

**Harvest Podcast**  
**4<sup>th</sup> October 2020**  
**Matthew 21:33-46**

**Music**

**Welcome**



Hello, and welcome to this week's Harvest podcast from New Kilpatrick Parish Church. I am Jeanette Peel, the probationary minister, at New Kilpatrick. This Sunday is Harvest Sunday and the church and online worship are hopefully coming together as one. Sunday worship in the church will be streamed with those online through Zoom! But even if you cannot come to the building or watch what is happening online, our worship podcast is still here this week and every week. Church is still meeting you wherever you are. So, thank you for joining us.

We have explored some difficult themes over the last few weeks, conflict, forgiveness, grace and compassion and what Jesus asks us to do with and about each of them. Today, is traditionally Harvest Sunday but the concept of how that came about has changed over the years. We do not just harvest food in at this time anymore, in the hope it will last us through the winter. We do not need to as we have food abundantly throughout the year. But not everyone does.

This month we will be focussing on Creation and while we do, will explore the idea of broadcasting the Word in preparation for what is to come. These last six months have been very different and now we need to consider and plan for the next few, especially in the church. How are things going to change? What will change? And what will go? We are broadcasting – passing the Word on – looking at what is happening rather than gathering it all in while giving thanks for all that has been harvested these last few months: more family time, work/life balance, caring for neighbours, and being there for each other.

We are also going to offer a practical Community response this month, different ways we can care for neighbours both here and overseas. I will give you more details about that later, but you can also read about it the Bulletin.

**Centering Prayer**

But for now, let us turn our hearts and minds to God in prayer. Let us pray.

Loving and generous God,  
We come into your presence  
This Harvest Sunday  
Yet as we walk around your created earth  
We hope to catch glimpses of you.

In among the greed and selfishness  
Which surrounds us  
We do see hope and the self-giving  
Of people willing to do all they can  
To action your love and forgiveness  
For the very least  
As you do for us

Creator God  
In these difficult times  
We witness your love  
In the most unexpected of ways  
In the beauty of the autumn colours  
In the changing season  
In the sound of nature  
In the laughter of children  
And we are thankful

Thankful you are always with us  
By our side  
Edging us on to do more in your name  
To be more Christlike  
For your people  
And your vineyard  
Here in the kingdom of God



And now hear us as we say the Lord's Prayer together

Our Father, who is in heaven  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come  
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory for ever. Amen

### Story Introduction

What a parable this week. Not an easy read and yet there is so much in it. A landowner leaving his vineyard to tenants to look after, nurture, protect and then harvest but entitlement, greed, a lack of moral judgement in doing the right thing – handing over the harvest - takes over. We might think that this parable has nothing to do with a twenty-first century world, but it has everything to do with it. Corruption, greed, lack of moral understanding in how people are treated is commonplace. And the setting of this parable could be transferred into many other contexts. It is about God's kingdom and how we treat

it which includes the very people living in it. Which begs the question, which side of the vineyard to we belong to?

### Reading – Matthew 21: 33-46

“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

### Reflection

This is the Harvest Sunday Service, and there will be a very different feel to the church service because, we are having to do things differently. There is still a Harvest Sunday service, but it is a blending of the church and the online. We will know soon enough how it all goes. And in some ways, this very difficult reading from Matthew’s Gospel, gives us opportunity to explore the theme of harvest and gathering people in from different places.

As you heard, it is not an easy passage to read. There is so much violence and lack of empathy or compassion for anyone. The parable shows the tenants do not care what happens to the people sent to them. And in the end, we hear that the landowner should do the same with the tenants – put them to death? Is it revenge? Retribution? Justice? It does not really play out. Instead what comes across is a sense of entitlement, of people not having to do the right thing, and thinking they can do whatever they want without consequences.

Where do you see these things in the world today? The lack of concern for the planet we call home, big corporations trying to withhold resources which should be readily free to everyone, companies and individuals using the law to negate their tax liability. Where do we find honouring God in all of this? Where is their accountability for that which



they should look after and use to benefit all not just for individual greed?

We only need to tune into the news at the moment to discover other events from around the world. Belarus. Police brutality and numerous killings of young black lives. Governments ready to break international law to get what they think they are entitled to. Election campaigns ready to throw whatever dirt they can against the opposition regardless of the hurt they cause to others in the process. Where does it all end? Where is the thought for the consequences of these actions and what the future will bring?

Harvest. A time to prepare for the future. A chance to make good that which has been produced and ensure everyone is provided for. The tenants' greed and lack of concern for others, meant they wanted to keep everything for themselves. But every action has a consequence. In this parable, their punishment was going to be as bad, if not worse, than they did to the others. It did not gain them anything. It was inevitable it would go wrong.

When we consider our own actions, how many of our own decisions, hand on heart, can we say are based more on God's kingdom values than on selfish desires and wishes? The need to buy as cheap as possible, use resources that are not Fairtrade, or buy things at the expense of forests or wildlife or people's livelihoods. And when we make the direct connection to the church today, the tenants of God's vineyard, how do the actions of our churches, locally or nationally, reflect the values of the kingdom of God? Does our internal wrangling over who has authority distract us from living out the gospel in and around the communities we live in, or further afield?

The harvest should be our way of sharing what we have with others, not in the literal sense as it was in years gone by. That is the why we had a Harvest service, the fields were harvested, and the produce brought in for the winter, but as a way of looking back as we prepare to look forward. This is particularly important this year with everything that has happened. We are gathering people in as we broadcast from the very traditional way of preaching God, on a Sunday morning in the church building, to the virtual way – through here and video and Zoomday School for the young people of the church.

It is taking a seed – broadcasting it - nurturing it, and letting it grow, into something new, something exciting. It is not destroying it or keeping it all for oneself. It is sharing and shouting about it within the community where it has been planted. It is looking at new ways of being church. It is ensuring Jesus is the cornerstone of what is done and putting Jesus and his teachings at the centre, while continuously asking ourselves, are we being church? If not, what do we need to do? Harvest. Gathering in what we have to prepare for the future. Gathering in to give away what we do not need.

## Prayer

During our time of prayer, there will be a period of silence, for your own prayers to God. Let us pray.

Loving God,

As the seasons change and we prepare to move into Autumn, we feel the chillier mornings and night air around us when we are out. We are still locked in such a period of uncertainty that we wake not knowing what each new day will bring. Restrictions and anxiousness, both for ourselves and those in our communities.

We lay before you our fears, hopes, anger and grief. All the things we cling on to and cannot find a way to let go. Draw close to those in their need.

The world around us is in turmoil, your creation taken for granted, resources wasted, a disregard for what might be when they are gone for ever. We pray that we begin to understand the consequences of our actions and begin to change our way of living.

For those who already live without everyday essentials: food, shelter, water, love, or peace, transform our minds and attitudes to show your grace and love shining through our own actions to support them.

We pray for those who are struggling, struggling with the ordinary, the everyday. Broken by sorrow and fear through the action of others, those who have nothing to smile about, those who are haunted by the emptiness and loneliness of life. Help them find the rainbow through the rain, a glimmer of hope in the sparkle of a raindrop, the joy of your love which no one can take away from them. Transform us to be that glimmer and hope.

We pray for those who are bereaved, ill, both at home and in hospital. Be with them and their families of what tomorrow might bring.

And now as we move into silence with the prayers of those we know and love, let us also remember those in the wider community who have no one offering a prayer for them. Hear us now in the silence.

Help transform our thoughts and prayers into personal action so we can be the living prayer that others need. Amen

## Epilogue

The following words from Brian Wren's hymn, 'Come, Cradle all the future generations,' speak of loss, and trust, and experience, and hope for the future:

The precious seed of life is in our keeping,  
yet if we plant it, and fulfil our trust,  
tomorrow's sun will rise of joy and weeping,  
and shine upon the unjust and the just.

Our calling is to live our human story  
of good and bad, achievement, love and loss,  
then hand it on to future shame or glory  
lit by our hope, and leavened by the cross.

Come let us guard the gateway to existence  
that thousands yet may stand where we have stood,  
give thanks for life and, praising our persistence,  
enjoy this lovely earth and call it good.

### **Benediction**

May we gather in what we need and share what we have in abundance as blessings for those who go without. May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon us and with all those we love, today, tomorrow and for evermore. Amen

### **Announcements**

New Kilpatrick's Sunday worship is available online through YouTube, as a podcast, and by attending the church service – please phone the church office to book a pew by the Friday morning and Catherine will phone to confirm your place.

During October, the church is exploring the theme of Creation and has got involved in some practical ideas to help both the Community at home and overseas. Each week, the church is collecting donations of food, toiletries, etc. that will be distributed to the local foodbanks. Monetary online donations can also be made through the website. Each week the request will be for a different type of item and this week it is tinned food. Please drop your donations off at the New Halls between 11.00am and 12noon on Friday.

Because Christian Aid missed out on their big May fundraising activities you can also donate to Christian Aid to support their activities both at home and overseas. Please go to the church website or <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/> to make a donation. Every penny or item counts towards helping someone else in need.

A special thank you to Alfred Dallman, who shared in our time together to make this podcast. Next week, we are at the wedding banquet. So why not come along and join us. In person and on here.