

Harvest Sunday invites us to pause and remember that everything we have is ultimately received. The food we eat, the work we do, the people we know, the resources we enjoy and even the breath in our lungs are gifts from God.

Warm up Question!

- *What's one small thing you've appreciated recently? Was it easy to notice, or did you have to pause and think about it?*

Read Psalm 65 aloud twice. As you listen, notice any phrase or image that stands out to you and connects with gratitude.

Reflection

Psalm 65 is a song of praise that moves from God's welcome of those who come to him to his care for the whole earth.

The psalm gives us several reasons to be grateful:

- Forgiveness and Welcome
- Power and Presence
- Provision and Sustaining Life

Gratitude for forgiveness and welcome

The psalm begins with praise offered to God in Zion. People come to him with their prayers, and the words "When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions" (verse 3). Gratitude begins with mercy. We do not have to pretend we have everything together before approaching God. He hears, forgives and makes a way for people to draw near.

The psalm calls blessed those whom God chooses and brings close to live in his courts. Their welcome is a gift: they are satisfied by the goodness of God's house.

Discuss: *How does knowing that God forgives shape your gratitude? Is there a particular phrase in these verses that you find encouraging?*

Gratitude for God's power and presence

The focus widens from the worshipping community to the whole world. God is described as the hope of the ends of the earth and of distant seas. He established the mountains by his strength and stills the roaring seas and the turmoil of nations. The same God who welcomes people in prayer has power over forces that seem overwhelming.

Discuss: *Which image in the psalm helps you notice God's presence in the world around you? Where do you see signs of his creativity or power?*

Gratitude for provision and sustaining life

Psalm 65 celebrates the ordinary gifts that sustain life: rain, flowing water, fertile soil, grain, crops and the changing seasons. God provides what people and creatures need, often through familiar rhythms that can be easy to overlook. The rain softens the ground; the fields become fruitful; the harvest brings food. God's care is both abundant and practical.

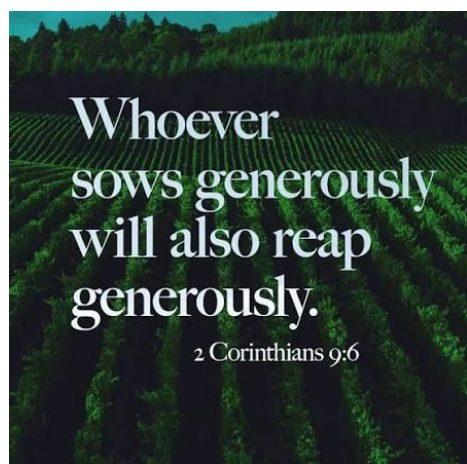
Recognising God's care and his gifts should lead us to gratitude, trust and a generous spirit. Paul explores that response in 2 Corinthians 9:6–11.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–11.

The immediate context is a collection Paul is organising for Christians in need in Jerusalem. He encourages the Corinthian church to give willingly and generously, not reluctantly or under pressure. Giving is an expression of trust: Paul says God is able to provide what they need and to increase the "harvest" of their



generosity. The result is not simply that needs are met. People give thanks to God, and the generosity of one church strengthens the bonds of care between believers.



This passage speaks to our giving today. Regular and generous giving help sustain worship, pastoral care, children's and community work, and the sharing of the gospel at St James. They also extend beyond our church, supporting churches across the diocese, people facing hardship, and gospel work through our mission partnerships. Paul's image of sowing and reaping encourages us to see generosity as something that bears fruit: it meets real needs, builds relationships and leads to thanksgiving.

Paul is not promising that giving will make us wealthy. He points instead to God's provision: God supplies what is needed so that people can continue to do good. Generosity grows from trusting that what we have is received from God and can be shared for the good of others.

Discuss together:

- What helps you give willingly rather than out of pressure or guilt?
- Where does our church's generosity make a difference (St James' ministry, people in need, the wider world)?
- What might it look like for each of us to practise a generous spirit in daily life, as well as in financial giving?

Prayer

Generous God,
thank you for the gifts you give us: for your goodness in creation, your care for our lives, and your welcome and forgiveness through Christ.

Teach us to recognise your generosity with grateful hearts. Help us to give freely and faithfully, not from pressure or fear, but in trust and love. May what we sow through our money, time and gifts bear fruit in the life of St James, in the lives of those in need, and throughout the wider world.

Guide us to use what you have entrusted to us wisely, so that others may encounter you, grow in faith and take part in your purposes. May our giving bring help, hope and thanksgiving to your name.

Amen.

