

The changing harvest

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I remember an autumn time when I was younger, I can nearly smell it. I remember early starts, the rising sun, lemonade, jam sandwiches and Kit-Kats. I stood with my dad on top of a large stack of straw bales, on a trailer moving down the fields of the farm. Bales were being thrown up by farm hands, family, friends and anybody else available. Harvest was a defined time; it had parameters and boundaries. There was a start and a finish.

How harvest time has changed! Farms are mechanised and computerised. They have more crops, with all year harvesting and seasons that drift into one. The world has got faster and faster and it appears there's nothing we can do about it! Sound familiar? Especially in these current times of uncertainty, life doesn't always feel defined. This isn't just in farming but is a reflection of the world in which we now live. Currency buys us less, pension funds grow smaller, jobs are not for life (though sometimes they may feel like a life-sentence!), there is chaos on our streets and the finish line of retirement has moved. People still live in poverty, slavery still exists, wars still continue, earthquakes and natural disasters seem common place . . .

When I focus on all the awful things in the world, I find it difficult to be thankful to God and generous towards others. So when I get overwhelmed I go for walks in the Lake District, read Psalm 23 and look at what God has entrusted to me: land, property, crops, machinery and my relationships with my farm hands, customers, suppliers, family and friends. Then I think, 'What did God originally intend these to be used for and look like?' There is a Hebrew word for this, *tshuva*, which basically means to return to God's original intention.

Maybe this harvest is the time to be truly thankful for what God has entrusted to us, to see what is in our hand, its original God intention, and how it can bless others, in our communities and around the world. In a time when harvest and abundance appear in short supply, may we as the UK church be a people where God's grace and his amazing provision are most evident. This harvest let's remember he can do more than we could ever ask or imagine, and ask him to reveal his *tshuva* for our lives and all he has blessed us with.

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