**Bamford Chapel & Norden URC – Sunday 19th September 2021 – 10.30am**

**Order of Worship**

*\*People are invited to leave gifts of food at the front of church as they arrive for worship*

*If you are reading this online then please contact us about ways in which you can give to the Foodbanks.*

**Welcome and opening words**

Welcome to worship and our Harvest Service today. Harvest Sunday is a good Sunday to focus our thoughts on thanksgiving. With this in mind I want to read some words from Psalm 95:1-7-

**1Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.  
2Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.**

**3For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.  
4In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.  
5The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.**

**6Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;  
7for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.**

Our first song today picks up on the theme of thanksgiving – Give thanks to the Lord our God and king.

**Opening song: CMP 1046: Give thanks to the Lord our God and king** [verse 1, Chorus, verse 1,(repeated) verse 2, chorus, verse 3, chorus]

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| 1. Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King,  His love endures for ever.  For He is good, He is above all things:  His love endures for ever  Sing praise, sing praise.  Sing praise, sing praise. | 2. With a mighty hand and outstretched arm:  His love endures forever  For the life that's been reborn:  His love endures forever.  Sing praise, sing praise.  Sing praise, sing praise. |
| Chorus: *Forever God is faithful,*  *forever God is strong.*  *Forever God is with us*  *for ever, for ever.* | 3. From the rising to the setting sun:  His love endures forever.  By the grace of God we will carry on:  His love endures forever  Sing praise, sing praise.  Sing praise, sing praise. |
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**Prayers**

Heavenly Father, we gather as your people either reading this script or watching the service online. We gather to bring you our worship and our praise today. We come acknowledging your goodness, singing your praise, receiving from you in the words of the Bible and our collective reflecting upon them.

May the words we say, sing or hear toady bring glory to your name. In your extravagant grace may we also be strengthened and empowered to live as people who make a difference in the world today.

As we come we do so with thankful hearts. We thank you, creator God for the beauty of the seasons. We thank you God for your provision.

We thank you God for your goodness and the assurance of your forgiveness.

We thank you God for friends and family.

We thank you God for food, drink and warmth.

We thank you God for all that we have that we do often take for granted.

We thank you God for Jesus, your Son and our Lord and Saviour for through him we have the glorious opportunity of everlasting life.

But Lord, we acknowledge that we are weak and frail. We so often fall short of what you expect from us. For those times when we have failed you and others, we seek your forgiveness.

May we be assured that when we truly ask for forgiveness you offer it to us without hesitation and for that we thank you. We offer all our prayers in and through the name of Jesus.

Amen.

I don’t always have The Lord’s Prayer in my services. As it is a prayer that contains in it some powerful lines and I think I have been guilty in the past of simply saying it as it is so often prayed in services.

But it is a prayer that contains some hugely challenging and powerful words….Jesus taught it to his disciples. I also think there is power in it being a universal prayer, one used by many, many churches.

And so I want to invite us to say this prayer together now:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.

Amen.

**Song: For the fruits of his creation**

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| 1. For the fruits of His creation,  thanks be to God.  For His gifts to every nation,  thanks be to God!  For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,  silent growth while we are sleeping; future needs in earth's safe keeping,  thank be to God. | 2. In the just reward of labour,  God's will is done;  in the help we give our neighbour,  God's will is done;  in our world-wide task of caring  for the hungry and despairing;  in the harvests we are sharing,  God's will is done. |
| 3. For the harvest of the Spirit,  thanks be to God.  For the good we all inherit,  thanks be to God!  For the wonders that astound us,  for the truths that still confound us;  most of all, that love has found us,  thanks be to God. | Fred Pratt Green  ©1970 Stainer and Bell  ccli 169737 Streaming licence 595811 |

**Part 1: Harvest/Foodbank**

**Bible Reading 1: Deuteronomy 26:1-4 (NIVUK) - Firstfruits and tithes**

**“1**When you have entered the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, **2**take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land that the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name **3**and say to the priest in office at the time, ‘I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the land the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.’ **4**The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the Lord your God.” Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Foodbank Quiz:**

The tinned and packet foods collected today will go to the local Foodbanks.

I want to invite you to take part in a quiz about Trussell Trust Foodbanks. I have compiled this quiz from stats on the Trussell Trust Website (answers for those reading the script are at the end of the script.)

1. **In the period from April 2020 – March 2021 how many food parcels were given out by Trussell Trust Foodbanks in the UK?**
2. 2 million
3. 2.5 million
4. 1.5 million
5. 1.75 million
6. **In the North West of England how many adults were given a Trussell Trust Fodbank food parcel in the year 2020 – 2021?**
7. 192,494 adults
8. 188,500 adults
9. 190,589 adults
10. 191,367 adults
11. **In the North West of England how many Children were given a Trussell Trust Foodbank food parcel in the year 2020 – 2021?**
12. 145,895
13. 117,263
14. 120,521
15. 118,999
16. **How many Trussell Trust foodbanks are there in the UK?**
17. 1,100
18. 1,200
19. 1,300
20. 1,400

(not to mention the 1.034 run by the “Independent Foo Aid Network” and ones run by The Salvation Army and ones run by schools)

1. **How many food parcels were given to adults in the Rochdale Trussell Trust Foodbank in the year 2020-2021?**
2. 8,198
3. 8,789
4. 8,820
5. 8,899
6. **How many food parcels were given to children in the Rochdale Trussell Trust Foodbank in the year 2020 – 2-2021?**
7. 4,407
8. 3,967
9. 3,645
10. 4,397

It is a real sadness that Foodbanks are needed and from the figures shown are needed more and more. The pandemic will have affected some people, others have been using Foodbanks for several years before the pandemic was even heard of. It is so important that we give what we can to help those who are in need. Sometimes, those people may live nearer to us than we might first have thought.

Let us pray…. Loving God, we thank you for all who work for and volunteer for any Foodbank whether a Trussell Trust one or not. We thank you for all who give food or finances to support Foodbanks. May we not just think about giving to them at Harvest time but through the year so that families can be helped and supported through challenging times. We thank you, Lord, for all the food given this year and for the families that have benefited from the generosity of others. Amen.

**Song: CMP 786 – Yes God is good**

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| 1.. Yes, God is good - in earth and sky, from ocean depths and spreading wood, ten thousand voices seem to cry: “God made us all, and God is good!” | 2.. The sun that keeps his trackless way, and downward pours his golden flood, night’s sparkling hosts, all seem to say in accents clear that God is good. |
| 3.. The joyful birds prolong the strain, their song with every spring renewed; and air we breathe, and falling rain, each softly whispers, “God is good!” | 4.. I hear it in the rushing breeze; the hills that have for ages stood, the echoing sky and roaring seas, all swell the chorus, ‘God is good!’ |
| 5.. Yes, God is good, all nature says, by God’s own hand with speech endued; and man, in louder notes of praise, should sing for joy that God is good. | 6.. For all Your gifts we bless You, Lord, but chiefly for our heavenly food, Your pardoning grace, Your quickening word, these prompt our song, that God is good. |
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**Part 2: Generosity and Worship**

**Bible Reading 2: Luke 12:13-21 (NIVUK)– The parable of the rich fool**

13Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’

14Jesus replied, ‘Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?’ 15Then he said to them, ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.’

16And he told them this parable: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.”

18‘Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”

20‘But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”

21‘This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.’

Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Reflection**

*I recall as a child my Mum and Dad always telling my sister and I to say “thank you” for the things people gave to us or did for us. That might have been presents at birthdays or Christmas…that might have been people inviting us for a meal or buying us sweets or something like that. Ruth and I instill the same thing in the lives of our three children.*

*There are times when I get frustrated when people don’t say thank you! I don’t know if any of you talk to yourself? I certainly do especially if I am driving and I flash my lights at someone to let them out of a junction, or flash my lights to allow them to change lanes….I get frustrated if they don’t raise a hand of thanks or flash their lights in “thanks”. And often say out loud, “don’t bother thanking me then!”*

Being appreciative and saying ‘thank you’ is, I think, really important. It is important in our faith life too.

It is important that we say thank you to God for His provision and for His goodness towards us.

The reading from Deuteronomy today hints at the theme of “thanksgiving” even if in the 4 verses we read the word “thanks” or “thanksgiving” isn’t mentioned. God’s chosen people Israel had been through some really difficult times. They had been in slavery and under some brutal oppression in exile. And yet for so long God had promised them a land of their own. In Exodus 3:8 when Moses has the encounter with God in the burning bush - we read these words:-

**“8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.”** (Exodus 3:8 NIVUK)

And now at this point in Deuteronomy they are told that when they enter the land and have settled in it they are to take some of the first fruits of their crops and offer them as a thanksgiving offering to the Priest. The fruit of their labour, not just any fruit, but the first fruit of the crops. Giving the first fruits acknowledged that all provision comes from God and is God’s. It is also a statement of trust that there will be more fruit harvested – enough for them to live on.

The fact that they even have land and crops to plant is because God has delivered them from the hand of their captors and placed them in the land He promised to them. A land that will enable them to settle and multiply to fulfil the promise made years before to Abram in Genesis 12.

And that is why today on Harvest Sunday we can give thanks to God for all His provision to us. As harvest foods will be collected in churches I am conscious that for the Bamford Chapel and Norden Church family they are bringing foods for the Rochdale and Heywood foodbanks. In order that those who currently live a life of struggle for their daily food and drink can be helped.

But we always have to be mindful of accumulating too much! Because there are people around the world who have nothing!

*I often say to Ruth, my wife, “What are we having for tea tonight?” We then sometimes have a discussion about what we might fancy. I so often have to remind myself that there are many people who don’t have such luxuries in life. People who don’t know where their next meal is coming from and that is why it is good to give to those less fortunate than ourselves – not only in food and drink terms but also financial terms too.*

Fast forward a few hundred years and we read of Jesus telling parable about “A rich fool”.

A parable that focuses on “self” and not on others. The man spoken of in the Parable can so often be “us” as individuals or indeed “us” as churches too. We can think so much about what we might need and for how long a period we might need it for.

In this instance the man had such a large harvest that he had to tear down his barns and build bigger ones! He must have forgotten about the story of his Jewish ancestors who gave their first fruits as an offering of thanksgiving to God.

The man spoken of in this parable must have forgotten the later words of Deuteronomy where in Deuteronomy 26:12 (NIVUK) we read:

**“12 When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow so that they might eat in your towns and be satisfied.”**

Those people listed here were the needy people of Israel.

And Jesus, in this Parable in Luke’s gospel, is warning his listeners not to be like the man in the Parable. Likewise we as individuals and churches need to be mindful of that as we look at the resources we have. It is not that Jesus is suggesting that we simply give everything we have away to the poor – but I believe these harvest readings challenge us to think about what God has given to us….what truly is ours anyway….and what can we give in order that others may have a better life?

Because as Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 – **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

May our desire and prayer this harvest be to acknowledge that all we have individually and collectively is God’s and how we might use what God has entrusted to us to help those less fortunate.

Amen.

**Song: CMP 152: For the beauty of the earth**

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| 1.. For the beauty of the earth,  for the beauty of the skies,  for the love which from our birth  over and around us lies;  Father unto You we raise  this our sacrifice of praise. | 2.. For the beauty of each hour  of the day and of the night,  hill and vale, and tree and flower,  sun and moon, and stars of light;  Father unto You we raise  this our sacrifice of praise. |
| 3.. For the joy of love from God  that we share on earth below;  for our friends and family  and the love that they can can show;  Father unto You we raise  this our sacrifice of praise. | 4.. For each perfect gift divine  to our race so freely given,  thank You Lord that they are mine,  here on earth as gifts from heaven;  Father unto You we raise  this our sacrifice of praise. |
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**Prayers**

Loving God, we come before you with our prayers.

**We pray for the world in which we live.** We ask that you would bring your peace into troubled lands. We think of, and pray for, Afghanistan; Israel and Palestine; Iraq; North Korea and other parts of our world where there may be conflict or political unrest at this time. Bring wisdom, honesty, fairness and integrity to corrupt regimes and may the light and presence of Jesus bring change and transformation.

We pray for those parts of our world where poverty, sickness, disease, hunger and thirst bring suffering and pain. We pray for those who work faithfully and tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of others. May we in our relative comfort share our resources with those who struggle at this time. On this Harvest Sunday we pray for Foodbanks across our country and those who need to use them. May they know their worth is in you and not in their current difficulties. May they know they are loved.

**We pray for the Church.** Seeking wisdom for leaders and leadership teams of whatever kind. We pray for churches that are struggling because of the pandemic. For those facing closure and the pain and anguish that that can bring. We pray for churches discerning a new vision and a new direction. We pray for new churches that may have begun during lockdown – those which are perhaps using new technologies to reach people and to draw people. Bless them and guide them we pray.

We pray for the churches of the Bury, Rochdale and North Manchester Missional Partnership. May each of our churches be a light in the communities in which they are set. Challenge us to fresh commitment to Christ and to the wider community.

**We pray for ourselves and those who we love.** We pray for those we know who are in need at this time. May they know your presence and support to be near them. If they are sick come with you healing, Lord.

If they are lonely come with your presence, Lord.

And for ourselves we pray that we would come closer to Jesus in our daily lives. May our faith be a powerful part of our lives each day of the week.

We offer all our prayers in and through the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

**Final Song: CMP 106: Come, you thankful people, come**

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| 1.. Come, you thankful people, come;  raise the song of harvest home.  fruit and crops are gathered in  safe before the storms begin:  God, our maker, will provide  for our needs to be supplied;  come with all His people, come,  raise the song of harvest home. | 2.. All the world is God's own field,  harvests for His praise to yield;  wheat and weeds together sown,  here for joy or sorrow grown:  first the blade and then the ear,  then the full corn shall appear -  Lord of harvest, grant that we  wholesome grain and pure may be. |
| 3.. For the Lord our God shall come,  and shall bring His harvest home;  He Himself on that great day,  worthless things shall take away,  give His angels charge at last  in the fire the weeds to cast,  but the fruitful ears to store  In His care for evermore. | 4.. Even so, Lord, quickly come -  bring Your final harvest, home!  gather all Your people in,  free from sorrow, free from sin;  there together purified,  ever thankful at Your side -  come, with all Your angels, come;  bring that glorious harvest home! |
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**Blessing**

I want to close with the words that come at the end of 2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIVUK):-

**“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”**

Friends may we all know the presence of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit as we continue through this new week. Amen.

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***Answers to the Quiz:***

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| Question 1 - b) 2.5 million | Question 2 - a) 192,494 | Question 3 - c) 1,300 |
| Question 4 - c) 120,521 | Question 5 - c) 8,820 | Question 6 - a) 4,407 |