

THE RIPENING HARVEST

by Marion Fairman



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The Ripening Harvest

by MARION FAIRMAN

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This service is prepared for Thanksgiving, with a place reserved for the presentation of special projects and gifts from the congregation.

On a table, prepare a basket or a tray of harvest plenty, allowing room for ears of corn to be added during the service.

The song, "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" which provides the theme for the service is available in many hymnals and song books. The words are printed within the script in their appropriate places.

At two places in the service, anthems are suggested. In each instance, one is a contemporary song, one more traditional. Any other Thanksgiving anthem may, of course, be substituted.

Both of the Avery and Marsh songs are in the *Avery and Marsh Song Book*, Proclamation Productions, Inc., Orange Square, Port Jervis, New York 12771. Vocal Edition, AM001, 1-20 copies, \$3.50; 20 or more copies, \$3.25; Accompaniment Edition, AM002, \$7.50. Individual songs are sold in packets of 50 for \$2.50.

Each section requires a leader and three readers. The readers may change each time if desired; it is probably better if the same leader remains throughout the service. Those who present the projects and/or gifts may come from the congregation.

I. First the Blade

PRELUDE: *(Any appropriate organ selection)*

CALL TO WORSHIP:

LEADER: All the ends of the world shall remember and turn
unto the Lord and all the kindreds of the nations shall
worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's and
he is the governor among the nations. . . . A seed shall
serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a
generation. They shall come and shall declare his
righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he
hath done this. *[Psalm 22:27-28, 30-31]*

HYMN: "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" (Verse 1)
[Henry Alford, 1810-1871, George J. Elvey, 1816-1893]

Come, ye thankful people come,
Raise the song of harvest home;
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of harvest home.

(Found in most hymnals)

LEADER: Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither
grudgingly nor under compulsion . . .

READERS 1, 2, & 3: *(In unison)* . . . For God loves the man whose
heart is in his gift.

LEADER: After all, God can give you everything that you
need, so that you may always have sufficient both for
yourselves and for giving away to other people. As the
Scripture says:

READERS 1, 2, & 3: *(In unison)* He hath scattered abroad, he
hath given to the poor; His righteousness abideth forever.

LEADER: He who gives the seed to the sower and turns that
seed into bread to eat, will give you the seed of generosity

1 to sow and, for harvest, the satisfying bread of good deeds
 2 done. The more you are enriched by God the more scope
 3 will there be for generous giving, and your gifts,
 4 administered through us, will mean that many will thank
 5 God. For your giving does not end in meeting the wants
 6 of your fellow Christians. It also results in an overflowing
 7 tide of thanksgiving to God. Moreover, your very giving
 8 proves the reality of your faith, and that means that men
 9 thank God that you practice the gospel that you profess
 10 to believe in, as well as for the actual gifts you make to
 11 them and to others. And yet further, men will pray for
 12 you and feel drawn to you because you have obviously
 13 received a generous measure of the grace of God.

14 **READERS 1, 2, &3:** *(In unison)* Thank God, then, for his
 15 indescribable generosity to you! *[II Corinthians 9:7-15,*
 16 *J.B. Phillips]*

17 **ANTHEM:** "Thank You, Lord" [Avery and Marsh] "Let There Be
 18 Peace on Earth" [Miller] *(Or any anthem of your choice)*

II. Then the Ear

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND UNDERSTANDING: *(This portion may be duplicated for use by congregation.)*

LEADER: The prophet said: "We are all as an unclean thing,
and all our righteousness as filthy rags."

ALL: O God, forgive us for our sins.

READER 1:

For deceitful hearts and crooked thoughts,
For thoughtless words spoken hastily,
For barbed words spoken deliberately —

READER 2:

For envious and prying eyes,
For lifted eyebrows and haughty looks —

READER 3:

For ears that rejoice in gossip,
For greedy, grasping hands,
For dragging feet —

ALL:

Have mercy upon us, O God,
For the sake of the seed planted in us, Jesus Christ
our Lord.

LEADER: In our self-conceit we have sometimes despised
others, and we have let them see that we despised them;
and in our snobbish pride we have sometimes talked of
common people.

READER 1: In our impatience we have lost our temper with
those who were doing their best, but who were slow to
learn and slow to understand.

READER 2: In our intolerance we have refused to see any
good in those with whom we differed.

READER 3: In our anger we have hurt others and have
known that we were doing it.

ALL: O God, our Father, forgive us for the way we have
treated our fellow men and women.

1 **LEADER:** In our ignorance, we have learned so little of thy
2 world and of thy people.

3 **READER 1:** In our absorption in our own affairs, we have
4 thought so little about our brothers and sisters.

5 **READER 2:** In our refusal to be bothered we have prayed so
6 little for their salvation.

7 **READER 3:** In our selfishness we have done so little about
8 their needs.

9 **ALL:** O God, our Father, forgive us and enable us to grow
10 unto Thee.

11 **HYMN:** "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" (Verse 2)

12 All the world is God's own field,
13 Fruit unto his praise to yield;
14 Wheat and tares together sown,
15 Unto joy or sorrow grown;
16 First the blade, and then the ear,
17 Then the full corn shall appear;
18 Lord of harvest, grant that we
19 Wholesome grain and pure may be.

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III. Then the Full Corn

LEADER: (*Musing tone*) First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn — Tell me . . . Is everyone a teacher? Of course not. Is everyone a preacher? Or a missionary? Does everyone heal the sick? Of course not. Let us tell you about a way that is better than any of these!

READER 1: If I could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth but didn't love those who spoke those languages, I would only be making noise. If I knew everything about everybody but didn't love anybody, what good would that do? If I gave everything I have to poor people and despised them, or if I were burned alive for preaching the Gospel but didn't love those to whom I preached, it would be of no value whatever.

READER 2: Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not touchy; it does not hold a grudge and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. Love is never glad about injustice; it rejoices whenever truth wins out.

READER 3: Love keeps an open mind, is willing to attempt new things. Love does not consider the past so precious that it limits new vision. Love gives the courage to change when it is necessary, to repent, to turn about, to begin again — even when the transforming power of the gospel threatens our present security. Unless we are willing to keep on growing, we shall have defenders of old systems but no new voices; we shall have preachers but no prophets; we shall keep the bush pruned, but within the bush there will be no burning fire.

LEADER: But whatever happens, whatever changes the winds of the spirit may direct, there is this certainty; our Lord will not leave himself without a witness. Institutions may pass away, but the labor of hands sharing with those

1 in need, and the message of the saving love of Christ
 2 will never, never pass away. In this life there are three
 3 enduring qualities: Faith, Hope, and Love, these three.
 4 But the greatest of these is Love. *[Adapted from I*
 5 *Corinthians, 13]*

6 **ANTHEM:** "Come As a Child" [Avery and Marsh] "When I Was
 7 Hungry" [Dowell] *(Or any anthem of your choice)*

8 **LEADER:** *(As prayer)*

9 O Tree of Calvary,
 10 Send your roots deep down into my heart.
 11 Gather together the soil of my heart,
 12 The sands of my fickleness,
 13 The stones of my stubbornness,
 14 The mud of my desires.
 15 Bind them all together,
 16 O Tree of Calvary;
 17 Interlace them with Thy strong roots;
 18 Entwine them with the network of Thy love.

19 [From *The Cross Is Lifted* by Chandran Devanesen, © 1954,
 20 Friendship Press, New York, Used with permission.]

21 ***The Presentation of Special Thanksgiving Projects & Gifts:***
 22 *(After each project is described, the person should lay an ear of*
 23 *corn, either fresh or decorative, on the tray or basket containing*
 24 *the harvest display.)*

25 **LEADER:** Therefore said He unto them, "the harvest truly is
 26 great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the
 27 Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers
 28 into his harvest." *[Matthew 9:37,38]*

29 **THE THANKSGIVING OFFERING:** *(During the offering, the*
 30 *organist may softly play, "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come")*

31 **HYMN:** "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" (Verses 3 and 4 or in
 32 entirety)

33 For the Lord our God shall come,
 34 And shall take his harvest home;
 35 From his field shall in that day

1 All offenses purge away,
 2 Give his angels charge at last
 3 In the fire the tares to cast,
 4 But the fruitful ears to store
 5 In his garner evermore.

6
 7 Even so, Lord, quickly come
 8 To thy final harvest home;
 9 Gather thou thy people in,
 10 Free from sorrow, free from sin;
 11 There forever purified,
 12 In thy presence to abide;
 13 Come, with all thine angels, come,
 14 Raise the glorious harvest home. Amen.

15 **LEADER:** Let us pray:

16 Oh, Thou desire of all nations, in the knowledge of whose
 17 love and power there is salvation for all the peoples of
 18 the earth, hasten the day, I beseech thee, when all men
 19 shall acknowledge Thee as Lord over all. Hasten the day
 20 when our earthly society shall become the Kingdom of
 21 Christ. Hasten the day when Thy presence and the strong
 22 hand of Thy purpose shall be found not only in the hearts
 23 of a few wise and brave men but throughout the broad
 24 land, in court and council chamber, in workshop and
 25 marketplace, in the city and in the fields. And whatever
 26 I myself can do, give me grace this day to begin — through
 27 Jesus Christ, Amen. [From *A Diary of Private Prayer* by
 28 John Baillie, © 1949, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Used
 29 with permission]

30 **BENEDICTION**

31
 32 *NOTE: The numerals running vertically down the left margin*
 33 *of each page of dialogue are for the convenience of the director.*
 34 *With these, he may easily direct attention to a specific passage.*
 35



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