

**The Vine at Home**  
**26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time/ Harvest – Year B**

**Call to worship**

A few lines from Psalm 63:

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;

I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

**Hymn: 123 StF, 355 H&P – Come, you thankful people come**

**Opening Prayers**

*As the psalmist cries to God and asks how long he must wait, will God forget him forever, and asks where is God, we too, can cry out to our loving God.*

*Lament leads us into a closer relationship with God because we are not hiding anything from God's nature. Today, we come as we are; carrying pain, struggle, grief, disappointment and weariness. Before we can look ahead, we will look back and name the parts of life which are hard for us and weigh heavily on our hearts.*

*Where have we been? What has happened that we need to lament?*

*Pause*

Let us pray

Here I am Lord, waiting for you.

You know every road I have been down,

Every step I have taken.

You know my story more completely and wholly than I do myself.

This day, fill me with grace, bring me hope.

This day, help me to move forward with you, with a full understanding of where I have been, with a complete sense of your love at work in my life so far.

As I lament, as I grieve, so too do I hope, and my hope is in you. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

**Let us now say the Lord's Prayer**

**Readings: Luke 17: 20-22**

**Revelation 21:1-5**

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 63: 1-4

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by All We Can

## Reflections on the reading

The approach to harvest is always characterised by waiting... Farmers wait for full growth, maturity and yield. As much as they might like to plant seeds one day and reap the next, they know that reaping a harvest is a process of time. They must plant a seed and then be persistent and patient, fully expecting a harvest...in time!

But this kind of waiting can't afford to be a passive, twiddling of thumbs, kind of wait, this wait must be active. There are things to do, like weeding, and steps that must be taken to ensure a healthy harvest and then there are decisions to be made and opportunities to explore post-harvest. Rev 21:1-5 is a reminder for us today of what we are waiting for, in kingdom terms. We read of 'a new heaven and a new earth'... 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'

What a picture, what a hope, but what about now? What happens while we wait? Well Luke 17: 20-21 is a reminder that there is little time for passivity or inactivity while we wait because the king who will be fully revealed in Rev 21 is already on His throne reigning, right now. But just as Jesus informed the Pharisees of Luke 17, when they enquired or possibly even demanded that he provide them with proof of the kingdom he constantly spoke about and of which he claimed to be king or Messiah, the kingdom of God was not about to arrive with the same trappings, paraphernalia, pomp, and ceremony as an earthly kingdom! And by the same measure, neither would it be accompanied by the same constraints and limitations of an ordinary or even an extraordinary earthly kingdom!

While we wait for the full expression of the kingdom described in Rev 21, we are invited to participate in spreading and introducing the kingdom 'reign' of our king wherever we can through expressions of love, care and commitment. And precisely because the Kingdom of Heaven is among or indeed within us in a world where the kingdom seems far away and even absent at times, we become the means by which it opens up into the earth and we become an avenue through which God's kingdom is manifested.

Every time somebody acts out of love, every time something is put right and justice is served no matter how small, God's kingdom is experienced and expressed; where there is beauty, God's kingdom is experienced and expressed. Where there is love God's kingdom is experienced and expressed.

Uncertainty and instability have been normal life for many Christians the world over. I have found that the cry 'where is God in our suffering?' is a peculiarly Western preoccupation. Brothers and sisters living with great uncertainty, instability and under the shadow of aggression or the physical suffering of war and oppressive regimes, seldom ask such questions. Instead, they assume God's presence and seek out God's favour in the midst of it all. Surely, we can learn from their spirituality and tenacity.

Devising creative and innovative ways of staying connected even while being forced apart has been the challenge of our Christian brothers and sisters experiencing intense persecution. Surely, we can learn from their ingenuity, innovation, commitment to community and creative ability to find ways of honouring the call to community even when visible community becomes challenging. As you consider partners overseas and at home, commit yourselves not just to give to them but also to learn from them. As we come alongside them and take steps toward recovery together in the face of the climate crisis, the dehumanising effects of material poverty and more, let's commit ourselves to experiencing and expressing the reign of God among and within us in ways that impacts injustices, resists darkness, adjusts circumstances and transforms lives.

Like farmers, the task for us remains the same today as it has ever been. However, we must step back to see the bigger picture by keeping an eye to the past even as we travel into our God-given future. We must deploy our new tools and approaches in creative ways for the sake of God's 'now and not yet' kingdom. And, after all has been said and done, we must ready ourselves to take our next God-inspired steps.<sup>3</sup>

### **Prayers of intercession**

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though they may stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord upholds them with his hand.

Loving God,

We pray for ourselves, our loved ones and community. As we look ahead, we ask that you will light the way for us and continue to draw us closer to you. We thank you for the members of our community who continue to serve in frontline services; give them rest and encouragement.

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though they may stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord upholds them with his hand.

Merciful God,

We lift up our leaders to you as they guide our nation. We pray that you will give them wisdom, compassion and willing ears to listen. We pray that they will be able to find the balance of championing our country whilst being a caring and generous global neighbour.

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though they may stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord upholds them with his hand.

Gracious God,

We pray for All We Can's local partner, HEFO, and the community of Nkayi. We thank you for this fruitful partnership and pray that it will flourish as they walk

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<sup>3</sup> Reflection written by Revd Dr Kate Coleman for All We Can

together. We pray for the community projects that HEFO run and all the members who take part. We ask Lord that the gifts that have been given today will be an encouragement to the farmers like Vaiter and Shupikai as they work to grow their farms and livelihoods.

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though they may stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord upholds them with his hand.

Creator God,

We are sorry for the times when we have not looked after and protected the beautiful world you have given us. We pray for the Climate Change Conference (COP26) taking place in Glasgow in November. We thank you for the commitment of the countries, organisations and campaigners coming together to inspire meaningful action to combat the climate crisis.

We pray that it will be a marker in the sand and a significant step towards tackling the devastation caused by climate change.

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though they may stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord upholds them with his hand. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

*If you would like to support the work of all we can click here <https://www.allwecan.org.uk/donate/make-a-donation/>*

**Hymn: 465 StF, 437 H&P - Guide me, O thou great Jehovah**

### **Blessing**

May the God of all,  
Bless you and lead you as you take your next steps.  
May you know the loving guidance of your saviour.  
Today, Tomorrow, And always. Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Prayers of intercession written by All We Can

<sup>5</sup> Additional prayers by All We Can