

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity 27.09.2020

Exodus 17: 1–7; Psalm 78: 1–7; Philippians 2: 1–13; Matthew 21: 23–32

Good morning everyone. I trust all is well with you and yours. A very warm welcome to these reflections on the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

One doesn't have to drive far out of the city to see that the harvest, or perhaps I should say harvests, is/are well underway. The grain harvest largely completed, the potato harvest in full swing and the apple harvest about to start. This being the case it seems highly appropriate to take harvest as our general theme. And to explore one particular harvest which is of paramount importance to all of us, and that is the harvest of our lives. So this morning let us reflect upon aspects of our spiritual lives.

The obvious starting point is prayer. Now sad to say my prayer life is likely to receive that comment frequently seen on old school reports, "*could do better!*" But, God be thanked, there is always scope for improvement! And thanks to be God that we are loved, taken and accepted as we are – warts and all!

Many of us, I suspect, were taught about prayer and the different parts of prayer by using that well known acronym, "ACTS"; adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication for others and supplication for oneself.

A little while ago I came across this simple prayer card which many may find helpful. Like "acts" it provides a basic framework which can be developed and adapted as one would wish.



After prayer the next basic component of spiritual life is reading the bible and bible study. There are a variety of approaches to reading and studying the bible, always remembering the importance of placing the text within its context. One helpful approach is outlined in the dialogue box below.

**LOOK** ... and be curious.  
**WAIT** ... with prayerful expectation.  
**READ** ... the text with an open mind.  
**LISTEN** ... for a word with a willing heart.  
**RESPOND** ... with prayer and action.

- Look at the passage and be curious.
- Wait with prayerful expectation that meaning will be revealed.
- Read the text, but be open to what may come and be happy to receive it.
- Listen for a word of insight with a willing heart.
- Then respond to what has been gleaned with honest prayer and direct action.

The respond element is important. It is easy to fall into the trap of reading the bible as history, as a story of what happened long ago. We are called to respond "with prayer and action." For Jesus challenge to the lawyer at the conclusion of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is also the challenge to you and to me, "*Go and do likewise.*"

So here are three components for our lives to attain a good harvest; prayer, bible study and social action. Sadly I know too well how easily our lives become crowded with busyness and our time in prayer & bible study become marginalized. So I must pray to put these things first, to give priority to the Lord Jesus Christ and loving service to those I meet. Now to conclude here is a prayer to aid us in our daily lives.

Christ, as light illumine and guide me.  
Christ, as a shield over shadow me.  
Christ under me;  
Christ over me;  
Christ beside me on my left and my right.  
This day be within and without me,  
lowly and meek, yet all powerful.  
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;  
in the mouth of each who speaks to me.  
Christ as a light;  
Christ as a shield;  
Christ beside me on my left and my right.  
Amen

As our theme is harvest for our intercessions "**A Prayer for the Earth.**"

*(Please add prayers and petitions for people and situations of personal concern)*

All powerful God, you are present in the universe  
and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,  
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with your peace, that we may live  
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,

help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,  
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature

as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle,

for justice, love and peace. Amen

‘You are a seed of the word, O people:  
Bring forth the Kingdom of God!  
Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice  
Grow in the Kingdom of God!  
Bring forth the Kingdom of mercy,  
Bring forth the Kingdom of peace,  
Bring forth the Kingdom of justice,  
Bring forth the City of God!’