

Harvest Thanksgiving

Principal Service readings

Deuteronomy 26.1-11	First-fruits
Psalm 100	Invitation to praise the Lord
Philippians 4.4-9	Fill your minds with good thoughts
or Revelation 14.14-18	The harvest of the earth is reaped
John 6.25-35	Food that lasts – bread from heaven

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 bread from heaven

²⁵When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ ²⁶Jesus answered them,

‘Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.’

²⁸Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ ²⁹Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’ ³⁰So they said to him, ‘What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?’ ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” ³²Then Jesus said to them,

‘Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’

³⁴They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ ³⁵Jesus said to them,

'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

John 6.25-35 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Today's gospel reading is the first section of a long discourse by Jesus on the Bread of Heaven. The introductory question, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' prompts Jesus to speak about the need to search for food that endures to eternal life.

People ask for signs from him (6.30), to assess his miracle-working credentials to see whether he surpasses those of Moses. Jesus corrects them, saying it was not Moses but his heavenly Father who gives 'the true bread from heaven' (6.32). This is the bread that gives life to the world (6.33).

Then the people want this bread for themselves (bearing in mind the miracle of the loaves and the fish from 6.5-15). Jesus points to himself as the 'true bread from heaven' (6.35).

Harvest is something always to be thankful for, but it is also a metaphor for the spiritual food that nourishes us invisibly. How much do we value this spiritual nourishment?

Quotations

1

Love is what we are born with. Fear is what we learn. The spiritual journey is the unlearning of fear and prejudices and the acceptance of love back in our hearts. Love is the essential reality and our purpose on earth. To be consciously aware of it, to experience love in ourselves and others, is the meaning of life. Meaning does not lie in things. Meaning lies in us.

Marianne Williamson, 1952–

2

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.
Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106–44 BC

¹ *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.

2

3

Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough.
Oprah Winfrey, 1954–

Related topics

For further study:

Bread of Life; spirituality; harvest; gratitude; sharing

Closing Prayer

Eternal God,
you crown the year with your goodness
and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season:
grant that we may use them to your glory,
for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

*Common Worship · Harvest*²

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² *South African Prayer Book* 1969. The prayer draws on Psalm 65.11, and focuses on the implications of God's generosity.