

## Harvesting our Stories

Illustration ...

What did that have to do with harvest? Absolutely nothing ... it was a shameless gimmick! Except that when we first looked at the towel when it was compressed, we didn't think we had what we needed, it wasn't until we used the water on it that we saw it was more than enough.

In our first reading this morning we heard how God wanted the people of Israel to celebrate Harvest, and God wanted them to tell a story. It was a story of being a wandering people, of not planting crops or being able to eat from their harvest, it was a story of God providing the food that they needed.

It was a story of being slaves, of having to work hard for nothing, of being treated as different and unkindly.

It was a story of being rescuedd and given land that had everything that they needed to eat well and live well. And even though they could now plant their crops and harvest their food, God wanted them to remember that it all still came from God.

The story they told at harvest mattered about how they saw themselves and how they saw God.

The second reading we heard isn't about harvest at all, you might think. St Paul, who wrote it, is actually in prison when he's writing and yet he can say to the people he's writing to, "rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice." Paul can say that because Paul is telling a different story.

Paul's story isn't about being in prison, or being sad, or being defeated;  
Paul's story is about the God whom he serves who is near to him;  
Paul's story is about a God who we can talk to, pray to, ask for things from, commit to things with.  
Paul's story is about a God who brings us peace through Jesus Christ.

That's why Paul finishes the reading we heard with: "whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." The stories we tell matter.

If we tell stories about how we don't have enough, how others are taking what we have away from us; if we tell ourselves stories that say we're too young or too old to do anything, or stories that say the task is too hard then we begin to believe those stories and we live according to them.

But if we tell stories of a God who can meet all our needs, of a God who always feeds the people, of a God who is the water on our compressed towels, who can take the smallest thing we can offer and turn it into something great then we can start to live by that story.

That's what mattered for the eco group and for all of us here at Holy Trinity. We told a story of how we could change, of how each of us could live differently, it didn't have to be big changes to begin with.

We told a story of why it mattered that we have put LED lights in our buildings, of why it mattered that we put solar panels on the roof of a Grade I listed building;

we told a story of why it mattered what cleaning products we buy and use, what coffee we buy and use, what clothes we buy;

we told a story of why it mattered that the church yard was a place where we could demonstrate what looking after creation means, with increased biodiversity, bees, a herb garden;

And we'll continue to tell that story here, as we work more with both of our primary schools helping each other tell a good story; as we build more links with our community; as we further develop our work in the church yard, putting a pond in, increasing our bee hives, giving people more information about what they might find there.

This morning all of us are invited to think about the stories we tell. Stories that tell more of what we have than what we don't, stories of hope rather than stories of fear, stories of abundance rather than stories of scarcity.

And we can tell those stories because like the people of Israel and like St Paul our story starts with God, a God who created a world in which everything was good, our story continues with God in Jesus Christ helping us to continue to create a world where things are good, where our stories help us to see the goodness and abundance of God, where the lives we live matter.

Harvest is a time to tell the story of God's goodness and abundance in a world of scarcity and fear. Harvest is a time to remember that no matter how we feel, it is the water of God's love and grace that unfolds we all have. Harvest is a time to tell our own stories to bring not just food but ourselves to see what story God can tell with each one of us.