

Dear Friends,

This is the time of the year when we come together to thank God for the harvest He has given us. In some ways it is something of a historical anachronism. There are few of us who are involved personally, and most of the harvest was gathered in some weeks ago. But that doesn't invalidate what we do, it doesn't mean it's pointless or a waste of time. People do sometimes ask why we still celebrate harvest in towns and cities and suburbs as well as in the countryside?

What we celebrate at harvest time isn't just the crops and fruit and vegetables that are grown. What we celebrate is God's goodness to us in all that He has created and all that He has given to us. That is the context in which we celebrate harvest. Genesis reminds us that all life comes from God: human life, plant life, animal life, life in all its richness and variety. The abundance of life, the huge variety of different forms of life is a sign of God's love and generosity. He has created all things, He has given us this planet to live on and to care for.

After the flood we're told that God made a covenant with Noah and his family. He promised that never again would He cause such destruction, Noah and his descendants could rely on the regular return of the seasons, that would be a time for planting and a time for harvesting. Noah is told that he and his descendants are to have power over creation.

As the human race we have a position of great power and responsibility. We have been placed over creation, over all other forms of life, and as we're aware, they're all inter-related. We have known that for centuries, even though it's only in more recent times that we've started talking about ecosystems and food chains. We are aware that different forms of life are interlinked, if a link is removed from a chain the chain will break.

When a plant species dies out or becomes extinct we do lose something. We lose in terms of variety or richness, there's one less species or variety to enjoy. But we may also lose something very practical - it may be that that rare plant contained something that could be used in later years in medical treatment. Caring for the world isn't just about aesthetics, preserving all the different varieties like some vast zoo or botanical collection. It's also very practical common sense; if we destroy life, if we allow forms of life to die out because of our neglect, if we damage this planet the practical consequences may be very serious. We have been given so much by God, we are the guardians of his creation, we have a responsibility to care for what He has created.

Best wishes,

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