

THANKSGIVING FOR THE LORD'S HARVEST

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Reading: Mark 4:26-29

“For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head” (Mark 4:28).

Thanksgiving is a very special family day—a day of family happiness and feasting. But it is also a day for thanking the Lord for all His many gifts to us. This thanking the Lord makes Thanksgiving a day for grateful worship as well.

On this special day we thank the Lord for the food from the fields. Some of you may take fruit or vegetables to church to give to the Lord. This is a reminder that our food is really a gift from the Lord. But the Lord gives us much more than food. He gives us each and every good thing we have. So the fruit we bring to the Lord stands for all the Lord's blessings, and not just our food. Do you know why this is? Because in the Word the “fruit of the earth” stands for or *corresponds* to the spiritual food the Lord gives us. And what is this spiritual food? It is the Lord's good and truth—His love and His wisdom. This is the food we must have if our minds are to be fed and our characters to grow and be healthy.

But how are we fed the Lord's good and truth? Every time we learn from the Word the difference between right and wrong—between good and evil—we are being given the Lord's good and truth. If we take these teachings into our minds and try to live by them, then we have (in a very real way) eaten of the Lord's good and truth, and He will cause our minds and characters to grow strong.

Now, as you know, our natural food does not come to us all prepared straight from the Lord. First the seeds have to be planted. Then they must sprout and grow and produce fruit. When the fruit is ripe, it must be harvested and be prepared before we can eat it and be nourished by it. We read about this in the Gospel of Mark where it spoke about wheat growing.

Now the same thing is true of the heavenly or spiritual food from the Lord. The Lord sows the seeds. Each time we learn some true things from the Word—something about the Lord or heaven or how we should live—each time this happens, seeds of truth are sown and planted in our minds. Who sows them? The Lord, of course.

As we pay attention to these truths and take real interest in them, the Lord causes them to sprout and grow in our minds. But we must tend these tender,

new growing shoots or blades of truth. We must keep them free from weeds and insects—free from the false ideas and evil thoughts that would choke and destroy them. If we do, they will continue to grow in us and begin to influence our daily thoughts. We begin to think from the Word of the Lord.

And then a wonderful thing happens. We begin to think of ways in which we can *live* the truths we have learned. We think and plan of ways to fight evil and do good things in our lives. The plants in our minds begin to produce young heads of wheat. As we try to live what we know is true, we really begin to do what is good, and the grains of wheat grow and ripen in their heads. Now the fine new wheat is ready for the harvest—ready for real use in life. All this is what is meant by the text we began with, “For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head” (Mark 4:28).

Who does all this for us? Who is the one who sows the seeds of truth and causes them to grow, develop and bring forth fruit in a good life? It is the Lord. Often it may seem as if we “bring forth fruit” of ourselves. But we don’t—we can’t do it by ourselves. It is always the Lord who does it, but He does it in secret ways without our noticing it. He always lets us be free. He never forces His truth or good upon us. Yet, if we cooperate with Him and try to understand and to live His truth, then He will bring us to the harvest. He will bring us into the good of life and nourish us with His good.

Let us keep all this in mind when we celebrate Thanksgiving. Let us remember that the fruit we bring to the Lord stands for His heavenly harvest. The Lord will bring this spiritual harvest to pass if we allow His truth to grow in us and bear fruit in the good of life. Then truly we will feast in the presence of the Lord.

Amen.