

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Discipleship; justice; Christian community

## Closing Prayer

God, the source of all good things,  
from the fruit of the earth, your bountiful gift,  
you satisfy the needs of every living creature.  
Keep us mindful of your generous mercy  
and faithful in keeping your commandments,  
that all may share justly in what you have bestowed,  
and come in thanksgiving to bless your holy name.  
We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Celebrating the Christian Year, Harvest Thanksgiving, Year A<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*

## Harvest Thanksgiving

### Principal Service readings

Deuteronomy 8.7-18	The promised land
or Deuteronomy 28.1-14	The promise of blessing
Psalm 65	We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house
2 Corinthians 9.6-15	The generosity of those who are blessed by God
Luke 12.16-30	Parable of the farmer and the storehouse
or Luke 17.11-19	Jesus heals ten lepers

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *The parable of the farmer and the storehouse*

<sup>16</sup>Jesus told the people a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. <sup>17</sup>And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?” <sup>18</sup>Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” <sup>21</sup>So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.’

#### *Trust in providence*

<sup>22</sup>He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup>For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. <sup>24</sup>Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! <sup>25</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>26</sup>If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? <sup>27</sup>Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was

not clothed like one of these. <sup>28</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! <sup>29</sup>And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. <sup>30</sup>For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them.'

Luke 12.16-30 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

## Comments and Questions

The parable of the farmer and his storehouse follows directly on from an incident in which someone in the crowd is complaining to Jesus about not being given a share of his inheritance. Jesus' response is to decline to judge the matter, but he does warn against avarice, for 'life does not consist in abundance of possessions,' he says (12.15).

The farmer seems quite industrious, wanting to build more storehouses to protect his harvest. This leads him to pat himself on the back – no need to worry, he says, there's enough here for many years; take it easy ... He's a fool, though, because God will say to him suddenly, 'time's up', and who will inherit then? Jesus ends the parable by saying, 'So it is when someone stores up treasure for himself instead of becoming rich with regard to God' (1.21).

This parable leads us to question, 'What is it all for?' My grandson had a patch of pessimism after he left school and got a job. He felt he was on a treadmill, and said, 'You work for years, and then you die'. Well, it's true in a way, but what it leaves out is *how* you work, and what you do with the *produce*, the *harvest*, as it were.

I once saw someone wearing a T-shirt which had the slogan on it: 'Number 1 charity'. That is one way of thinking of life, like the rich farmer. But following the parable, Jesus speaks about not worrying about your life (12.22), but rather trusting in God's providence, for he will provide (12.30).

How many of us are willing to put that to the test? We like to be in charge, to keep what we have acquired to ourselves, which gives us a sense of security and perhaps pride.

<sup>1</sup> New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

I had an uncle who was a chauffeur. He worked for a while for a millionaire. The millionaire had two Rolls Royces and two Bentleys, a silver and a gold one of each. Which car he was asked to drive depended on what the millionaire wore that day, whether a grey suit or a brown one. Decisions, decisions ...

There is tremendous inequality in our world – some people have more than they can possible use, while others are lacking the very necessities of life – food, clothing, shelter. One the figures we have been looking at in our summer sermon series this year was Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of the Save the Children Fund. After the First World War there was still a bitter feeling in the country, and a blockade was enforced after the war, which led to mass starvation and death in Europe. Some people thought of all Germans, Austrians etc, as 'the enemy'. Eglantyne Jebb cut through all the prejudice with a challenge: 'Surely it is impossible for us, as normal human beings, to watch children starve to death without making an effort to save them' (Eglantyne Jebb, May 1919).

## Quotations

### 1

Do you not know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud the Lord, by applying it to any other purpose?

John Wesley, 1703-1791

### 2

When someone steals another's clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor.

Basil the Great, 330–379