

**Sermon**  
**12 October 2014**  
**West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood**

**By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald**

**Text: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9**

**Harvest Thanksgiving**

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As all of you probably know, Orville and Wilbur Wright invented and build the world's first *successful* airplane. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1903, the Wright Brothers made the first controlled, powered and sustained human flight in history. They were so excited about their success, that on that very same day they sent a telegram from where they were, in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, to their sister living in Dayton, Ohio. The telegram read, "*Sustained flight for 59 seconds. Hope to be home for Christmas.*"

Their sister found this to be incredible news, so she took the telegram to the local Dayton newspaper. A small headline appeared the next day on the back page. It read, "Popular bicycle merchants to be home by Christmas."

Sometimes we miss the extraordinary because we are blinded by the ordinary.

How could that reporter have missed the fact that something extraordinary, something that would change the world, really, happened, and just mention that the 2 brothers were coming home for Christmas?!

Sometimes we miss the extraordinary because we are blinded by the ordinary...

It is Harvest time now. Something part and parcel of our daily lives, something so ordinary – it doesn't seem to be anything special at all. Seeds are planted, in time these seeds grow, and then, roundabout this time of year the crops gets harvested and made into all kinds of different foods for us to eat.

But actually – if you take a few minutes to think about what happens to a seed from *when it is planted* until *it is harvested* – there is absolutely nothing ordinary about it!

A tiny wee seed, planted in the right soil, getting the right amount of water, in time grows into something completely different – into a tiny beautiful wild flower, into corn or wheat (the food we eat!), or into huge big trees.

How is all of this possible? Who makes it happen? It's God. That's how God created the earth – an extraordinary place where extraordinary things happen.

And harvest is a very good time to remind ourselves about this.

I don't know much about farming, but I heard that *this* year, with the good weather we've had, the farmers are happy. They were able to gather in a good harvest.

And that is why we call today's service Harvest Thanksgiving – because today we want to say thank you to God for this good harvest. Because a good harvest is not something only the farmers should be thankful for – the food we *all* eat are made from the crops that the farmers gather in.

In our Scripture reading the apostle Paul compares our spiritual lives with what happens on a farm.

He says that God is the Farmer, and we are his fellow workers. We need to sow the seeds and water the seeds, and then, at the right time, God will make the seeds grow.

And then, of course, at harvest time, we should gather in the crops. Because that is what you do on a farm. I don't know a single farmer who will look at his ripe and ready-to-harvest crops and then do nothing about it! You go through all the trouble of planting *in order* to be able to harvest the crops later.

All of this applies to our labour in God's land – the world – too.

So let's look at this practically:

- *What does it mean to sow the seeds in God's land?* It means to tell people about God. This doesn't have to be done through words alone – we can *tell* people that God love them, but we can also *show* people that God love them.
- *What does it mean to water the seeds in God's land?* It means that we should do everything in our power to give the seeds we have planted to opportunity to grow. If you plant an actual seed and forget about it, it might come up, but it *might not* come up. If you

plant it, take care of it, water it – the chances are very slim that it won't grow. But depending on the type of seed you planted, you sometimes have to be very patient before you'll be able to see any results. So – no use telling people about God and then never mentioning it again. Or telling people about God and not living a life of faith yourself...

And then – for a while – that's all we can do. Any farmer, or actually, anybody who's ever planted a wee seed will tell you that for quite a while it feels as if nothing is happening. But that's only because you can't see anything happening on the surface. Under the ground, that wee seed is actually very busy – changing, growing – until one day it breaks through the ground and makes you very happy!

And then comes harvest time.

- *What does it mean to harvest in God's land?* Harvest is an *opportunity*. It's an opportunity to bring people to God. To bring them to church, to make them a part of the community of believers.

Because sometimes it can be really hard to be a Christian. Especially if it's a new thing for you. Or if you are the only one, surrounded by lots of people who don't believe and who make your life hard because you do. Then you are like a lone ear of wheat surrounded by weeds. We need to, as a matter of speaking, harvest that ear of wheat and put it with the rest of the wheat – where it will be safe and understood.

And it can also be hard to be a Christian in difficult times. In the storms of life. Once again, as a matter of speaking, we should get the harvest in before the hail knocks it down to the ground completely. When you are

held up by others, you can get through a storm. It's when you have to face it alone that it can all get too much.

So let's do our job as fellow workers here on God's land, as well as we can. Because seeing somebody grow close to God, is even more extraordinary than seeing a seed change into a tree...

It won't always be easy, and it's hard work, but it's worth it through and through. I don't know a single *real* farmer who will give up because he is struggling...

I want to tell you a wee story of perseverance. The second house we stayed in here in Scotland, was on Corstorphine Hill, in Edinburgh. We stayed in a flat in Leith before that, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, so we didn't have a garden. But now we had a garden and we were very excited about that. But because the house was at the top of a steep hill, this garden was on a slope. And the grass needed cutting badly.

We didn't know many people, and we didn't own a grass cutter. So we decided to approach the friendly neighbour who promised a helping hand when we needed one.

*Of course we could borrow his grass cutter*, he said, and he brought it along. When he left Andre and I looked at each other and started giggling. We had no idea that our friendly neighbour was very eco cautious – it was one of those old fashioned (and very old and rusty, might I add), push reel lawn mowers.

Now for starters – Andre isn't a very keen gardener in the first place. Secondly, he's never seen one of these grass cutters before, never mind *used* one! But cut that grass he was going to cut that grass!!

He struggled so much that I had to go laugh inside and come back out with a straight face, otherwise I'm sure he would have had me do it. But seeing him running down that hill and struggling back up time after time, sweat dripping in his eyes and muttering under his breath the whole time, is a picture I'll never forget...

He struggled very much, but because he persevered – that evening the grass was cut. Maybe not as neat as he was hoping for it to be, but it was done, none the less.

If you persevere, you will get the job done, even if it's hard.

So let's not miss this opportunity God gives us – let's plant the seeds, water them, and bring the harvest in – so that when the winter comes, we'll be ready for it.

Amen