

Harvest Festival

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 October 2016

Preacher: Martin Ayers

[0 : 00] We've been hearing, haven't we, about how it's God we should thank for everything that grows. So in a way you could think of the world like God's garden. Actually, what God says in the Bible is he tells us about his goodness to us by talking about three different gardens.

And between them, these different gardens, they tell us about the kind of fruit that God wants from us and how we can produce it. So to help us think about the first garden, I need three volunteers. And if you volunteer, you have to be willing to try some food and tell me what it is. Just to warn you. Okay. So, yeah, if we have three over here.

So, are you coming, Ronan? Yeah. Ella, if you come. And Olivia, great. Okay. Good. So we're going to do a bit of blind tasting.

Do you guys want to stand up here? Not everyone will know who you are. So let's have your names. Ella.

[1 : 03] Olivia. And Ronan. There we are. Good. Okay. So. Blindfolds. No. Okay. Okay. Is that too tight?

Are you all right? That's all right. Okay. Good. There we are. Another one. Can you see? No, that's what we need. Okay. Here's another one.

Just another blindfold there. There we go. Can you see? That's what we want.

Okay. So. Tricky times. Here we are. I'm going to hand you a fork, Ella. There it is. For you to try that and see what that is.

It's fine. Don't worry. Don't worry. You might even like it. You might even like it. Can't guarantee it. Put it in your mouth. Go on. Olivia. Here we are. You're all more nervous than you should be.

[2 : 06] Don't worry. It's not a nasty trick. Nice. Okay. Ronan. There's his fork. Okay. Just have a think. Think what it might be.

Well, let me get the microphone. Is this working? Are we?

Hang on. Let me turn this on. What do you think it is? Mango. Mango. Pineapple. Pineapple.

Apple. Apple. Apple. There we are. And you're all right. That's right. Round of applause. Great fruit tasting. Great. Thank you. Thanks, guys. That's brilliant. You can go back now.

That's great. Okay. So, brilliant. Now, I don't know what your favorite fruit is. Maybe have a think. But we had a few different fruits there. And there's such variety of fruit these days, isn't there?

[3 : 01] There was pineapple there. There was mango. And even there's some apples that have come from Gordon and Evelyn Reed's garden. Isn't that amazing? So, they've even watched them grow. We didn't give them the cooking apple.

Ronan was spared that. That's an eating apple that he had there. So, even between apples, you've got different types, haven't you, that you can have to choose from. Now, what the Bible says is that God made the world like that.

Originally, he made a beautiful garden for the first people to enjoy. And everything in it was good. And there was all kinds of fruit in the garden to enjoy.

But because God is God, he made a rule. Okay? And the rule was this. It's in Genesis chapter 2.

I'm going to read it for us. It'll come on the screen. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground.

Trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord commanded the man, And grown-ups, perhaps worth thinking about that, that there's nothing special about the fruit.

[4 : 16] It's just that God had to give a rule that showed that he was God. The only reason to keep that rule is so that you let God decide what's right and wrong. And so that humans couldn't say, I get to decide what's right and wrong.

And we need to think about that today when we look at the Bible. That when the Bible is clear about what God wants, we don't need to know why. You see, sometimes God makes rules. And you think, well, that makes sense.

God tells husbands and wives to love each other. And you can think, I can see why God would tell us that. Sometimes God tells us things that we don't understand. He asks us not to do things and we don't know why.

But we have to let him be God. And that's really important. What did they do? What did the people do? Well, they had apples to choose. Were they going to let God be God?

Let me read what happened in Genesis chapter 3. When the woman saw the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

[5 : 16] She also gave some to her husband who was with her. And he ate it. So the first people said, I get to decide what's right and wrong.

God doesn't get to decide that. And they disobeyed God's word. That's what the Bible calls sin. Sin entered our world. And because sin entered the world, death entered the world. Because God punishes sin.

Because he's just. And ever since then, people can't stop sinning. And they can't stop dying. We can't stop sinning. We can't stop dying. It was a very bad thing in that first garden.

We're going to go to our second garden now. So I'm going to need another brave taster. Maybe someone who volunteered before. And didn't I saw a hand over here. So you come up. Yeah, okay. You just come up.

Thank you. Great. Thank you. Great. You want to see what's there? No, no, no. That's completely not the point.

[6 : 13] So, okay. You see, very lucky today. Putting this scarf around you. Guaranteeing you success at football for life.

There we go. Can you actually, can you breathe? Okay. Not everyone will know you. Let's have your name. Hugo there. If you didn't hear it. Great. Okay. Needs to be.

Oh. The precious scarf is falling off. Hugo is right. Okay. You could just keep your eyes closed, couldn't you? There we go.

Okay. Okay. If you just take your hand. Or do you want me just to put it in your mouth? You do it. There's the fork. There we go. There we go. Okay. Just give me a moment.

[7 : 18] All right. Right.

Hugo. Tell me what you think it is. Olive. Do you like olive? No. Is it still in your mouth? I'm sorry. Where can you put them? Great. How nice.

Hugo, well done. It was indeed olives. Okay. That's our second fruit. Round of applause. He's got a brave face on it. That young man is desperate for a drink if anyone has any water.

We've had a mysterious problem recently at the rectory. That's our house. And it's that our olives kept going missing. And we all know children don't like olives. So we were suspecting one of our children.

[8 : 17] Was it Hannah, our eldest? Was it Bethany, our middle child? So we came up with a plan. Like an undercover investigation. A bit like Big Sam Allardyce had ill-fatedly this week.

We asked Rachel to look after our olives. We said we're just going out of the room for a minute to see who's going to steal the olives from Rachel's lap. Is it Hannah? Is it Bethany? I wonder if you can think.

Do you think it's going to be Hannah? Do you think it's going to be Bethany who steals the olives? Let's have a look at this. Let's have a look at this. Let's have a look at this.

Let's have a look at this.

The Mount of Olives. There were olive trees in the garden. And if we'd been there one evening 2,000 years ago, we'd have seen God there in the garden in the person of Jesus.

[10 : 05] And he was praying and he was very, very sad. Do you know what you can do with olives? What can you do with olives that's useful? You can crush them.

That's right. Okay. And I've just got here actually an example of what's useful from crushed olives is olive oil. Well, the reason Jesus was very sad in the garden with the olives was that he chose to be crushed.

He was crushed on the cross in our place for all the mess that we'd made in turning away from God. And he took on himself all the bad that we brought into the world because he loves us and he wants us to have a fresh start.

It says that in the Bible, in Isaiah chapter 53, it says this about Jesus in verse 5. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him. And by his wounds, we are healed. 12 years ago, there was a huge tsunami, a massive tidal wave that hit Thailand.

[11:11] And there was a girl called Bua on the beachfront when this wave came. And when the wave came, her and her friends grabbed a flagpole to try and be safe from the wave. But they weren't going to be able, they were losing their grip on the flagpole.

And so a boy called Golf saw them and he grabbed the flagpole and he tied himself to them around the flagpole. And so the sea came pounding at them and there was debris in the sea and it hit them. And he protected them by holding on and he tied himself to them. And when the water went away, Bua and her friend weren't hurt. She was okay. But Golf had died from protecting them at the flagpole.

He put himself in between Bua and the danger so that she could live. And the Bible says that's what Jesus has done for all of us. He's like our big brother who saw the danger that we were in, that we've made ourselves by turning away from God the way we've sinned.

And so he came and he stood in our place so that all the problems, all the danger from being not right with God would crush him instead of us. Crushed so that we can live forever and enjoy a friendship with God.

[12:23] It's amazing what he's done. So our second garden was olives to crush. And Jesus left the Garden of Gethsemane and was crushed for you. And that leads us on to our last garden.

So I need one more volunteer. Jamie, who's been desperate to taste fruit or to wear the Middlesbrough scarf. One of the two. So here we are, Jamie.

You were piling those cans quite high. I thought they might cause some sort of major accident. So maybe the best place for you is up here. And let's get you some fruit.

So here is your fork to have a try. Okay. You can already tell.

What is it? It's a grape, isn't it? Well done. Okay. Well done, Jamie. Thank you. Grapes. Now that Jesus has died for us so that we can be forgiven, because he died in our place, and he's risen again, he says that he's like a grapevine.

[13:38] So he's like the main trunk of a tree, and if we choose to belong to him, we're like the branches coming off that tree. And we can produce the fruit that he wants in the world today.

The fruit of the spirit that we see in Jesus' life. Love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and self-control and faithfulness to God and gentleness.

These are the things that we saw in Jesus, and we can produce that fruit for him today. So Jesus described this vineyard, this grave garden, to his followers the night before he died, and he said this, I am the vine, you're the branches.

If you remain in me and I in you, you'll bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing. Now one day Jesus is going to come back, and he says that when he comes back, it's going to be like a great party.

I brought this with me, hoping it would make a massive pop, and then I've realized that it's got a plastic lid, so it probably won't. So, never mind. Yeah, I can't see that doing anything.

[14:43] But anyway, oh, there we are. It did. So there's going to be this great banquet. That's okay, that's what they do in nice places, with the champagne.

There you are, gents. You enjoy that. As a fortis for the banquet. No alcohol in there.

Just in case anyone was worried about what I'm doing. Okay. So there's going to be this great banquet one day, as we meet with Jesus. But in the meantime, he says that on that day, it will be like a harvest.

And he's looking forward to a great harvest of all the good things that his people have done for him.

And when we meet for that harvest, there might be some of our friends there. If we've talked to them about Jesus, and they've put their trust in him, because they know that he died for us.

And we'll bring in all the goodness that we've done to show God. So Jesus gives us a great responsibility as branches for him. To bear fruit, he says we have to remain in him.

[15 : 48] And we do that by letting his words remain in us. So that means we've got to be Bible people. People who are every day listening to God's word so that the living word is in us.

And we're connected to the living Jesus. And it's not enough just to be hearers of the word, or readers of the word. We have to be doers of the word as well. And that will mean looking different to everybody else.

You know, some of us, I think, especially, I don't know, I'm thinking about grown-ups here and how I think. We kind of think, oh, it would be really good if I just looked like everybody else. And then they'll like me, and I can talk about Jesus. But that's not what Jesus wants.

It doesn't work. Jesus wants us to be really weird for him. You can't remain in him and bear the fruit that he wants and look the same as everyone else in Glasgow.

We have to look radically different for him. Be weird for Jesus. And even at the times when that sounds constraining or hard, that's because Jesus is pruning us to get the fruit that he wants.

[16 : 48] We're going to think more about that in a moment. But first of all, let me pray for us with what we've learned together. Let's pray. Father God, thank you for these three gardens which show us how you have been faithful to us and have a plan for us.

We think about those apples to choose. And we're sorry that just like Adam and Eve, when we were given the choice, we chose not to let you be in charge. We think about those olives to crush.

And we thank you that Jesus was crushed on the cross to give us a fresh start by taking all our darkness away. And we think about these grapes to grow. Help us to remain in Jesus, to be connected to him like a branch to a vine, so that our lives produce a bumper harvest of love for you.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it would be good, wouldn't it, to think more about how to remain in Jesus, since that's how we make the harvest he wants. So inside the term cards that you were given when you came in, you should see a white card.

On one side, it's got a bit more of that reading that I read for us earlier. And on the back side, it's got some questions. Let's just spend a minute on each question. Let's get through them.

[18 : 00] And just turn to the person next to you. And in twos, threes, fours, let's discuss these questions together.