

Friends,

We have come to the end of the annual round of Harvest Festivals. Autumn, that “season of mists and mellow fruitfulness”, is fully upon us, and any time now we will start to notice that we have made a mistake if we pop out without a coat. The harvest is gathered in and we have perhaps given the lawn its final mow of the year, but if the summer seems a long time ago, the reality is that August was with us only six weeks past.

In the time of Jesus, harvests involved agricultural cycles of wheat, grapes and olives, which were crucial for survival but also symbolised spiritual concepts. The wheat was harvested in the late spring/early summer, followed by the grape harvest, and then the olive harvest in the autumn. These harvests were central to ancient Israelite life, influencing festivals and providing daily sustenance like bread and oil. Later, Jesus was to use the idea of Harvest metaphorically as he spoke of many people needing to come to know God in a new and real way, but there being a real lack of workers to share the Gospel with them. How often we have felt that in our own times. Jesus goes on to ask his disciples to pray for more workers. (Matthew 9:37 – 38: Then [Jesus] said to his disciples “The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.”)

I wonder if we are currently praying for those who might need to hear the Good News, and workers to take it to them, or if we have just accepted that the situation is as it is? I wonder if sometimes we are so busy coping with the difficulties of not enough, that we forget that the reason it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven is because it is in our lack that we remember to turn to God. Are we

still trying to figure it out for ourselves and forgetting to simply pray for more harvest and more harvesters?

Of course, Jesus' answer was to summon the twelve and, having given them authority, to send them out, so perhaps this reflection comes with a health warning and we should be prepared for our prayers to be answered with "Go thou and do likewise" (Luke 10:37)!

God bless, Vicci