

Harvest 2025 Notes

Both of these texts are about who we should be kind to and in what way. In our Old Testament reading, God tells his people to remember the poor and those who are foreigners (i.e. 'aliens') when they harvest their land. The people of God will not only take food for themselves, but will share it with those who have none. It is interesting to note, however, that God does not tell his people to give the food *directly* to the poor and to foreigners, but instead leave it for them to work themselves.

In the second reading Jesus is confronted with a number of prohibitions against eating and offering help on the Sabbath. The key to this passage – which reads a little strange to contemporary eyes – is Jesus' words 'I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.' Jesus is pointing out that the various rules his opponents cite are concerned with holiness and purity. Yet if they realised that the Holy One of Israel was before them, the God who gave them these laws, they would not have taken offence, but would rather have fallen down in worship. The wider point of the passage, of course, is that all of God's laws are for the sake of love and mercy. If an interpretation of God's law stops us from feeding other people or curing them, for example, then our interpretation is wrong. There are *always* reasons not to help others, and Jesus is clear that they are all spurious.

Leviticus 23:22

²² When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the Lord your God.

1. Has someone ever given charity to you in some way? How did you feel?
2. Why do you think God wants us to share things with others?
3. Do you find it odd that the Israelites are not meant to give crops to the poor and to foreigners directly, but instead allow them to work the land? Why might this be?

Matthew 12:1-13

12 At that time Jesus went through the cornfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.' ³ He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. ⁵ Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? ⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice", you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.'

⁹ He left that place and entered their synagogue; ¹⁰ a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, 'Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?' so that they might accuse him. ¹¹ He said to them, 'Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.' ¹³ Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other.

4. Why do you think Jesus talks about David here? What might the connection be between Jesus and David?
5. 'For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath' What do you think Jesus means by this?
6. At Linavon Church of Scotland we do various things to help the hungry (principally supporting West Lothian Food Bank and the Food Pantry in Cross House). Is there anything else we should be doing?