

Sunday 5 October 2025

Liverpool Parish Church

Evensong for Harvest

OT: Nehemiah 5.1-13

NT: John 9

Nehemiah lived more than 400 years before the birth of Christ and yet the tone of the first reading this evening is not dissimilar to the political rhetoric we hear from some political parties today. There was antisemitic feeling then and as we saw in the terrible events in Manchester on Thursday, there is antisemitic feeling today. The growth in the reviling of Jews in this country has caused many innocent people to feel unsafe, especially in the practice of their faith. Whenever there is unrest, it seems that the Jews are an easy target to vent such disquiet and it is too simplistic to associate an entire people with their government's policies.

Such matters are complex and I am aware that Fr Yazid sits there who has much more understanding on the subject, both academically and personally than I do. But suffice to say that just as many in this country would not have wanted to be associated with Thatcher's policies or US citizens with the current regime in their country, so I am sure that many Jews do not support the Israeli government in their actions in Gaza. Discrimination against any peoples, Jew or Gentile, especially when it is presented with violence, is never right.

But today we are celebrating the Harvest so why is the reading relevant? At its essence, it is about sharing, about ensuring that whatever resources we enjoy, they are meted out in fairness to everyone. The earth and its abundance is there for all to respect and benefit from its bounty. It is not God's will that one people should go without while another enjoys plenty.

In biblical times as described in the book of Ruth, farmers were commanded to leave the edges of their fields for the poor and the stranger to enable everyone to benefit from the crop. Today's equivalent is to place additional items in our shopping trolley to bring to the Food Bank for those who don't experience all the comforts we enjoy, those who are struggling through no fault of their own to meet their basic needs.

If we share more, hopefully this will reduce this mistaken sense of resentment that others are taking what rightfully belongs to the needy. And those with a surplus beyond imagining may come to realise that sharing brings a far greater comfort than hoarding. The harvest is not complete until it is shared. Whether it's food, time, kindness, or resources — generosity is the fruit of gratitude.

And it is this gratitude that we are expressing today. Not an abundance of wheat or fruit or vegetables. We are a city church, we don't have those rural connections. We express our gratitude, yes in the donations we have made to the Sisters in Seel Street to support their work with the homeless, but more importantly in the commitment of ourselves to God's will, God the source of all our blessings.

The food on our tables. Our family and friends and all those who care for us. The peace in our communities and the freedom to worship here as members of a supportive congregation. The grace of God that sustains us in times of plenty and of need, in our joy and in our sorrow.

It is this harvest of God's love which bears such fruit in our lives, this is what we are giving thanks for today. And in doing so, we acknowledge that all people are entitled to enjoy such blessings and that to discriminate against anyone is to deny God's creation and his love at work.

Revd Michelle Montrose