



Call to worship : Ps 136

Praise the LORD! He is good.
Praise the God of all gods.
Praise the Lord of lords.

Only God works great miracles.
With wisdom he made the sky.
The Lord stretched the earth over the ocean.
He made the bright lights in the sky.
He lets the sun rule each day.
He lets the moon and the stars rule each night.

He gives food to all who live.
Praise God in heaven!

**God's love never fails.
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Hymn: For the fruits of your creation STF 124 Watch on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CRW9qC2pqU>

For the fruits of all creation,
Thanks be to God;
For the gifts to every nation,
Thanks be to God;
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
Silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
Thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
In the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;

In our world-wide task of caring
For the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
Thanks be to God;
For the good we all inherit,
Thanks be to God;
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all that love has found us,
Thanks be to God.

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Prayer: "Creation time prayer"

God of **honey** and halleluiah, of grain and grape, of ocean and orchard, this Creation Time we praise you for the abundance of life, and pray that the gifts of the world are not just shared, but shared justly. God of **beehives** and breadbaskets, of living webs and the weaving of life, of ecosystems and economy, this Creation Time we praise you for the wealth of the planet, and pray that this wealth is not just a promise, but is full of promise for all. God of **bumble bees** and blue whales, evolution and environment, ice-field and star-field, this Creation Time we praise you for the sheer wonder of the world and pray that this wonder is not about our wealth, but the wealth of our generosity.

Hear us, O God of hope, O God of promise, so be it.

Amen.

Prayer of confession: Father of creation: You made all things through love. You spoke with authority and life sprang into being. You made us in your wonderful image to be stewards of your world. Forgive us, Lord: When we have failed to reflect you, when we have lived with selfish intention, placing our own needs above those of others, when we have misused or polluted creation, or when we have acted in a way that has caused disadvantage and hurt. Help us, Lord, to reflect you: By being faithful stewards of your creation, by showing love and concern for the world. May our actions produce lasting fruit, for the sake of your Kingdom. **Amen**

Readings: *Exodus 3: 7-8a and Luke 12: 13-21*

Hymn: As climate is warming (Tune Ashgrove)

Listen to tune

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl6R--Ol3Q4>

As climate is warming will bees keep on
swarming
if we just continue to damage the earth?
Will birds and sea-creatures with beautiful features
forever be lost by denying their
worth?
Will trees and each flower succumb to the power
of poisons and toxins we put in the air?
As ice-caps diminish, a sign of the
finish-
we must meet this crisis and show that we care.

If we start to measure some things that we
treasure
it may cause us anguish to let these things go;
for comfort and leisure, our life-style and pleasure,
we claim we have earned and don't wish to
forgo;
but we can all ponder and face what we squander,
then start to make change in the way that we live;
we can curb excesses; each harms and
oppresses
the poor and the weak; we take what they don't give.

To greenhouse emissions we make our
additions
and by them we foster some possible gloom;

Message: In our Call to Worship at the very beginning of this Service we recognised all that God has given us, and all he has done for us.

In another Psalm, 34, it says "taste and see the Lord is good."

Do you like honey? I love honey, and because I keep bees, and each year I can usually take two different batches of honey – one in June and another in August, I have become a bit of a honey snob. The honey in June comes from the yellow rapeseed flowers we often see in the fields. This honey is very pale and goes hard very quickly. It doesn't have much taste to it, but the honey that comes in August is a mixture of all different sorts of flowers. It depends where the beehive is, and mine is near lime trees, and it has a sort of minty flavour and is runny honey.

In our reading from the Old Testament, God said, he was going to rescue the people from Egypt and bring them to a land of milk and honey. I wonder what this meant?

Milk represents food. When we are babies, milk is our only source of food for the first few months of life. It is rich in everything we need for us to grow. By the time we are 6 months old we have more than doubled our weight- just by drinking milk!

So, this land was going to provide all the food the people needed to grow healthy lives, and God was going to provide it. Today, God provides all the food we need to grow healthy lives – physically and spiritually.

But with perseverance we can make a difference,
we can work to limit the fuel we
consume;
we'll tell each law-maker that every green acre
is ours to look after and not to destroy;
God's bounty possessing, we're stewards of
blessing,
we meet our commitment with challenging joy.

With nature so fragile, yet dazzling and fertile,
we ponder its beauty, its charm and its grace;
evolving triumphant with life so abundant-
confounded we are with so much to embrace;
yet these greenhouse gases pollute in their masses;
we need to decrease them; we know that we
should!

When nature is bleeding we hear urgent pleading
to change our behaviour; we know how we could!

If we stop this warming then bees will keep swarming
and sweetness of honey remain for our taste;
then birds and sea-creatures and hills and sea beaches
will stay in their magic unharmed by our waste;
the charm every hour of trees and each flower
will bring us to silence in wonder and awe;
With God so surrounding in beauty astounding
we kneel in God's presence to praise and adore.

Words: George Stuart NSW Australia

Honey is very sweet, it is golden in colour, and depending where you buy it, is worth a lot of money. So, honey represented happiness, luxury, pleasure. Honey also has many medicinal qualities – it helps heal wounds, it helps decrease symptoms of things like hay fever. Honey represents health and wealth. God was telling the people, I will send to a land where you will have food and money, where you will grow and thrive.

Today we are celebrating the harvest and all the good things that God has provided for us. He has provided food to help us grow. He has provided medicines that help us when we are sick. He has provided us with the skills to grow that food and to harvest it. He has provided us with the skills to grow and thrive, and we celebrate that today.

So, what is our response to all that God provides for us? Our new testament reading was entitled, “the parable of the rich fool,” and is not primarily about harvest, but we can use it to explore what our response is to the goodness that is all around us.

The man in the story was already rich, he was a successful farmer, and this particular year he had a bumper harvest. The question was, what to do with the surplus? He already had more than enough. This farmer’s response was simply to think of himself. He didn’t ask anyone else’s advice, and he certainly didn’t ask God for his advice. It was unusual in the culture of Jesus’ day to go it alone. The people would normally bring this sort of dilemma to friends and family to discuss together.

This man never consults anyone else, he never considers anyone else – not his own family, not his friends (if he had any), what about the farmworkers who’ve helped nurture the crops and have worked hard to gather them in? What about God? This man, as rich as he may be in earthly terms, failed to gain the true riches of a right relationship, a partnership with God. He believed that the bountiful harvest was his alone, and that no one else, even God, deserved a share in that food. He believed contentment lay in storing up earthly pleasures. Jesus makes the point that this man may be rich in material goods but his soul is poor. This man was reliant only on himself, whereas Jesus tells us we are made rich when we rely not on ourselves but when we rely on God, when we are in partnership with God.

The rich man gained, for himself, from creation’s produce but forgot who it was that sent the sun and the rain, who created the seeds and the soil – the Creator himself, God!

It’s great to celebrate at harvest time, but it’s not a competition to see who can grow the finest leeks, or the heaviest pumpkin. It’s a time when we thank God for all that he has provided, and acknowledge his hand in partnership with us, or rather our hand in partnership with God.

Turning again to honey and my beehives – let me tell you a little about beekeeping to illustrate how working in partnership helps us in relationship with God.

Honey bees live in a colony in a hive. At the beginning of the season, around February or March, there are about 1500 bees in the hive. For the colony to survive there has to be only one queen, who spends her entire life laying eggs. At the peak of the season in July and August there are about 50,000 bees in the hive. The each only live for about 6 weeks and so there has to be a continuous production of new bees, hence the queen laying all those eggs. Each worker bee has her own role within the colony, (sorry guys the drones just sit around!), there are nurse bees looking after the eggs and the developing larva, there are guard bees preventing wasps and other predators getting into the hive, there are foragers that go out and look for good sources of nectar. The bees live on nectar obtained from flowers to make honey as their source of food, and they bring back pollen on their legs which is the building blocks for them to make their honeycomb.

A hive is pretty self-sufficient, I don’t have to do much, but if I want to harvest the honey, I have to work in partnership with them. In early spring when the colony wakes up, they have often eaten all their winter stores of honey and so can literally starve. I therefore give them some sugar syrup to help them get started again. I then need to inspect the hive every few weeks to make sure they are thriving and that the queen is still there. The honey is stored at the top of the hive and the new bees develop at the bottom.

It’s important that I don’t act like the rich man and take all the honey stores off for myself, this would leave the hives empty and the colony would not survive. When I take the honey off in June and in August I give them some sugar syrup again to replace their stores. So hopefully you can see, that unlike the rich man who thought only of himself, working with my bees is a partnership, we work together.

I have provided a home for them, food when their natural supplies are short, and hopefully a good site where there are lots of good flowers and nectar supplies. They in turn continue to thrive and grow, producing new bees to keep the

colony going, sharing out the various jobs to be done. They provide honey and wax in plentiful quantities, which I can then share with others.

However, in any partnership there are some ground rules:

Respect- I've learnt this the hard way, having some nasty stings and almost always because I didn't do things quite right. The rich man had no respect for God, and so that very night God took him from all he had hoarded up. Do we acknowledge that all we have today comes from God? Do we use what God has given us responsibly? Do we share God's creation and its produce with others?

Trust – by and large, I can leave my bees to get on with it. The rich man did not trust God to provide for him, so he stored up his bumper crops for a "rainy day," just in case. Later on in the passage from Luke's gospel, Jesus talks about not worrying about where our food comes from or whether we have clothes to wear; and this was to poor people of the time, who sometimes didn't know where the next meal was coming from or who only had one set of clothes to wear. Do we trust in God to provide, or do we hoard "for a rainy day?"

Faith- I have faith that there will be some honey for me at the end of the season. The rich man had a weak or no faith in God. Do we live in close relationship with God, or do we only let him in at certain times? When you are next in your garden, or at the supermarket buying fruit or vegetables, perhaps stop for a moment and remind yourself, that everything comes from God, the Creator. When we make decisions about money or lifestyle, let us think about God who gives us so much, rather than how much we can store for ourselves. The kingdom is not about gathering riches here on earth, rather it is about living together in God's kingdom, not ours. AMEN

Prayer of thanksgiving: Gracious and loving Father, we thank you for all that you have given us. We gaze around us and see beauty everywhere, from bright breezy blooms to delicate inconspicuous flowerheads. We hear the busy buzzing of bees working for the benefit of their community as well as for us. We taste the sweetness of new honey and the coarseness of new bread from the grain. Everything we have comes from you, in your abundant love.

We thank you for sending your Son to feed us with your Spirit, helping us to grow in faith and love.

We come today to offer praise and thanksgiving for all you have done. AMEN

Hymn: O Lord my God (How great thou art) STF 82 Watch on YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIPJ-5TqG0c>

O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

Refrain

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die-I scarce can take it in.
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:
Refrain

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home-what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!
Refrain

Stuart K Hine (1899-1989)

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Blessing: May we taste justice at our tables. May we sense hope in our land. May we savour the sweetness of all we have been given. May we journey towards renewal in our living and may God direct us, challenge us and be our companion on the way.

Amen.