

Halling View Autumn 2018 – Harvest and Armistice

Two big things to mark each Autumn are Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday. This year, the latter is even more significant than usual because it falls on the 100th anniversary of the armistice which concluded the First World War. At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the guns at last fell silent.

Harvest is about ends. It is the end of Summer. It is the purpose underlying the whole agricultural year - ploughing, sowing, nurturing the crops and, finally, reaping. Harvest is very hard work, often in amazingly golden weather. Ultimately, we all depend on successful harvests (though we may be unconscious of that fact, given that most of us get most of our food from shops selling us other people's harvest goods). Harvest is a time for celebration – hence Harvest Festival. With harvest home comes a brief respite from labour before preparing the ground for next year's sowing. Harvest is a good time.

There is also, however, a darker side. In many cultures, a poor harvest means severe hardship in the coming winter. Death we think of as the Grim Reaper. The final harvest is indeed the end, the conclusion of our life on earth and its meaning. Harvest is a time of separation – the wheat from the chaff. Our patron saint, John the Baptist, speaks of Jesus thus: I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. There is a judgment to come and Jesus is the judge.

What about Armistice Day? What about the very mixed feelings there must have been on November 11th 1918? Joy that we had won; relief that it was all over; grief for all those millions of lives lost; continued suffering and hardship for the grievously wounded; hope for the future and, no doubt, apprehension as to what it might bring; the resolve to make this the war that would end all wars, to build a better society, the promise never to forget those who had fallen. Things could never be the same again and yet a longing to restore all that had been lost. The Grim Reaper had stalked the fields of Flanders and of so much of the rest of the world. There was an end to celebrate, the end of the fighting. The allies had achieved their end, but at what cost? Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. There were astonishing acts of sacrifice that must be honoured eternally and yet there must also be judgment. Thou shalt not kill. How could human beings, made in the image of God, for whom Christ died, act as we act in war? What do we deserve for what we have done? Thankfully, our Judge is also our Redeemer. He also is our teacher, our example, our friend and our brother and it is in Him that we find the means to overcome evil with good, the only true and final victory, when the sacrifice of self brings in the Kingdom of God – earth's Harvest Home. Roger Knight, Rector, 717134, roger@cuxtonandhalling.org .

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.

All the world is God's own field,
fruit as praise to God we yield;
wheat and tares together sown
are to joy or sorrow grown;
first the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear;
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come,
and shall take the harvest home;
from the field shall in that day
all offenses purge away,
giving angels charge at last
in the fire the tares to cast;
but the fruitful ears to store
in the garner evermore.

Harvest Festival 7th October: Holy Communion at 8.00am at the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling, 9.30 am at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton & 11.00am at St John the Baptist Halling. Harvest Praise is at 6.30 pm at St Michael's, followed by the Harvest Supper in the church hall.

Remembrance Sunday 11th November: Holy Communion at 8.00 am at St John's*, Holy Communion & Parade at 9.30 at St Michael's, Morning Service & Parade at 10.50 am at St John's†, Presentation to mark the centenary in music and readings 7.30 pm at St Michael's. Bells will be rung at 7.05 pm all over the country as they were in 1918 on this date.

* This will follow the 1662 rite and be very similar to the service offered at St John's on the same Sunday in 1918.

† This will include contributions from village organisations and individuals. Please contact rector if you have a contribution to make. There will also be an exhibition of WWI photographs and artefacts. Please contact rector if willing to lend anything.