

On Harvest Sunday Pieter largely used a sermon by Hetty, which she had preached the Thursday before at The Vyne. Hetty's original sermon follows here:

This summer I bought three small tomato plants for charity. I think they were only one pound each. One of them was uprooted by our new dog, who enjoyed digging in the garden, two of them survived. We had planted them in a small corner of our not-so-large garden, because they were small plants. Those of you who know much about tomato plants, know we should have given them more space. Because, 'wow', did they grow... They now occupy four times the space they originally covered. The tomatoes are the little ones, the cherry tomatoes, with a nice, sweet taste. How amazed we were to find about 100 tomatoes on these two plants. And there is more to come, because every day I find nice, red ones ready to be eaten!

I never grew up with a garden with vegetables or fruit, but my husband Pieter did. He could tell me about the beans they grew, the lettuce, sprouts, potatoes, carrots, red beets and the strawberries. It was a lot of work, but beneficial for the large family they were. I'm sure several of you recognize this!

But he and I never had tomato plants since we got married, so to me it is pretty new and I am still astonished by what is growing in my own garden! For many people who live in a large town or a city, nature is far away. We buy our vegetables in the shop, we don't see anything growing anymore, except for on television in programmes like Countryfile. When our daughter was in a school in London, the girls in her classroom did not know that milk came from cows, they thought milk was made in a factory. Our daughter knew better, because she had a friend whose father was a farmer and milked his cows. For farmers the harvest is part of their life and they live with the weather forecast and what grows on their land.

The Harvest Festival makes us think: where does everything come from? And who are we to thank for our food, our daily needs, our daily bread? In the Lord's Prayer we say: 'Give us this day our daily bread...', but often we don't realize how special it is that God provides for our needs.

In Genesis 1 we read this morning how God created everything. We also sang songs about it. God put a steady rhythm in nature: the plants and trees bear fruit, each of their own kind. There is a great variety in nature. Every fruit tree, every plant, every fruit is different and has their own specialities. The trees and seed-bearing plants all produce the things they are meant to produce and there is a large variety.

And there is spring, summer, autumn, winter, in which they all go through the circle of the year. I found this very encouraging during lockdown in the time of the Covid crisis. The whole life seemed to stop, contacts were reduced, life came to a standstill. But nature didn't: God still gave the spring with its beauty, its flowers, its colours. Summer came as normal and autumn with its beautiful colours. Winter came and spring followed, not matter what happened in the world. I found this very comforting and received it as a great gift from God.

A Harvest Service like the one today is a time to thank God for the proceeds of the land. Thankful people are usually happier than people who are moaning all the time. The apostle Paul often says in his letters in the New Testament: Give thanks to God, he even says 'Give thanks to God in all circumstances...'

Today we do thank God for all his gifts in nature, for giving us food and a place to live in. But we also share with those who are in need. Nowadays, there are more and more people who use a foodbank. For those of us who have plenty, there is a lot to share. When we are blessed with food, we can be a blessing to others by sharing it with those who are in need. So today we thank God for his gifts, but we also pray that God will use us to pray for those in need and to give to others, as far as we are able to.

In the name of Jesus, who said: '...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Amen