

Today we are continuing our Harvest Celebrations. We began last Sunday, with a Communion Service, in which we sang all the traditional harvest hymns. We had our Harvest Supper last night, and today we conclude our celebrations this Family Service.

I would like to base my thoughts around the three R's...

Not reading, riting and rithmatic.
But, the three R's of Rvest!

Which are... pardon the pun...

REJOICE

RELLECT

RESPOND

Today is first and foremost about
REJOICING – giving thanks to God in song
and prayer for all the blessings of his
harvest.

Rejoicing in God's great faithfulness from
age to age, from season to season in
bringing forth the fruits of the earth to nourish
and sustain us.

It's about saying thank you to God for all the
foods we enjoy – Pizza, fish and chips,
spaghetti, apple pie and treacle sponge and
custard!

However, Harvest also provides us with the opportunity to REFLECT.

As we give thanks for so much, we are increasingly aware of the inequalities in the distribution of God's gifts, and our failure as human beings to use these gifts wisely and share them fairly.

To help us reflect on this today, we're going to play a game...

Two teams of 6.

Each throw a dice in return.

Collect the number of food items as the number on the dice.

What happens!!!

Is it fair?

That's how it works in the world today.

The system of trade between countries,
favours the rich countries.

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

As we come together today to celebrate and
give thanks for all God's gifts at harvest time,
and in particular all the food that we enjoy,
we also reflect on the fact there are sadly
many in our world who do not have enough
to eat.

The statistics are horrifying.

There are around 700 million people in our
world today who do not have enough food.

In Africa alone, one third of all children are
undernourished.

2.8 billion people in the poorest countries of
the world survive on less than £1.30 per day.

No doubt each of us often says in our hearts, if only a miracle would happen..... We heard in our Gospel the familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand. God's miraculous and generous provision of bread and fish for thousands to eat and still have some left over. If only a miracle like that could happen now...

In a very real sense, the miracle we often hope for has already happened. What we need to do is RESPOND and share in it. The miracle that I am talking about is the miracle of God's generosity.

Again and again, Jesus says things can be different in our world, if only we were better at sharing the resources of the world that God has given us.

As individuals, we often feel powerless to do anything about the situation.

However, I was very struck by something I heard a number of years ago at a One World Week talk, given by John Madely.

John Madely, is a writer and broadcaster, who over the last 20 years has specialised in third world issues - in particular economics and world trade.

He recounted an incident that happened following a talk that someone had heard about fair trade. The person listening to the talk came up to the speaker and afterwards said **“I feel so small and powerless.”**

What can I do when were up against big companies and governments? To this, the speaker replied; ***“You have obviously never tried sleeping in the same room as a mosquito!”***

In the story of the feeding of the five thousand that we heard this morning, it was a small boy who offered two fish and five small loaves of bread. It was a very small amount of food amongst so many. But, Jesus took that gift, blessed it and did amazing things. 5000 people were fed, with 12 baskets full left over!!!

If everyone responds and gives just a little, shares just a little – many people who at the moment haven't got enough food or water, can be given the basic things they need.

I want to leave you with a final illustration of how sharing can enable others to share in the blessings we have.

RIBBON EXERCISE

As we REJOICE THIS HARVEST in God's gifts to us, may we also REFLECT on the needs of those us, and RESPOND by sharing something of what we have.

In that we, we can each be part of God's miracle!

Amen.