



~AT HOME WORSHIP~

Sunday 26th September

Theme: Harvest
Living your best life!



Preparation

Inclusive God, we gather together.
Welcoming God, we come to you.
Valuing God, we see our worth in you.
Challenging God, open our ears to your words,
open our minds to explore our ways,
open our hearts to receive all that you offer.
Loving God, we come to you.

Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving A harvest prayer based on Psalm 65

Creator God, you send rain to make the land produce crops.

We praise and thank you, O God.

You provide water and sunlight for the crops to grow.

We praise and thank you, O God.

Your generosity provides a rich harvest.

We praise and thank you, O God.

The fields are filled with flocks, and the valleys are full of wheat.

We praise and thank you, O God.

You satisfy us with the good things you provide.

We praise and thank you, O God.

Hymn/Song: Harvest Samba [Harvest Samba \(Cabbages and Greens\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Cabbages and greens,
Broccoli and beans,
Cauliflower and roasted potatoes,
Taste so good to me!
Apricots and plums,
Ripened in the sun,
Oranges and yellow bananas,
Good for everyone!

Golden corn and wheat,
Oats and sugar beet,
Fluffy rice and tasty spaghetti,
Wonderful to eat!
Coffee, cocoa, tea,
Growing naturally,
Herbal plants and all kinds of spices
Very nice indeed!

It's another Harvest Festival
When we bring our fruit and vegetables,
Cause we want to share the best of all
The good things that we've been given.
It's another opportunity
to be grateful for the food we eat
With a Samba celebration
To say thank you to God the Father.

Chorus
Thank you for the harvest,
Thank you for your goodness,
For all of the fruit and vegetables
and the wonderful things that grow!
Thank you for the harvest,
Thank you for your goodness,
For all of the fruit and vegetables
and the wonderful things that grow.!

Prayer for the Day

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Saying Sorry

We take some moments in quiet to say sorry to God for where we have done wrong, for the things we have thought, said and did which we are sorry for.

God in creation

We confess to you our lack of care for the world you have given us.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you our selfishness in not sharing the earth's bounty fairly.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We confess to you our failure to protect resources for others.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

BIBLE READINGS



Based on James 5.13-20

Questions and responses

Voice 1: Are any among you suffering?

Voice 2: They should pray.

Voice 1: Are any cheerful?

Voice 2: They should sing songs of praise.

Voice 1: Are any among you sick?

Voice 2: They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

Voice 1: The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

Voice 2: Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Voice 1: Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

Voice 2: Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

Voice 2: My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another...

Voice 1: know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Mark 9:38-50

Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us

³⁸ "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

³⁹ "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

Causing to Stumble

⁴² "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ^[44] ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ^[46] ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where

"the worms that eat them do not die,
and the fire is not quenched.'"

⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire.

⁵⁰ "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Short Reflection by Angela

The expression 'living your best life' is widely used on social media, particularly by young people. The phrase is said to have been coined by Oprah Winfrey, and is shared as a frequent hashtag on Instagram and FB. On Instagram there are 6.2M

posts with #livingmybestlife!. It's a great phrase, and an endorsement of how to live well. However, it is often used on social media as a promotion of self, a 'look at me' and my interesting life! For instance, the phrase might be posted under a portrait photo on a stunning beach looking out at an azure sea. Or it could be a hashtag by a photo of the newest kale and turmeric smoothie.

Someone who comes to mind in recent weeks as truly living their best life is Emma Raducanu. She has shot to fame with her victory at the New York Open tennis tournament at the tender age of 18. But there is something special and inspiring about her isn't there. The word delightful is often used. What is it about Emma that people are drawn to, other than her astonishing success? She has an openness and freshness, an upbeat and friendly personality, and a sense of great joy and gratitude for what is happening to her. And yet, her success hasn't just landed on her lap; she has tirelessly worked on her tennis skills since a young child, staying behind after others had finished to repeatedly practice the strokes, and in all weathers. Emma took her natural athletic ability, and practised and practised to deliver tennis at the standard of mature stars in the sport. Living her best life, has also meant being incredibly resilient, repeatedly trying her best when things are going wrong.

I think the phrase to 'live your best life' has a deep meaning; to be the best person individually that we can be, using our gifts, interests, personalities, experiences etc. To be someone who makes a positive difference to the world and others. You can even search 'how to live your best life' on *wikihow*! I think that it also means avoiding things that drag us down, like jealousy or complaining. They pull us away from having a generous spirit. In the readings today we are encouraged to be kind to others, to pray for them, be honest with

them, and yet also to get rid of all that causes us or others to stumble.

The problem is that we all want to live our best life, but know only too well that we fall short. We are a complex mix of good intentions and emotions, with all sorts of distractions and fears. Both passages today point us in the right direction. Jesus spent much time with his disciples urging them to live their best lives for God. He tells us what to choose and what to avoid: Jesus often talks about tough choices in life. But let's look at an easier choice for the moment; If I were to offer you a choice of a £10 note, a Lego set or a tub of table salt, which would you choose? It is likely that most will choose either money or the Lego™. But if we had asked people of Roman times, it is more likely that they would have chosen the salt. Salt was so useful and so valuable that roads and towns were built to process and transport it. Some say that Roman soldiers were paid partly in salt, with the term 'salary' coming from the ancient word for 'salt'.

One directive of how to live well is Jesus telling us In Mark's passage to have salt among ourselves, and be at peace with each other. And for salt to not lose its saltiness. Let's think a little on what he might have meant about saltiness. Salt makes a marked difference to the taste of food. Have you ever tried to eat fish and chips without any salt?! Salt brings out the taste of the food itself. Salt also purifies and preserves. Saline is used to clean wounds and salt water is used to preserve many foods. Some of the tins and jars we collect at the Harvest service have foods preserved in brine.

If saltiness is about an impact and an improvement, it is a good analogy for Christians and how to live. Both passages today exhort us to positively impact others. Reading them made me ask myself, am I involved enough with others and their lives? Jesus reveals that how we **are** with others, is of eternal significance. Acts of kindness like offering water to another, are

always important when done in the name of Jesus.

In addition to making a positive impact on others, a very dramatic warning is given by Jesus in the Mark passage; if anyone causes another to stumble or sin, it is better to put a millstone around their neck or cut off the part of the body causing ourselves to sin. Eternal significance of choices we make. We can't be sure if this was meant literally or not, but at the least Jesus is warning us of how seriously we should take everything that holds us back from living the right way. To ask ourselves what are our stumbling blocks, what leads us to living in the wrong way or making bad choices. And to honestly challenge ourselves about how we might be causing another person to question their faith or move away from God.

The life of a follower of Jesus requires self-denial or sacrifice, making choices that are costly and sometimes counter-intuitive. Getting rid of a way of thinking which has become common for us, is very tough indeed. Essentially, in this passage Jesus here is restating what Mark recorded in 8:34-35: that if we try to save our lives, we will lose them, and to follow Jesus means to pick up our cross and follow Him. Take a few moments to think on these questions: *What is it that I sometimes do which could lessen people's desire to know God? What do I tend to think which finds me drifting away from God?* Jesus' challenge is to ruthlessly root out these stumbling blocks from our lives. And to replace them with intentional kingdom-building choices. It is helpful to remember that our lives should demonstrate some self-denial, and we ask for the Holy Spirit to empower us in this each day.

Living your best life, is about making active choices to positively impact others, and to also ruthlessly get rid of what negatively impacts. But it is not about trying to be perfect because of course that is impossible. And our faith teaches us that we are made right with God not by our own deeds but because of the death of our

saviour Jesus on the cross. But, how we choose to live is still eternally significant,. Each act of kindness and love matters immensely. And as with our sporting heroes, it takes repeated practice, over and over making the loving choices. And we resiliently try again and again when we fail to do so. We are never too old to change how we relate to others. We can always find new ways of being – listening better, a new generosity, forgiving more, readily praying.

We are challenged this morning to bring a saltiness to our relations with others, to be kind, open, prayerful, and generous. But how do we become salty? Not in our own strength. We pray to make a positive impact by the strength of the Holy Spirit. In situations and conversations, we might practice the question, what can we do to be kingdom builders here? Often, we can find that God is already at work and we simply need to join in with what he is doing. Our harvest collection this morning is to help out a charity which is already doing

Let us pray- A personal prayer

As your bounty surrounds me in this harvest season,
so may my heart be bountiful to others,
Lord.

May I be caring through sharing,
giving of what I have,
but mostly of what I am:
my life, a gift from you, a gift to others.
Amen.

A prayer of intercession

We pray for those who spread the Word of God in our world,
for church leaders, evangelists and teachers,
that they may sow the good news with energy and joy.
Lord of the harvest,
hear our prayer.

fantastic work looking after the homeless. We choose to join in, because we know it is God's work and God's way. What other ways can we join in with God's work and be kingdom builders? Think for a few moments on what you might do this week, perhaps a visit or a call to someone struggling, or supporting a charity, or campaigning for justice. Whatever we choose, Jesus said, Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.

And so, what does it mean to live our best lives as followers of Jesus? To always strive to go God's way rather than our own; to be the best people that God created us to be; and to know that our best, most alive, self is found when we are in tune with God and creation. And by doing this together, we will see God in and through one another. Holy spirit, be our guide and inspiration.

We pray for all Christian communities,
and especially for the people of God

gathered in this place,
that we may not let the cares of the world choke the Word of God in us.
Lord of the harvest,
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have not yet seen and understood the Word of God,
that they may be enlightened and recognise
God's power in their lives.
Lord of the harvest,
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have remained deaf to the Word of God,

that they may begin to hear and
comprehend
the Word of Life in all its fullness.
Lord of the harvest,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick, the sad and the
suffering,
for doctors, nurses and for all who work for
healing,
that God's strength and power may be with
them.
Lord of the harvest,
hear our prayer.

Lord may your Word not return to you
empty
and may our prayers be heard by you in
heaven.
This we ask through your Son, our Saviour
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin **against us.**
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours
Now and for ever. **Amen**

Hymn Come Let Us Sing of a Wonderful Love [Come let us sing of a wonderful love - YouTube](#)

1. Come let us sing of a wonderful love,
Tender and true;
Out of the heart of the Father above,
Streaming to me and to you:
Wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2. Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
Joyfully came;
Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
Sharing their sorrow and shame;
Seeking the lost,
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
Home! weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
Come and abide,
Lifting my life till it rises above
Envy and falsehood and pride:
Seeking to be
Lowly and humble, a learner of thee

Closing Prayer

Lord, as we head into a new week,
help us to be people who choose to stand out from the crowd,
rather than simply to follow it.

By the power of your Spirit,
help us to also step out of our comfort zones,
and give us the courage to challenge barriers
that confine or constrain or control us.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, evermore. Amen

God bless you now and always



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