

Service Transcript  
4<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – Harvest (Online)

Service Leader: Mark Reid

Speaker: Angela Cox (Tearfund)

**Come ye thankful people come**

We come with thankfulness before a God who provides us with everything we need as human beings to live on this Earth, and we recognise that as we meet this morning. As those who have become part of His family through our personal faith and trust in Jesus, we see how much He loves each of us and provides what we need in life and for eternity.

And it is a joy to be in His presence. Psalm 84 says this:

*Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere;*

*I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

Psalm 84:10

Today as God's people in Christ we have come into His presence to worship. Let's proclaim Him as we reflect these words in the following responsive prayer.

*Better is one day in your presence, Lord, than a week in our favourite place, with our closest friends.*

Better is one day understanding your will for your church, Lord, than a month following our own direction

*Better is one day doing your work – as your church – Lord, than a year labouring alone*

Better is one day fulfilling your call, showing mercy to the poor, Lord, than a decade living for ourselves.

*Better is one day seeing potential released, and poor communities given hope, Lord, than a lifetime lived without the fire of your mercy drawing us to act.*

And so we ask, this day, as we enter your presence, for more than a day, Lord, far more.

*We ask for a lifetime in your presence, Lord, bringing healing where there is need, knowledge of you where there is none.*

*In Jesus name, Amen.*

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**Praise Him you heavens**

**Intercessory Prayers**

Harvest is a celebration of the goodness of God in providing us, through His creation, all that we need for life here on Earth, and our display this morning, even though packaged up, shows the variety of things this Earth produces. Let's recognise that as we pray this prayer together

*Lord of the Harvest,  
We thank you for your creation,  
For its beauty and fruitfulness,  
We thank you for blessing us  
With our daily bread.*

Indeed Father, we recognise that as a Fellowship this morning in the gifts of produce we have brought, the financial gifts we give for the work of Your church and through our meeting together either at the church or online to worship.

Be close we pray, to those in the fellowship and others we know of going through a difficult time in their lives – be close to them and give them that sense of your presence that brings peace. We pray for the young people who are going to be the recipients of the food and other products given today. Each of them have experienced difficult, even traumatic things in their lives. Help them to find their way and purpose in this world; most of all may they find the ultimate truth and hope about life that only comes through following Jesus.

We ask this in Jesus' name, *Amen*.

I said earlier that God provides the human race with all that we need through His creation. In that case, why is it that so many people starve; why is it that the air is polluted, species are becoming extinct, the climate is changing rapidly, and agricultural land is degenerating? Why is it that a disease, Covid-19 has killed a million people worldwide? How has that happened? Simple, the human race has been responsible for all of it; it's all a product of human sinfulness, and one of the highest consuming countries in the world, we need to recognise our part in what has happened to the environment. Let's continue together by praying this prayer of confession for our failure to be wise stewards of this planet.

*Lord of Mercy,  
We confess to you our failure  
To be wise stewards of this world,  
We confess to you our selfishness  
In not sharing the earth's bounty fairly.*

And Father, as we look at the damage we have as a human race to this planet, may we be a people we lead by example in the way we live and by doing what our liberty enables us to do in encouraging responsible stewardship of this world.

As we think of the current Covid-19 crisis, we see all that is wrong with the human exploitation of this world and the inability that many human beings have in thinking of others and protecting others. May we stand as an example as individuals and your Church in doing that which helps restrict the spread of the disease. We pray for our Government and others, that they may take wise decisions as the number of infections again rise. We pray for continued positive research that will bring forth a vaccine.

We lift all this before you in Jesus' name  
*Amen*

Human beings don't just cause an inequality of resources in the world, but cause the injustice that leave so many in poverty, slavery, without proper shelter, with poor healthcare, education and basic safety. As you know Tearfund is strong on issues of justice relating to poverty, resources and environment, so let's pray now as we are about to hear more of this, that the Lord may challenge us to be bringers of relief and hope to those who are victims of injustice.

*Lord of Justice,  
We pray for those living in poverty  
And cry out for an end to inequality,  
We pray that you help us to help others,  
That all might live a life of plenty.*

Let's say the Lord's Prayer together before our Tearfund speaker, Angela Cox speaks to us, brings us God's word and tells us of challenging situations in the Lebanon as a result of the Syrian Civil War.

The Lord's Prayer

### **TEARFUND PRESENTATION**

Sue spoke from Ruth 2:1-11 which is the story of Ruth gleaning on the fields of Boaz, and of Boaz showing compassion on her. We were reminded of how the Law made provision for the poorest and the foreigner to obtain food by allowing them to glean fields at harvest time. Boaz was prepared to go above and beyond to help this poor Moabite woman. It was pointed out that was as God's people are called to help the poorest in our world and Tearfund has followed God's call to do this for 50 years now. We were introduced to Tamam, a refugee from Syria, living in a slum in Beirut and needing help. Here is the Tearfund description of her.

"Tamam never imagined her world falling apart the way it did. She has a photo of her husband, her small son and her beautiful garden in Syria. All that's left of those beloved things now is the picture. Caught in the crossfire and forced to flee their home when the conflict came, Tamam and her four remaining children sought safety in neighbouring Lebanon. But it's not the same. It's not the home she remembers and loved and lost. Now she and her family live in two small, cramped rooms in a slum in Beirut. Tearfund's local partner, the Tahaddi Center, has helped bring some help, comfort and hope for Tamam and others like her in the midst of such sadness.

"Please will you help people like Tamam and her children? We are making amazing progress. According to the World Bank, over the last 20 years we have seen the rate of extreme poverty reduce by half around the world. Through the generous giving of people just like you, we've been a part of this result. Tearfund and our partners have been able to reach over 48 million people in the last few years alone. But there is more to be done. Just under a billion people on the planet still live on less than £1.50 per day. That's 1 in 7 people who can't afford to eat properly, to feed their children, to access education for them, or to pay medical bills. As the church – the body of Christ on earth, we must reach out. For people like Tamam and her family, we need to stand in the gap. We need to help provide the tools for them to move from hunger, trauma and fear, to a future with hope. Your gift is powerful in God's hands whatever the amount."

### **Tearfund Prayers led by Mark (using Tearfund material)**

God has always been the God of the poor and the friend of the weak. In the story of Ruth this morning, we heard that the poorest were cared for in each community and that included a provision for the poor to glean crops in fields being harvested. Here's the command for it in Leviticus:

Leviticus 23<sup>22</sup> *“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.”*

Angela challenged us as to our response to the poorest in our world. So let's do the most basic thing we can when we hear stories like the one we have heard today: pray!

Lord, we bring to mind all that Tamam went through. Seeing her home and family life destroyed, and forced to make the agonising decision to flee her own country to live in a foreign land.

Help us to stand alongside families who have lost almost everything through conflict and displacement. Help us to share your compassion with people in greatest need who feel broken and abandoned.

Father God, we ask you not to let us look away. Show us how we can respond to situations like Tamam's that can seem overwhelming. We pray that all families fleeing their homes will find a place of welcome and safety. Help us to play our part in restoring a sense of home.

*Amen.*

(Reflection video)

Let's pray this together: *We ask for a broken spirit, Lord, that in the ashes of our own will, you will grow a spirit that longs for justice. We ask that from these ashes will grow a desire to end poverty, Lord, as we work with churches around the world. Better is one day in your presence, Lord, so let us today remain at your feet.*

*Amen.*

## **We plough the fields and scatter**

### **Blessing**

*Jesus,*

*Better is one day fulfilling your call, showing mercy to poor and marginalised people, than a decade living for ourselves.*

*Better is one day seeing potential released, and poor communities given hope, Lord, than a lifetime lived without the fire of your mercy drawing us to act.*

*We are here to serve, Lord.*

*And we will.*

*Amen.*

## **For Reflection and Discussion**

1. What picture comes into your mind when you hear the word refugee? Why is it do you think that many are so hostile to refugees coming into their countries? Is that justified? Listen again to the sermon or look at Tamam's story at [www.tearfund.org/tamam](http://www.tearfund.org/tamam).
2. Read Leviticus 23:22 and Ruth 2:1-12. How were the Israelites supposed to treat the foreigners that came into their land (or for that matter, the poor in their own land)?
3. What motivated Boaz, do you think to look favourably on Ruth? How many of these values can we see taught in the New Testament to those who follow Christ?
4. Apart from supporting Tearfund and similar organisations, what other things can we do to show compassion to the poor and strangers in our society?