

**Sunday 6 October 2024**  
**Harvest**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Joel 2:21-27**  
**NT: I Timothy 6:6-10**  
**Gp: Matthew 6:25-33**

In our Gospel reading today there is one word that keeps getting repeated over and over again, worry. Jesus warns us not to worry about our lives, what we will eat or drink and what we will wear. Worry. I would say that I am a worrier, and I bet many of us today are. I'm worried if I'm not worried about something! CS Lewis, the author of the Narnia stories, was a Christian and he admitted to struggling with worrying. In relation to this Gospel passage, he said: *"If God wanted us to live like the birds of the air, it would have been nice for him to have given us a constitution that was more like theirs!"*

I'm sure that you can sympathise with Lewis, I know I can. As I've just said, I do tend to be a worrier. Don't worry, be happy, sounds great in theory, but how do you put it into practice?

I think we need to recognise that Jesus practised what he preached. He seems to have spent his life trusting in God and he tried to teach his followers to do the same. If you're anything like me, then sometimes Jesus' command not to worry, to consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, can be a reassurance to trust in God when times are hard. But sometimes, this can be really hard to put it into practice when reality sets in.

When we are beset with debt, loss of a job, loss of a loved one, a decline in health, the list goes on. But what if Jesus' message wasn't that everything is ok, so don't worry, but was instead, everything is not ok, so consider? Jesus, knew, like each of us know, that there are occasional moments in each of our lives when something beautiful makes us stop everything we are doing, takes us out of the moment and makes all of the worries slip away for a bit.

What was it for you? What was the last thing that was so awesome that it took your breath away and made you forget everything that weighed you down. For me, it was a time away at the Cenacle in Liverpool last Saturday for our parish Quiet Day. That was a chance to step away from everyday cares and to reflect on where we are in our spiritual walk with Jesus. It is good to have a time of quiet, if we can go somewhere to reflect upon the beauty of creation and God's love.

Today we celebrate the Harvest. At Harvest time we gather to give thanks for the good gifts that we have received, and to share what we have with those less fortunate. Of course, it's wonderful to see food of all descriptions being offered with open hearts to those in need, and it is a Christian priority to look after anyone who is weak, vulnerable and poor.

When Jesus said do not worry, he wasn't talking to people who had loads of food or money. He was speaking to people who did not necessarily know where their next meal was coming from. He was speaking to people who knew they relied on the harvest being fruitful. If the crops failed, the people would go hungry.

So, Jesus was speaking to people with very real concerns, and his words then still hit home, because they challenge us to trust. Trust is a little word, but it often requires a huge leap of

faith. If we knew the outcome of any particular situation, it wouldn't need trust. Instead, it would be a given. Trust and faith require us to let go of control, and with eyes fixed on God, take that step forward into the future.

Paul's letter to Timothy also reminds us that control is an illusion. We can try and accumulate all the possessions we like, but we are born with nothing, and whatever we have gathered during our life, when we die, we cannot take it with us. Far better to use the blessings we receive and share them with others, to bring glory to God.

Whether we have much or little, Jesus' words remind us how much we are reliant on God. And here is the Good News. God is abundantly, wildly, extravagantly generous and his love is overflowing. There is more than enough to go around, provided that people do not grasp at an unfair share.

Where crops fail, the rest of the world can share if they decide to. Where people fall on hard times, food banks, homeless shelters and charities, such as the Whitechapel Centre, The Missionaries of Charity and the Micah Foodbank are there to provide a safety net. They shouldn't be needed, but sadly they are, and we can contribute to these to try and reduce the gap for those who have less than ourselves.

Let us reflect on the harvest. It is a time to give thanks to God, not just for all that the earth provides, but for the beauty of creation that reminds us that there is something bigger, brighter and more glorious than the things we hold on to and worry about. It is a time, I feel to consider creation and consider our part in how we sustain it and take steps to reduce our carbon footprint, to recycle and make better eco choices. It is a time to recognise that we are not just allowed but commanded by Jesus to take the time to consider things of beauty; for by doing this, just for a moment., we do not worry, but we soak up the glory of God.

This harvest let's take time to remind ourselves **why** we give these tins of beans and packets of rice. We give because we acknowledge we are reliant on God. Lord, have mercy. We give because we have received from God's abundant provision. Christ, have mercy. We give because we are called to care for those in need. Lord, have mercy.

"Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Mt 6.33)

**Mthr Jennifer Brady**