a year to give to the “saints”, the poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem (cf. Romans 15: 25 - 32, 1 Corinthians 16: 1-4) and he had even used them as a shining example to motivate others to give in a similar generous way ( vs 2).

Paul is particularly keen that this anticipated gift is not given reluctantly, through coercion, but given in the knowledge that generosity reaps generosity (vs. 6). He reminds them that their own abundance comes from the generosity of God who loves a cheerful giver and will ensure they will always have enough( vs. 8). He emphasizes their interconnectedness with the community to which they are giving and the praise God will be given as a result; their giving will result in many thanksgivings to God by the receiving community (11-12). Their giving will model the gospel of indescribable generosity.( vs. 13-15) This passage, full of harvest and creation time language: sowing and reaping, harvest and abundance, bread and food, encourages us to consider the abundance out of which we both live and give.

### Luke 12.16 – 30

In Luke's gospel a rich farmer enjoys a bumper harvest - one that will make him even wealthier than he already is. But he has a problem. His difficulty is not what to do with so much produce, but where to put it. It never occurs to him to do anything but keep it all. The solution is not to share his cornucopia in a world where many people lived perilously close to hunger.

Like the farmer, it is not wealth but our greed that becomes idolatrous. Behind the greed is our need for security and our desire to keep control of life. Jesus makes this point before he tells this parable when he says: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (12:15).

The fragility of the farmer's life is easily exposed. Control can vanish in a heartbeat. God demands not just our wealth but our lives.

### Sermon Starter Thoughts

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The farmer in Luke has forgotten the truths of the Psalm that it is 'God who cares for the land and its waters, it is God who enriches it with abundance, providing the corn, crowning the year with bounty.' Whatever efforts this farmer has made to control his life he forgets that ultimately it is God who provides the harvest.

At the same time the Farmer also neglects the responsibilities of blessing established in our other reading from the Hebrew scriptures today, Deuteronomy 28. Clearly if God opens the storehouses of bounty and grants prosperity to some then it is so that they might lend generously to others and borrow from none. They are to be a witness to the open-handedness of God.

As we consider the UN year of family farming this Creation and Harvest time the farmer and his barns presents a challenge to intensive agribusiness focussing on ever increasing yields but at great cost to the environment and the livelihoods of small scale farmers. There is a growing call for the many barns of agribusiness to be replaced with sustainable small-scale farming solutions where the economic, environmental and social are in balance.

Where conflict has got in the way of harvest and where hunger is an all too present reality the plight of this farmer serves as a challenge to the globally affluent who may secret their vulnerability behind savings and insurance policies. Those truly living on the edge of life, like those trying to rebuild their lives in war struck South Sudan illustrate only too well social unrest, violence and war are never far from the thin veneer of our managed lives. 'Eat, drink and be merry' we might say, but not without remembering that anything we have is there through the providence of God. Find out more [www.christianaid.org.uk/harvest](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/harvest)

### Prayers

#### Call to Worship

O God, you are the one we come to with praise

**You are the one who hears our prayer**

People everywhere come to you weighed down with sin

**Our faults defeat us, but you forgive them**

You have blessed us with your hospitality

**May we be filled with the blessings of your house**

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### Prayer of Approach

God, Giver of all life and of our lives,  
Blessed are you in the fruits of the earth  
Blessed are you in the work of human hands  
Blessed are you in the harvest of human creativity.

God of the poor and hungry,  
Blessed are you in the striving for justice  
Blessed are you in the fragility of peace-making  
Blessed are you in the grace of hospitality

God of the great feast and the simple meal,  
Blessed are you in the sowing of seed  
Blessed are you in the breaking of bread  
Blessed are you in the sharing of bread  
Blessed are you in our daily bread.

### Prayers of Confession

Gracious God,  
because we believe that your mark is abundance,  
and your love is overflowing,  
we come before you not in fear,  
but in the knowledge that we can be redeemed,  
and ask for a breaking down of all the barriers we create  
that block your life and love.

And so we pray:

For the times we lose sight of your blessings  
and forget to give thanks for our daily bread,  
and the simple pleasures of sharing food;  
when we are inspired only by competition and celebrity chefs:  
**Forgive us.**

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For the ways we build ever bigger barns,  
and store up our wealth,  
and worry about tomorrow  
without heeding the needs of the world today:  
**Forgive us.**

For the things that dull our reactions  
so that we can read stories of hardship and poverty,  
without feeling moved, inspired,  
or anything very much at all:  
**Forgive us.**

And in the knowledge that in Jesus our sins are forgiven,  
inspire us with your kindly and generous love,  
to build a world where all will have enough.

### Prayers of Thanksgiving

An Acrostic Prayer of Thanksgiving

**H**appy are those who have bread to eat!  
**A**s grain grows in the fields and  
**R**ains bring the water of life we share  
**V**isions of all your people united in  
**E**ternal praise and kneaded together to  
**S**hare good news of justice and peace.  
**T**aste and see that the Lord is good!

### Prayers of intercession

We pray for those who have not been able to gather the harvest because of adverse weather conditions, for those who bear the brunt of a changing climate, where rains have become unreliable and the harvest unpredictable.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who struggle to get land or have been forced off the land they need to be able to plant and grow enough food, for those who have had to abandon land because of conflict, leaving crops un-harvested .

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God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray the communities of South Sudan as they continue to rebuild their lives after and in the midst of conflict. We pray for your blessing on communities across the world who offer hospitality to refugees and to those who are returning home.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who still do not get a fair price for the food they grow and sell and so struggle to make ends meet. We pray for the many women who do so much of the work of harvesting but realise so little of the income and own so little of the land.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our community and the communities we represent.  
We ask that through prayer and action we might be agents of change, the yeast of justice at work in our society and our world.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

### **Christian Aid Harvest prayer**

The earth is fruitful

May we be generous

The earth is fragile

May we be gentle

The earth is fractured

May we be just

Creating God

Harvest in us joy and generosity

As we together share in thanks and giving.

### **Closing Responses**

With awesome deeds, with saving justice

**You have answered us, O God our Saviour,**

People all over the world, and across the distant seas

**Trust and hope in you**

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Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;  
**You make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.**

May the God who gathers and scatters us as seed  
Give us a harvest of peace sown in justice  
That everyone may have daily bread.

### Children's Address

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/harvest/childrens-resources.aspx>

### Musical suggestions

#### *Hymn Books Used*

BBC Songs of praise (SoP)      Church Hymnary 4 (CH4)      Common Ground (CG)

Hymns Ancient & Modern: New Standard Edition (AMNS) Hunger for Justice (HfJ)

New Century Hymnal (NCH)      Rejoice and Sing (RS)      Sing Praise (SP)

Singing the faith (StF)

#### **Psalm 65**

Lord, your hands have formed this world (Ch4, AMNS)

Life of the World (Ch4)

The earth is yours, O God (CH4, AMNS)

We plough the fields and scatter (CH4, RS, StF, AMNS)

Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field (CH4, CG, StF)

For the fruits of all creation (CH4, CG, RS, SP, StF)

Gather us in (CG)

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### 2 Corinthians 9.6 – 15

All that I am, all that I do (CH4)

Now thank we all our God (CH4, RS, StF, AMNS)

Praise to the Holiest in the height ((CH4, RS, StF)

There is a Redeemer (CH4, SP, StF)

For the fruits of all Creation (CH4, SP, CG, RS, SoP, StF, AMNS)

### Luke 12.16 – 30

We plough the fields and scatter (CH4, RS, StF, AMNS)

Inspired by love and anger (CH4, CG, HfJ)

Bigger barns are all we need

[http://www.carolynshymns.com/bigger\\_barns.html](http://www.carolynshymns.com/bigger_barns.html)

### General Harvest

Beauty for Brokenness (CH4, HfJ, StF)

God bless to us our bread (HfJ)

Lord of the earth's resources (HfJ)

We plough the fields, and scatter *Words: Alison Blenkinsop* (HfJ)

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