

Sermon preached by Louis Bezuidenhout in Inveraray 4 October 2009

Reading: Psalm 126:5-6

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

When we look at the harvest table in our church, we can see a great variety of products - fruit, vegetables, jam, flowers, bread. Where is it all coming from? Some come from our garden, some of it come from Londis or the Co-op, but even these products were grown in a garden or on a farm. Every item on the table tells a story. In order to grow anything, the gardener or farmer has to work hard. Every achievement in life requires hard work and commitment. Can you think of a few difficulties that a gardener or farmer may have? The hard work may not always be fun, but it will bring achievement and joy. In Psalm 126 we read these words:

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

We may wonder why one would sow in tears. Sowing requires a sacrifice. I can use the corn right away, grind it and use it as flour to bake bread that I can eat right away. Or I can put it in the ground in good faith, believing that it will provide a harvest.

My life is like this grain. I can either use it for myself here and now, or I can sow some of it - by doing something for someone else, invest it in something that I believe in. Think about it...

At harvest time we celebrate the joy of all the food and the produce of our farms, gardens and factories, but we also remember the hard work of those who provided it.

Today we enjoy all the decorations, but it a number of people worked hard to prepare the church. Today we have musicians in the church - when you hear them playing it seems to come so easily, but it requires a lot of practice. The Sunday Club is starting again, and a number of people went on a sponsored walk to raise funds for the club. I would like to invite David to come forward and to hand over the cheque.

Reading: Mark 4:26-29

When we plant the grain, we do it in faith. We have very little control over what is happening to the grain when it is in the ground. We cannot even see what is happening. In a way it is a mystery. Jesus referred to this mystery:

Mar 4:26-29 And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. (27) He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. (28) The earth produces by itself, first

the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. (29) But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

There are things in life that we do not know - there are times when we do not have control over important events. The farmer and the gardener understands it. There are times when we have to trust. God is reminding us that we can dare to trust - God is there where our arms are too short to reach, where our minds are too small to understand, where our eyes are too weak to see. Underneath are the eternal arms.

Reading: Galatians 5:22-23

God is calling us to bear fruit. But what kind of fruit do we bear? In the letter to the Galatians we read about fruit that we can bear because the Spirit of God is in our hearts:

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;

The word fruit is in the singular - it is one fruit with different aspects - we can not choose which aspects we would accept and which ones we do not like - we either bear the fruit in its totality or we don't.

We have enjoyed God's care for us, but have we reached a stage where we realise that we have to bear fruit? Just as there is a time when the corn is ripe and when the fruits are brought to the table, there has to be a harvest time in life of people. Let us invest our lives in love, let us dare to believe, let us bear the fruit of the spirit.