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Harvest - A Recent Harvest Service By Revd David Gaffney

A Reading:

Psalm 100: A psalm for giving thanks:

1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

*2 Serve the LORD with gladness;
come before Him with joyful songs.*

3 Know that the LORD is God.

*It is He who made us, and we are His;
we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.*

*4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving
and His courts with praise;*

give thanks to Him and praise His name.

*5 For the LORD is good and His kindness endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Amen

Address:

What a wonderful time is harvest time. The leaves on the trees are beginning to turn yellow, orange and brown; often associated with a nip in the air, the morning mist hangs above the fields, and is a reminder that winter is on its way. Before the EU

stopped it, the burning of stubble and fires crackling across the fields used to light the night skies of Lincolnshire where we used to live; and pheasants were rife across the fields, and in the hedgerows. The sense of the harvest and the Lord's provision for us seemed closer to us then, when we lived in the midst of arable farming communities.

Before mechanisation, tractors, combine harvesters, cold stores and the like, the whole community would have been very much involved with gathering in the harvest; knowing that their lives depended upon it. A sense of urgency, and probably a little fear, as well as awe and wonder, would undoubtedly have been associated with harvest time. In a way, it is a shame that this has been lost, as with it, seems to have been lost also, a sense of urgency, expectation and holy fear regarding our spiritual harvest as well. And that is the harvest of goodness in the human heart; springing up from living well; according to seeds of truth from the Lord's Word.

"As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night
will never cease." (Gen 8:22)

The literal meaning of this beautiful little passage is obvious, but what message does it give us about our development as human beings into the image and likeness of the Lord?

The never ending cyclic processes of summer and winter, and day and night, and of seedtime and harvest, in nature also represent the cyclic nature of our spiritual development and regeneration. There are the short cycles of day and night within the long cycles of summer and winter; as there are also short cyclic processes within long cyclic processes of spiritual growth.

Firstly, "As long as the earth endures" means that there will always be people on earth who are undergoing a transformation or regeneration because they have been exposed in some way or another to the Word of the Lord.

Surprisingly, the phrase "seedtime and harvest" means, according to the Writings of our church, a man or a person. So "seedtime and harvest" equals "person." You and I are "seedtime and harvest!" It sounds strange, but if you think about it, this describes a process that is going on in us continually as we live out our lives. 'Seeds' from the Lord's Word are implanted in us by what we read or what someone says to us; and we often compare this to how we are living our lives and decide to try to change for the better. If we succeed, then we have developed a little more goodness in our hearts or our wills and this is what the Lord harvests for eternal life. This goodness in our hearts, is something of the Lord's love in us, our heavenly essence. It is 'real' and it has 'life,' and everything else

we do of good character is added to it. So, when a bad trait is replaced by a good one, then we regenerate a little more, we really are, at our centre, growing in goodness, which, as I have already said, is what the Lord harvests for our eternal life. This is the wheat that the Lord stores into His barn - His heaven, whilst the chaff that is rejected represents the old selfish habits that are discarded. The threshing floor (See Matt 3:12 below) is a process where we choose the goodness over the uselessness and let the useless stuff fall away as chaff for the fire (See Matt 3 below).

I'm sure all of us can think of traits or habits we have, which we would like to be rid of. The phrase "cold and heat" in our passage from Genesis is talking about alternating cycles of selfishness and love. A seed sown into the 'cold' ground of a selfish area of our heart is nurtured by the Lord and flourishes into a full head of corn as His warmth penetrates the ground of our being. To this extent we become new creations; bound to the Lord and His heaven.

This growth and development of our spirit is not easy, as it inevitable involves overcoming urges that we need to rationalise as destructive and as 'temptation states.' It seems to me, and is stated in the Writings, that some temptation states are relatively mild and can drift by virtually unnoticed; but some, for some people are difficult. Throughout this cyclic state, weeds and bugs of false beliefs and selfish affections will try to choke and devour this new life.

Regeneration is a lifelong process going through many seasons; the result of which is a harvest of goodness, love and wisdom in our hearts; a process which continues to eternity if we are genuinely committed to the Lord.

Night and day is about light and darkness, and the cyclic nature again shows us how our understanding of the Lord's Kingdom develops in our heads. Day is when the Truths of the Lord's Word are clearly obvious in full light, and night represents a time of testing when the meanings of the Truths of His Word are obscure, difficult to identify and relate to a particular problem; often because we are looking for a way out of obeying it. It is hidden from us, because it is dark. In this darkness, our search of The Lord's Word and it's meaning is more difficult. We have to put more effort in but this seems to lead to a broadening and deepening of our understanding of The Word. So in the night we walk by the light of the moon which is much more obscure than the light of the sun. The moon represents walking in the light of faith when the Lord - who is represented by the Sun - is absent. At night, the Lord's light is not directly shining on us, but is only reflected by the moon. In this way, it seems too me, that our faith is cyclically strengthened.

The more we study the Lord's Word, the more we understand of His Kingdom, and the more we understand, the more our will changes as we live out our lives accordingly. To deliberately go against the Lord's instruction after once acknowledging it as being right and holy is to 'sin against the Holy Spirit' (Matt 12:31), after which we are in danger of loosing our desire to repent and reform. There is always hope for progress *if we still*

have a conscience. The Lord is the vine, and we are the branches which bear fruit; we are His harvest. Amen

Isaiah 18, v4:

For so the Lord said to me,
 "I will take My rest,
 And I will look from My dwelling place
 Like clear heat in sunshine,
 Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

A Prayer:

Dear Lord, we thank You for all the good things you gives us. You endlessly provides for us. We thank You for our families and friends, for all the natural resources which You provide for us; for our tools and skills to use them, for warmth, clothing and shelter and for Your Word through which You make provision for our eternal lives. We also thank you Lord that you are the very Life within us. So Lord, although we need our earthly resources for our earthly bodies, help us to remember that we also need heavenly resources if we are to enter into eternal life: so let us always remember, that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from your mouth. Amen

Rev. D Gaffney. Sept 2022.

Related Readings:

From the Writings of the New Church: Arcana Caelestia: No. 932.

There is no need to confirm from the Word that seedtime and harvest means the person who is to be regenerated, and consequently the Church, because the comparison and likening of the individual to a field and so to 'seedtime' and of the Lord's Word to 'seed', and of what it accomplishes as to 'produce' or 'harvest', occurs so frequently. This anybody can also gather from these same expressions which are part of his everyday vocabulary. In general the reference is to all men, and the fact that not one ever fails to have seed from the Lord sown within him, no matter whether he is inside the Church or outside of it, that is, whether he knows the Lord's Word or whether he does not.

[2] Without this implanting of seed from the Lord nobody can do the least good thing. Every good that stems from charity, even among gentiles, is seed obtained from the Lord. etc

Matthew Matt 3: 11-12: John the Baptist said:

11"I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."