

## Harvest Festival Sermon 2017

I want you to sit back, close your eyes and imagine a field of golden corn waving in the breeze, each stem so pure so strong, and now imagine each of these stems becoming a golden thread that connects us all together, and not only connects us but connects us to the land, to the planet, to Gods wonderful creation.

What makes heaven here on earth is the interweaving of all these golden threads that connect us altogether that connect us to our ancestors, our communities, our families, that connects us to those who have travelled with us throughout our lives.

I want to begin by looking at the golden threads that connect us to Gods wonderful creation

We are here today to celebrate our harvest festival, and in these days of digital technology of face book and twitter it is more important than ever that we reconnect with the cycles of nature with our Celtic roots

I have just read a book by a lady called Ester Emery called 'what falls from the sky ' and it is the sometimes very painful story of a young American mum in her early 30's who decided to give up the internet for 12 months. To cease from all sources of digital information, facebook, twitter, she was a regular blogger, and in giving up digital media she accidently found God,

rediscovered the beauty of creation and discovered that she had forgotten how to relate to real people and real situations. It is in many ways a very sobering book.

When we forget Gods creation, those golden threads can start to fall apart. What does it matter where our food comes from? What difference does it make if we buy our clothes from suppliers who abuse their workforce? What difference can we make? Do we care? What does it matter whether we support our local shops or support large corrupt supermarkets? What does it matter if our farmers aren't paid a sustainable amount for their milk, their meat?

If we as Christians can't see that it matters then there *is* no hope for the world.

If you go to the local shops, buy local food support our local farms we strengthen those golden threads. If we don't care, those threads snap

Those golden connecting threads don't only make for the survival of the planet but they also heal us.

'Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts' wrote a lady called Rachel Carson. She went on to say ' there is a symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of tides, the folded bud ready for spring. There is something infinitely

healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after the night and spring after the winter’

As we gather here today for harvest festival we thank God for the wonder of his creation. It strengthens us and nurtures us but **only if we have time to contemplate it**, and only if we are taught as children to appreciate it – any teachers and educators here please note!

I have banged on from this pulpit many times over the years about the need to be fully alive in Christ that is fully alive in body, in mind and in Spirit. To do that we must be in tune with nature, in tune with the cycle of the days, the cycle of the seasons the cycle of our age and our years as we move from baby, to teenager, to middle age to old age, life to death, not to fight it but to embrace whatever stage of life we are at, that is being fully alive..

The whole of life, the whole of nature is inextricably linked by golden threads and beautifully intertwined by God, but it is up to us to see it, feel it touch it, and be in the midst of it.

Our faith is not something to add on like a new hobby but we need to ensure that everything we do takes on a holy element. Whether we are putting out the rubbish, cleaning the loos or worshipping in church we need to

do it as for God. That way we build constantly new golden threads

The early Celtic Christians knew and understood this. The Buddhists understand this, the Hindus from my limited experience in India understand this, but when we as Christians went down the Roman path rather than the Celtic path we seem to have got detached from this, focussing instead on fine buildings, custom, tradition, and laws.

And you know the only thing that is important in our churches are those golden threads, otherwise known as relationships, loving relationships as we move closer together and enable each other to move closer to God. These are **the** golden threads Everything else is window dressing. After all God said exactly this in his two great commandments to love God and to love one another.

Our relationship with nature affects our relationship with one another. If we lose touch with the one, we lose touch with the other.

I suspect that the perpetrators of many of the current terrorism acts, the awful atrocity committed in Los Vegas this week, everything from that extreme to the few young people currently disrupting meetings and worship in Budleigh all suffer from a complete lack of

golden threads, binding them to their family, their communities.

It is when people lose their connections, that they lose hope and evil wins. It is down to us to ensure that each and every person in our communities feels connected

As we thank God for his abundant harvest I pray that each of you will think about how you might best create and weave your own golden threads, nurture your own spirit, your own soul, by connecting more deeply with the cycle of nature, the cycle of life, not resisting the cycle of life, but embracing it and accepting it, right through and including death.

You have a choice each morning of creating more golden threads or of cutting them through, what will you choose to do?

I was thinking back over the many privileged moments we have shared over these last 6 1/2 years, and there has been so many, and of course, many funerals and one occasion that stands out for me as an absolute high point in relationships between God, and between us, was actually a funeral, that of Margaret Sellin.

Why? Because she insisted her funeral must be Christ Centred, not Margaret centred, and I have never felt God's peaceful spirit more deeply in this place than that

service. Margaret managed to create new golden threads even *after* her death.

I know for my own journey with God, and in order that I can continue to create new golden threads I must leave you. I must get back to spending time with nature, time with God, for my own wellbeing as well as for yours.

It has been a huge privilege to serve here for the last six and a half years. I now move from an electoral roll of 341 to one of 54! Shepherd to a smallholding rather than a vast farm where I hope and pray I will be able to be much more in touch with creation and with God.

Amen