



Pastor's Page

“Harvest, sow what?”

Fred, Charlie and George were brothers who together owned Sherrett's farm. With their ruddy faces, black wellies and Lancashire accents they were like, characters out of a children's storybook. They lived about a mile from my childhood home and farmed in the fields around our house. My little friends and I loved these farming brothers even if we were sometimes a bit scared of them too (especially when we'd damaged their field with our Bonfire!) I learned words from these men that I'd never heard in a Methodist home and would never use in a Methodist home either! My best friend Andrew and I would play at being these farmers adopting the names George and Fred because they were our favourites. Though we lived close to a large town and a big city the proximity of Sherrett's farm gave us a wonderful flavour of rural life. Riding on tractors, watching combine harvesters, throwing bales of hay onto trucks and then travelling up to the farm to help unload them into the barns were all regular occurrences during my early childhood. But the impact that these men had on us was not confined to childhood it continues to this day as evidenced by the fact that my old friend Andrew is still known as Fred!

All of this plus our large Harvest Festivals at church gave me a romantic view of farming in general and the harvest season in particular. But what does harvest mean to 21st century city dwellers in Britain today? I guess that for many of us we are so far removed from the land that the concept of sowing and reaping, planting and harvesting just passes us by. Yet it is a fundamental process that God has built into his world and without it life would not be sustainable. So I believe that harvest presents us with an opportunity to thank God for his wonderful provision for our lives. As Psalm 145 says; *“The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing”*. In the bible, ancient Israel celebrated two harvests a year – the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) at the end of the wheat harvest and the feast of Tabernacles in autumn marking the end of the agricultural year when all was gathered in (Deuteronomy 16) Harvest is a time to thank God for all that he provides for us. If we have food in the refrigerator, clothes on our backs, a roof over our head, a place to sleep, we are richer than 75% of people in this world! Are we grateful to the Lord for all of this?

Secondly, harvest provides a poignant challenge to us to consider those who are less well off than we are. Many farmers in our own country earn less than £12,000 a year and struggle under difficult conditions and often lose out to supermarkets in selling their produce. People in the developing nations are suffering due to current trade laws which are stacked against the poorer nations and prevent them from coming out of poverty. There are many nations where harvests regularly fail and water supply is polluted and disease is rife. God cares for these people for their physical and spiritual health and so the BMS Harvest Appeal today to help those in Bangladesh is one way that we can get involved in this work and share the blessings that God has bestowed on us.

So rather than playing at farmers we need to be praying for farmers and playing our part in God's world by feeding the hungry in the name of the Lord of the Harvest.

5th October 2008