

# Harvest Festival Service Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October – led by Revd David Aplin

*There were many elements of a traditional Harvest Celebration in our church; the displays of produce - some from our Nursery Harvest Service, with the farmer (or was it a scarecrow?) - and the Aeolian Singers boosting our 'mini-choir'.*



*Yet the world scene, and in particular the situation in Gaza, weighed heavily on our hearts.*

David reflected on the situation in Gaza and the losses and trauma on both sides of the conflict. There was a huge job of renewal in Gaza, and people were still suffering. But one could hope - and give thanks for what had recently been achieved.



*David had been fired up by the impending delivery to him of a book by Michel-Yves Bolloré and Olivier Bonnassies, entitled '**God, the Science, the Evidence**', which argued that the universe must have had a creator. Their purpose was not evangelism but dethroning materialism, using the advance of science. So David launched in!*

Did we believe in the Bible? Did we REALLY believe in the Bible? Or did we take it with a pinch of salt? It didn't help that the Bible started with creation in 6 days when there was an awful lot of evidence to

show that creation had been a gradual process over billions of years. Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, and the whole concept of original sin.

The story of creation was clearly not to be taken literally, but what it did do was talk about the reality of creation, the fantastic reality of the creation of everything out of nothing. The authors of his new book had looked at the science behind the creation activities. And the more they did, the more they went into it, the more they became convinced that science couldn't explain creation. When they looked at the world that was created, it was not random. The start of life, DNA (*an incredibly sophisticated data storage system*), had appeared on earth 3.8 billion years ago and the authors knew enough to appreciate its infinite improbability. The conclusion was that everything was created by something or someone. By a God, a divine being, or a power, or something.

The biblical creation story was a simplified explanation suitable for people of its time. The real story might be a lot more complicated, but it was still fantastic. Adam and Eve explained in simple terms that God gave us the ability to choose right from wrong, to choose good or evil. And that was fundamental.

God had given us the right to choose. We had chosen to be in this church and David was grateful for it. Others didn't, and that was their prerogative. We could choose right and wrong, good and evil. If we looked at history, there had been a lot of evil choices, but in the end, good triumphed over the evil.

Our Bible was not made up. It told us what happened, maybe in a way that was fanciful, but

underneath it all, there was a truth that was important. If we looked at Luke 10, when Jesus was sending out the 72, he'd said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few". And that was still the message today. The Bible was fundamentally divinely written and true.

And that's why he'd wanted to ask that question, did we believe in the Bible? Did we believe in the gospel? Did we believe that the harvest was plentiful?

Unfortunately, Christians in the West, in our country, maybe in our church, were a bit demoralised. Church leaders sometimes said the church was in decline. But they were not looking at the Bible, not looking at the teaching. The teaching said that even if the numbers were reduced, the Word of God would continue to be spread. The harvest was out there: a lot of people were looking for something to believe in. And that something - the most powerful message of all - was the message of Jesus Christ.



The labourers, had to get out there, believing that they could do things and make things different. It was a duty for all of us, and God would be with his labourers. There were lots of people out there for whom the message could change their lives. The harvest was the people who could come to faith in Christ.

However few we thought we were, it was our duty to have faith in the Lord when He told us that we would be empowered by Him. And there were many who could come to Christ. The harvest was huge!

David expressed the thanks of the whole church to the Aeolians, and to Stephen, for their contribution to the Service.

And I think Stephen was happy with our collective performance as well!



All in all, another enjoyable and challenging morning.