

## NOTES TO CHILDREN BEFORE THEY GO TO MESSY ACTIVITIES

- HOLD UP PIECE OF BREAD OR DOUGH
- Who helped make some?
- Jesus said, *'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'*
- PRACTISE A FEW TIMES
- What do you need to really live?
  - Enough food
    - We've done this bit – but it comes from God anyway
  - Meaning and direction
    - That's the bit that Jesus does
      - Love,
      - Self-worth that comes from knowing you're forgiven
      - Values that are based on something rather than just chosen
      - Direction
- As you go to Messy activities remember who you're following and see if you can find him and meaning in the craft activities you are doing.

## SERMON

- Forgetful Frank came into church, saw the marrows and the potatoes, and realized it was Harvest Festival. 'Oh blow', he thought, not having brought the requisite tin of beans and box of cup-a-soups. He went and sat down and tried to hide on a corner where no one would notice that he had come emptyhanded.
- Smug Susan came in carrying a large bag of tin and packets, just the sort of thing they would need at the Foodbank, plus a large marrow she had grown on her allotment. She proudly brought them all up to the altar during the first hymn, and walked back thinking she had done her bit and God was pleased with her.
- We live in a society where by and large people seem to survive fairly well by relying on their own resources.
  - Most of us have got enough money to order a takeaway pizza every now and again, put petrol in the car, pay for our own Sky TV package. I'm not saying many of us have got 'loadsamoney', but neither are many of us wondering where the next meal is coming from either. We know. It'll come from Tesco.
- But the problem is that relying on our resources has the potential to lead to disaster.
- Forgetful Frank found his resources were not enough to enable him to be prepared with a tin of beans. So he slunk to the back feeling dreadful. Relying on his own resources caused his self-esteem to plummet. Disaster!
- That large, largely hidden subsection of our community which we do not see; the homeless, the debt-ridden, those waiting 40 days for their Universal Credit to begin; and those afflicted by drought and disaster in other parts of the world, also find their resources do not match up to the demands their needs place upon them. Disaster!
  - For those who 'have', it is easy. For those who 'have not' it is anything but.
- And even Smug Susan does not come away with a set of emotions that are going to help her. Smugness does not usually lead to Godliness! Disaster!
- Harvest is about acknowledging God is Lord of creation, not us.
  - We may be able to genetically modify tomatoes to create a better, stronger and probably more tasteless yield, but we can't seem to get our stewardship of the planet correct so that the polar icecaps will still be here in 100 years' time.. Disaster!

- We may be able to import fresh asparagus from South America but we insist on chopping down acres of Amazonian rainforest in order to do it. Disaster!
- Hunger is not largely something that we know about in this country any more, but it doesn't seem to worry us that hunger is very much alive in many African states or Bangladeshi refugee camps. Disaster!
- Surely it is time to get back to some basics that we seem to have forgotten in our desire to 'get'?
- As I said at the beginning when the children were still here Jesus said, *'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'*
  - Jesus calls us to search for real food. And this takes away, the desire to 'get'. Our hunger for having is removed. We are satisfied. So what is this real food?
- After all, how are you going to celebrate the goodness of the Creator if you feed your minds only on the things of the world which humans have made ugly?
- We believe in a God who values love and who values human beings and who values this wonderful world he has made. That's real. And once we know we are valuable, it is sustaining.
  - A God who shares life with us and has experienced the daily pressures we feel. Jesus knows what it is like to be human.
    - He knows about failure, he died on a cross. This is Good News for forgetful Frank. That's sustaining real food.
  - We believe in a God who knows we are not really as competent or as self-sufficient as we think we are. That's why Jesus came. Because he knows we need his help. All of us. And that's rather surprising News for Smug Susan. However hard she tries she cannot get past the cross. But God can. He raised Jesus from the dead.. He knows we need his help. That's real food, when we let him.
    - He knows about poverty. He doesn't magic it away, instead he calls us to remember those in need to share and to transform. And that's Good News when we put it into practice.
- I don't want you going home today worried that you haven't brought a Harvest gift. But I want you to go home even less, smug that you remembered and thinking you have done your bit.
- I hope we might all go home, encouraged by the God of creation to remember a bit more those among us who are not fortunate enough to be able to rely on their own resources, and to try to do something about it.
  - And when we do that, Harvest becomes more than merely charity relief for the homeless and starving and instead becomes a symbol of the good and loving Son of God on earth.
    - But that's only going to happen when we realise that Jesus offers the bread that gives life rather more than Tesco or our own well laid plans.
- *'Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.'*
- Claim Harvest for your own this year and let Jesus into a bit more of your life. Allow him to be in control, not you! Amen.