

A Harvest Sermon – Genesis 41 v14-36

We return today to the story of Joseph, to a section we missed on our journey through Genesis and Exodus.

At this point Joseph has been sold by his brothers and became a slave in Egypt. He has been unfairly imprisoned and there he interpreted the dreams of the baker and wine steward, the wine steward would be released and the baker condemned. That comes true but the wine steward forgets Joseph until Pharaoh has dreams that no one can interpret. Then he tells Pharaoh about Joseph and he is sent for.

Pharaoh says to Joseph – “I hear you can interpret dreams but Joseph responds” – “No but I can ask God for the interpretation.” See how Joseph has changed – in his earlier years he’d been quick to share with his brothers how his dreams showed how they would bow down to him. Now he says the interpretation belongs to God.

And so Pharaoh shares his dreams, ones we may be familiar with.



7 fat cows come from the river and eat the grass, they are healthy and sleek. Then come 7 skinny cows that eat the fat cows but continue to look as skinny and ill as before.

7 ears of corn full and ripe growing on one stalk, then 7 more ears of corn sprout but they are thin and scorched by the hot winds and they too swallow the full ears of corn.

(Image by ArtTower from Pixabay)

Joseph explains the 7 fat cows and 7 full ears of corn are 7 years of plenty.

The 7 skinny cows and 7 scorched ears are 7 years of famine that will follow.

The 7 years of famine will swallow up the 7 years of plenty for it will be so bad that no one will remember the 7 years of plenty.

That could've been a scary message; and indeed it was, but it was also full of hope because Joseph goes on to say: "Select a man of wisdom and insight and other men to take a 5th of all crops in the years of plenty and store them for use in the years of famine so that the people will not starve." – And we know it is Joseph that will be selected to be the one in charge of this programme.



*(Image by
jolanchapin from
Pixabay)*

As we think of the symbols of harvest we shared earlier today - soil, seeds, crops, livestock, fruits, bread - we remember there will be times of plenty and we give thanks for all that we receive.

We remember also that there are times when life is hard and crops fail and think of the symbol of harvest as the empty bowl. Here today we see the impact of poor harvests in price rises when a particular crop has a hard year. We see it on the huge scale when we hear of countries experiencing famine.

We are called to be stewards of God's creation, and part of that means not taking it for granted. In Egypt they could simply have enjoyed the years of plenty and not thought of the future. Make the most of all their resources. Instead they set aside some as protection for the future. Later on when the years of famine come and Joseph's brothers arrive seeking food, what we see another aspect of stewardship of creation: the surplus that has been stored for the time of famine is not held back from outsiders. It is used to bless others in need. Here we are reminded that as stewards of God's creation we are called to care for the widows and orphans, the stranger, any in need. Our plenty is not to be kept to ourselves but shared with generosity and in thanks to God.

This harvest time we can respond with Thanksgiving, Remembrance and Generosity

Thanksgiving –



As you eat your meals this week, say a grace of thanksgiving for God's provision and all those who have made it possible for the food to arrive on your plate.



Why not make something special for a neighbour as part of your harvest thanksgiving?

Remembrance –

Pray for all those places of the world where life is hard and it's not a time of plenty – for those who live in places of war or oppression, those living in refugee camps, those without a place to call home, for those who lack the funds to buy food.

Consider how you can get involved in working for justice and equality of access to food.

Generosity –

Make an extra donation of non-perishable goods to the Foodbank on your next shop – particular needs are hand soap, & small bags of rice.

Donate to the Smart Prebend Centre COVID 19 Appeal

<https://smartcjs.enthuse.com/cf/covid-19-appeal>

Donate to the Bishop of St Albans Harvest Appeal 'Creating a Buzz in Nepal' [https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/bishop-s-annual-](https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/bishop-s-annual-harvest-appeal/)

[harvest-appeal/](https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/bishop-s-annual-harvest-appeal/)

Almighty and everlasting God, we offer you our thanks for your great goodness and care in giving us the fruits of the earth in their seasons and we thank you for the lessons we can learn from Joseph. Give us grace to use the fruits of the earth rightly, to your glory, for our own well-being and for the relief of those in need; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen