

Pastor Graham Pfeffer Sermon for 3rd November 2024 Harvest Thanksgiving Gin Gin Rosedale

Text Psalm 65

Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple. ⁵ You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas...The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy. You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly.

Psalm 65 is a psalm of thanksgiving that was maybe even used like we are today at a harvest thanksgiving service for the Jewish people. Psalm 65 gives a good list of the way God blesses our lives. God is the one who answers prayer. When you are overwhelmed by sins, God forgives you your sins. You are blessed because God chooses to allow you to live in his presence. Our lives are filled with the good things of God's house and his holy temple. What are the good things of God and his Holy temple. We are blessed with God's gifts of grace that he gives to us through his word and sacraments. We are made his children through water and the Spirit. We receive forgiveness of sins. Christ gives his body and blood to us as we gather and commune together. He provides for us our daily bread.

His deeds are awesome and righteous. His hope is available to the ends of the earth and the furthest seas. He is the one who formed the mountains, who stilled the roaring seas and the turmoil of the nations. The whole earth is filled with his wonders, as morning dawns and evening fades, it's a time to sing songs of joy.

Why? Because he cares for the land and waters it to enrich it abundantly.

Then Psalm 65 tells how God blesses the land.

The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain. He drenches the furrows and level its ridges. He softens the land with showers and bless its crops. The carts overflow with abundance, the grass lands of the wilderness overflow, the hills are clothed with gladness.

The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

When Judy and I travelled to SA by road for General Pastors conference and General synod, we saw where there had been adequate rains and where there was no rain. For the majority of SA and parts of Victoria, the paddocks are not mantled with grain this year. Rather the crops were wilted and dying from no rain.

When I was a farmer there were plenty of times where the rains weren't generous, and there wasn't a generous harvest. The inability to control the weather is a reminder that we are not in control.

Often farming can be cruel where you are waiting and waiting for rain, and it doesn't come. Yet as soon as you begin harvest, that's when the grey clouds gather and down comes the rain.

Dorothea Mackellar wrote of this land in her poem, Core of my heart, later titled, My country.

I love a sunburnt country, A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges, of droughts and flooding rains.

I love her far horizons, I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror, the wide brown land for me!

Core of my heart, my country! Her pitiless blue sky,
When sick at heart, around us, we see the cattle die -
But then the grey clouds gather, and we can bless again
The drumming of an army, The steady, soaking rain.

Core of my heart, my country! Land of the Rainbow Gold,
For flood and fire and famine, she pays us back threefold -
Over the thirsty paddocks, Watch, after many days,
The filmy veil of greenness, that thickens as we gaze.

As a farmer those times where the crops don't make it when the rains don't come, it makes you really appreciate when there was a good crop ready for harvest. Like a paddock mantled with grain. The harvest brought a feeling of joy as the harvester gathered in the crop before it and trucks take away the good clean grain.

No matter what industry you are in whether it's cane, or cattle, or a service to the public, it may feel at times, what do you have to show for it. The key word for today is remember. Remember how God was with you and brought you through that last drought, or that time of feeling like you were lost in a sea of financial hardship, yet he sustained you.

We celebrate harvest thanksgiving today, knowing it is the Lord who gives the ability to produce wealth. We live in a land of plenty. Resources are mined from the ground, there is underground water supply, creeks and rivers. The ground is able to produce bountifully. Even though we know we live in a land of droughts and flooding rains, have you experienced where God softens the land with showers and bless its crops. The carts overflow with abundance, the grass lands of the wilderness overflow, the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

Dorothy McKellar also described Australia as,
*An opal-hearted country, A wilful, lavish land -
All you who have not loved her, You will not understand -
Though earth holds many splendours, Wherever I may die,
I know to what brown country, My homing thoughts will fly.*

Where is the place you call home. If you've only lived in this area your entire life that's easy. This place is home to you. Chinchilla was home for me for 45 years yet isn't it interesting wherever we live at the present time, and we go off to work, or holiday, when it's time to return, we say, time for home.

How often do you think of your eternal home? Soon we will remember those who have died. Those who have been called out of this land to their forever home. We will hear these words written in Revelation 7:16-17 in the memorial.

¹⁶ 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water. 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

Even though we live in what Dorothy McKellar describes as a wilful lavish land, of beauty and terror, of droughts and flooding rains. An earth that even holds many splendours among the heart aches. The time will come when you are called home from this land. Where is that place in your thoughts. Is it to the place Jesus said he will go and prepare for you? Where you will see your good shepherd who has taken you from a land of sun and scorching heat to the springs of living water, where he will wipe away all your tears

The time will come when Jesus gathers in his harvest and gather all his people. Until that time, until you are called to your eternal home, remember how you are blessed to know God and his love for you. Remember what the Lord has done to make you, his child. He will provide for you throughout the beauty and the terror of the changing of the seasons. As the Psalmist says, Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple. Amen