

Dear Friends,

The changing of the seasons can evoke a range of feelings and emotions. Shorter evenings and days bring longer nights. For some, this brings a sense of well-being of being 'cosy' whilst for others it is less positive. The falling leaves can bring a sense of loss, as can the shorter days, which is perhaps emphasised as we head towards November and Remembrance Day. Yet here we are in October and this year I've been reflecting in a different way and thinking about the generosity that comes with Autumn. Late September and early October are often associated with Harvest Festivals. This is a time where we celebrate the goodness and generosity of God. The growth cycle means that we see the fruit of the labours literally come to fruition. The harvest is gathered, fruits and berries collected and, where there is an abundance, conserved in various ways either through freezing or the making of jams and preserves.

Throughout the Bible we see the abundance and generosity of God. In the creation of the world, we see God's grace at work. The perfection described in the early chapters of Genesis shows us the world as it is intended to be. We see the life of God revealed in Jesus Christ who lived amongst the whole of humanity sharing the compassion and grace of God with everyone. His dying and rising again to bring new life to all who turn to him is an act of such huge generosity that it is almost incomprehensible. Through the Holy Spirit, we see God's love and grace active in the world today as we seek to live out the values of the Kingdom.

As Christians we often talk about how we can serve or give to others. Creation has undoubtedly provided something of a model for this in the giving of the fruits and crops that we share in. Autumn is a blaze of colour which brightens up the shortening days. At the same time, the falling leaves give back to God's creation nutrients to the soil, the trees produce berries which provide food for wildlife, and the basis of pollination by insects for the future. The generosity shown in the life of God is in both giving and receiving.

We are sustained by Jesus and receive from him the grace and compassion we need so that we can share it with others through the Spirit. As we give to others we need to receive from God. The invitation to come to God is personal and most definitely for everyone. It is offered through the free flow of grace so that abundant life can be experienced by all. As we travel through the next few days and weeks, let's reflect on the giving and receiving as a cycle of life where we receive from God and give to others out of our love for God.

God bless,
Chris