

Harvest Thanksgiving-3rd October 2021

Liturgical colour: green (the colour of hope and growth – growth of nature and growth in faith)

“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.” (Psalm 145, 15) This word from the Psalms stands over the Christian Harvest Thanksgiving and the time of harvest generally. And usually, when we look to the altar in church on the Sunday of Harvest Thanksgiving, we see manifold blessings. In many congregations, the altars are festively decorated: with fruit and vegetables, and in rural communities also with a harvest crown, traditionally tied from the four grains rye, wheat, oats, and barley. In urban areas, the ornaments are sometimes supplemented by handicrafts - they, too, are fruits of labour. Already from the Middle Ages hails the tradition that the gifts of the harvest altar benefit needy fellow citizens: They are donated to homeless shelters or food banks.



God has always wanted to sustain man after Creation. God does not want just to be a God for spiritual affairs. God knows that we also need food for our body. A very good picture for that is the **Gospel Reading** for Harvest Thanksgiving, according to **Saint Mark, chapter 8, verses 1-9**:

1 In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, 2 “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. 3 And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.” 4 And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” 5 And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.”

6 And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. 7 And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. 8 And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. 9 And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away.

The giant pumpkin and the full ear of corn, the honeycomb, and the bread - in the richly decorated harvest altar, nature's bounty and the fruits of our labour really come into their own when we bring them to our Lord, God, Creator, and Sustainer. This way the circle is complete.

But we harvest more: food and clothing, every growth and prosperity in partnership and family, great and small successes at work - there is so much which we can give thanks for. The harvest festival provides room for gratitude and turns it towards God. Those who give thanks take nothing for granted and know that they have been richly blessed by God. Anxious hoarding and excessive worrying are alien to him. God's generosity is catching and motivating. In this way, Sunday directs our gaze beyond our own plate and calls us to share our possessions and resources responsibly. Those who can give in this way will never run dry, as the Apostle Paul writes in the **Epistle Reading, 2Corinthians 9, 6-15**:

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for

sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

The service on Harvest Thanksgiving leads me to the question: What do I have to give thanks for? What was allowed to grow and mature in me in the past year? The harvest festival offers an opportunity to reflect on this, according to the **Old Testament Reading** for this day, **Deuteronomy 8, 7-18:**

7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

11 “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, 12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, 15 who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. 17 Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ 18 You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

(text largely translated and quoted from www.kirchenjahr-evangelisch.de ; URL of 30.09.21)

Prayer for Harvest Thanksgiving

Father, as we celebrate this season of thanksgiving we give thanks for the blessings of food, provision and nourishment. Please grow in us a harvest for the world. Come sow a seed of hope within our souls Lord, that we might yield goodness, patience and kindness in abundance. Sow a seed of peace in our lives Lord, that we might bear the fruits of forgiveness, compassion and righteousness. Come sow a seed of love in our hearts Lord, that others would reap the blessings of family, friendship and community. May each seed of hope, peace and love grow within us into a harvest that can be feasted on by all. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favour and + give us peace. Amen.



This compilation comes from **All Lutheran Church of Brussel**, www.alcb.be, a congregation of the Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in België, member of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) represented by The Reverend Johannes Reitze-Landau, pastor@alcb.be. The selection of the readings follows the German Protestant Series of the Biblical Readings for the Sundays and Church Feasts based on the “Ancient Church Series”, last review in 2018.

The Biblical passages are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).