Sermon:

Many urban parishes no longer celebrate harvest! In UK they sometimes think about industrial harvest, those by the sea celebrate fishing. Whilst many here grow what they have brought, the connection to the land is weaker than it once was. Should we forget harvest?

We still need to thank God for harvest, but maybe need to rethink its meaning.

This is exactly what Jesus did with respect to many of his traditions and expectations.

On Palm Sunday Jesus rides into town on a young donkey; **He comes triumphant & victorious, but humble & riding on a donkey – on a colt, the foal of a donkey** (Zechariah 9.9) No accident, but staged throughout (Mark 11.2-3)

Other conquerors rode on horses to show power; in Jesus military force becomes the force of love.

Later in the week there is the Passover, remembering Exodus. Angel of death. Meal involving bread and wine, amongst much else. Again staged (see Mark 14.13-15). Maundy Thursday service.

Jesus gives new meaning to Communion – freedom from slavery to sin, bread = body, wine = blood.

Later in the week Jesus is crucified. Horrific. Degrading. Yet the church saw this as glory & triumph: **the hour has now come for the Son of Man to receive great glory** (John 12.23) **we proclaim Christ crucified, a message offensive to Jews & nonsense to Gentiles** (1 Corinth 1.23). Shame becomes glory.

Jesus dies on the cross. On Easter Day we recall Resurrection. Without spoiling that day new life gives new meaning to death. A hope which surpasses the worst that death appears to be. Death becomes new life.

So Jesus gives new meaning to old traditions/expectations.

What in us needs new meaning? Eg Harvest of crops is given the meaning of harvest of Kingdom of God. Hence the words of **Come, ye thankful people, come** – read them below!

As we get older one question looms larger – what was the point of it all, what have I achieved?

It is a search for meaning to our lives. This is a personal journey, which some refuse to undertake.

This day, this period, is an encouragement to go on that journey, to rediscover new meaning to our faith, our church, to life itself. Use this time for that kind of reflection and growth.

**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 unto his praise to yield:  
Wheat and tares together sown, unto joy or sorrow grown.  
First the blade, and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear.  
Grant, O harvest Lord, that we wholesome grain and pure may be.**

**For the Lord our God shall come, and shall take his harvest home:  
From his field shall in that day all offences purge away;  
Give his angels charge at last in the fire the tares to cast;  
but the fruitful ears to store in his garner evermore.**

**Even so, Lord, quickly come; bring the final harvest home:  
gather thou thy people in, free from sorrow, free from sin;**

**There for ever purified, in the garner to abide;  
come, with all thine angels, come, raise the glorious harvest home!**