

Psalm 116



Prayer

Each thing we have received, from you it came.
Each thing we hope for, from your love it will come.
Each thing we ask comes of your providing.

Here we are, in the lovely Autumnal month of October, when we can see the leaves start to change colour and watch them fall. In them we recognise a season of transition, reminding us that our lives are constantly changing.

In the Benedictine tradition, one of the commitments is to be open to change and the **Surprise of God**. It means believing that God is far bigger than anything we can ever imagine, and so there will always be more dimensions to discover.

As autumn begins, we are invited to reflect where we are. The month itself seems to ask us to consider what we may be being called to let go of, in the coming days.

It is a time of reflection on the past and evaluation of the present and, a time to stop and think about the many ways that God has blessed us.

We see the 'autumned' fields produce the harvest of their summer, and we too can review our own bounty, to look afresh at **our** own basket of thanksgiving and review our giving and our purpose, in this season of transformation.

I thought this design centred around the word **Stewardship** summed up a basket that is rich in its diversity of gifts and its opportunities for growth.

We see words stemming from its root - commitment, blessing, vision, love, faith, community, caring, **time and talents and treasure.**

Today's reading psalm 116, is one of my treasured texts.

Let me read the first line again:

'I love the Lord because he heard **my** voice', (it is amazing to think that God heard **me**). He hears **your** voice too.

When I was considering going forward for ordination and I was having a real drenching of **Cold Feet**. Psalm 116 was read out on a workshop that I was attending.

The first part of this thanksgiving song shows the psalmist was in a desperate situation, mine was that my husband had died, the psalmist gives an anguished cry for help, as did I, and then it describes to us God's gracious character and his compassionate rescue for us all.

'But God delivered **my** soul,
My eyes from tears,
My feet from stumbling
so that I could walk before the Lord in the land of the living'

God has given us:

His listening ear (1-2)

Help to get through the toughest times (3-4)

Protection (5-6)

In Verse 7, we find that he gives us peace so we can rest

and in verses, 8- 11 we find God keeping us on track so we can go the distance

And then at verse 12, the psalmist asks the question “What can I offer the Lord for **all** he has done for me?”

And that’s the question for today **“What, can I offer the Lord for all he has done for me?”** What will our response be?

We want to contribute because God has given us everything. We heard, again, the story from 1 John (4: 9 – 10).

That on the cross Jesus saved **me**.

That on the cross Jesus saved **you**.

That’s how it works, we recognise all that Christ has done for us, and from a heart full of thankfulness we want to give back.

From our autumn baskets of thanksgiving and a heart of gratitude, we can offer our **Time, our Talents and...our Treasure**.

I thought we would take **Time** first:

Let us question ourselves:

Have we served God, with the time, he has given us this week?

In our busy lives we often overlook the time we give to God.

One statistic, I saw, when preparing this was that the average Christian spends a total of 15 minutes a WEEK in prayer.

If we can spend, on average, three hours a day in front of the television, it does make you wonder and it has challenged me about how much time I spend in private prayer.

I think Autumn is a good time to contemplate our daily priorities. How do we best spend our time? Where does most of our energy go?

God calls on us to be good stewards of time. All our moments and days are gifts from Him.

Moving on to our **Talents**

We have been given all sorts of skills, to use for God and to support his people. Sometimes we just need to think outside the box! I have been particularly taken with two 6-year-old boys that were reported on the BBC News, they saw a need and endeavoured to help.

They prompted me to reflect on what happens when we share a drink with other people. 'Have a cuppa' or just enjoy a lemonade in a paper cup. The simplest acts seem to build a sense of community with friends and strangers alike.

Let's take a look at their story: **BBC News Clip**

I wonder if we can all ask God to give us a fresh vision today and be open to the **Surprise of God?**

When Pam and I started the generationGold services, someone in our congregation caught that vision too, and anonymously, donated a financial donation to use on supporting the take home gift. We are so grateful to Mr, Mrs, Miss, Anonymous; it has meant we have been able to do some really great things, such as our now infamous beach day with complimentary fish and chips, an ice cream from a real van, and a picture with a donkey! for two rather dubious looking characters.

The children's work is also only possible because people had a vision and others shared it, helping to support it financially.

In Proverbs 29: 18, Solomon says "where is no vision, the people perish." When our desire and determination combine with the power of the Holy Spirit it produces a new energy and new visions. I say: **Let's go for it!**

Lastly let's look at **Treasure**

The smooth running of our church needs all sorts of treasure. !

Autumn is not just a time of 'mellow fruitfulness' but a season when we are presented with the church accounts. We may need to fundraise for the Children's work, or CAP or the roof, or an out of the box new vision that God gives us. I have been thinking about the Covid vaccine that is going to be made at Harwell. What an opportunity to share God and science. Anyone catching that vision?

In the light of the last 6 months many are struggling over finances at home, at work, and in our churches. We need to take time to pray and find ways to meet the current needs.

May we all be open to the season of Autumn, as we watch the birds fly south for the winter may we also take a flight into the unknown and thank our Lord the God of transformation for all the lessons that

the Autumn season teaches us and how there are always more dimensions to discover.

In our reading, we find the psalmist's answer, to his own question.

“What, can I offer the Lord for all he has done for me?”

“I will lift up the cup of salvation”

This had a very specific meaning for me, 10 years ago, but it's all about Lifting Jesus to the highest place in our lives and resolving to continue the walk of faith. God calls us to serve him, everyone has a chance to be open to the **Surprise of God.**

The question: **“What, can I offer the Lord for all he has done for me?”**

Requires a response:

How will I answer today?..... and how will you?