

HARVEST THANKSGIVING 2011

What a Wonderful Harvest

What a great display of food; all of it comes from the fantastic world we live in. Here are some examples:

Who likes **Baked beans**? Who doesn't? Where do baked beans come from? The USA.

Who likes **Jam**? What kind of jam is this? *Plum*. Where do plums come from? *Balerno!* What else goes into it? Sugar cane (which is grass-like) comes from Brazil, the West Indies, India or lots of other countries in world

Who likes **Peaches**? Where do peaches come from? China, Italy, USA. Does anyone grow peaches in their greenhouse?

Everything on this display comes from the world we live in; it grows in some part of the world & is then brought to the UK to be turned into food for us to eat; or it is grown in the UK (like carrots and potatoes) and is processed so that we can eat it; it is sold in the shops and supermarkets for us to enjoy.

Read Psalm 65:9-13

Here is a picture of a harvest, one that is overflowing. The carts can't carry it all, because there is so much of it; the crops and animals are all rejoicing at this great harvest. It all comes from God because God cares for the land; He sends water to make all of these things grow, to provide for us all that we need.

There are two things to do:

First, we rejoice: "*Praise awaits you*" because of what God has done; the people are glad and sing songs to praise God, just as we do today in our Harvest Thanksgiving service; God provides our food; God gives us all that we need to eat and so we say 'thank you, Lord'.

Second, we share: all of this is going to Bethany to help them look after people who are homeless in Edinburgh; we'll help feed them for a little while by these gifts and some people's lives will be a little better by our giving. We did that last week as well by baking the children did to sell over coffee; they raised £52 for CHO in Cambodia, sharing what we have with people in need. Other people in other places in the world don't have a good harvest; their crops died perhaps or they can't afford to buy food. But there is enough food in the world to feed everyone; we happen to have more than we need, while others don't have enough. Governments have to learn to share so that everyone is fed.

We are Church – the local church is the hope of the world.

Let's build some blocks into a piece of a building; we interlock them so that they need to lean on one another; the cornerstone block is the one that gives the building its shape and strength; the cornerstone keeps it straight! If we were to take the cornerstone away, the building would fall down; it is the stone round which whole building stands! We gave the cornerstone a label with the name 'Jesus' on it; Jesus is the cornerstone of our lives.

"The local Church is the hope of the world". So said Bill Hybels, leader of Willow Creek Church in the USA. What did the Church do for Richard and his family in the DVD? The local Church did two things for Richard: first of all, the church in his village in Uganda showed him that he could grow more food and catch fish so that his family would have a better diet and more to eat. Then secondly, the local church changed his life, and made

him a new person, believing in Jesus, so that he will no longer drink and cause trouble at home, but learned to love his wife and children better. These two things brought real hope to Richard and his family and changed their lives forever. The Church in his village did that; the church is made up of people that knew Richard and his family and told them about Jesus and Richard's life was changed forever; he believed in Jesus and became a new person. Jesus became the cornerstone of their lives.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-6

This is an 'everybody' picture. Each person is like a stone; we could put a name on each of these blocks, one for each person and then build them together. The Church is the people who belong to God and we are joined together by the faith in Jesus that we all share. Jesus is the cornerstone. This is true, not just for the church in this place, but for the Church across the world; there would be a stone with Richard's name on it and another with Simon Peter, the leader of the Church in Uganda, so that there would be millions and millions of these stones, people who are the Church and who share our faith and who believe in Jesus.

There are all kinds of ways in which our local church can be the hope of our world and give hope to our community:

- By offering ourselves to serve others: because we love God and because Jesus tells us to love our neighbour, we serve others, including our enemies.
- By living a life of love, following the sacrificial example of Jesus; Jesus loved the world so much that He gave His life for the sake of other people, for our sake; so we learn to follow His example and love other people, especially those in need.
- Part of that love for others is seen in sharing our possessions with those in need inside and outside our community; we do that today by the food on the tables that will go to Bethany; and by our baking for CHO last week, sharing our possessions with people in need 8000 miles away.
- By telling other people the stories of Jesus, sharing the good news that Jesus came to be the Saviour of the world and the cornerstone of our lives; we tell people why we love and serve others – we do it because Jesus loves and serves us!

The seed goes into ground and dies so that new plants can grow. That's how the harvest works; that's how your garden grows. Jesus spoke about Himself like that: the seed that must die to produce many seeds. Because Jesus died on the cross and because He is raised, there are lots of people like us across the world, people who love Him, believe Him, want to live life in His way and tell others about Him. Because Jesus died, Richard's life is transformed; because Jesus died, our lives are transformed. Because Jesus died and is raised, He is now the cornerstone of our lives and of our church. We love and serve others, we share what we have, we tell others, we give them hope. We are Church; let our local church be the hope of the world.