

Explore the Theme — What About That Harvest?

reflections by Sarah Bachelard on holding together tensions of joy & sorrow at harvest-time
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Harvest by Leon Zernitsky, Russia

If the seed falls to the earth and dies it yields a rich harvest.
What harvest do I/we hope for?

In the Jewish tradition the harvest is linked with the book of *Ecclesiastes* which tells us **there is a time for everything under the sun, a time to be born and a time to die, to plant and to uproot ...** This wisdom appears in chapter 3 of a book which begins in its very first line with the lament **“Meaningless! meaningless! ... Everything is meaningless.”** Scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann points out that *Ecclesiastes* is in profound tension with Israel’s general sense of hopefulness in the ultimate meaning and purpose of all life. Theologian Sarah Bachelard explores this tension in a reflection offered to her Benedictus Contemplative Church in Australia, as people of the southern hemisphere celebrate their harvest season in late March. Her thoughts can help us prepare our hearts for our own promised harvest-time:

- We’re gathering to celebrate our harvest, knowing all the while that in **Ukraine**, spring planting has been impossible and there will be no harvest there next year.
- We come to give thanks for provision and the earth’s bounty, even as the earth lurches closer to **ecological collapse**. It’s hard to feel happiness unalloyed in the midst of all this.
- I wonder if the deep wisdom of the Jewish liturgical calendar is its determination to **be faithful to this difficult whole**, its commitment to deny neither grief nor gladness but to **hold the two together**, inviting us to do the same.

- ... it’s important to recognise which side of this tension we ourselves find most difficult to honour ... [T]he tradition of reading *Ecclesiastes* at harvest means we’re not allowed to forget the realities of disillusionment, sorrow and pain, as we celebrate the good times.
- But ... the yearly celebration of harvest means that suffering, and the sense we sometimes feel of futility aren’t allowed to eclipse the realities of blessing and gift. **For some of us, it’s not sorrow we find it hardest to remain present to, but joy.**
- ... how do we hold such tension, such juxtaposition, such painful awareness of the whole?

Sarah Bachelard, “The Harvest of the Heart’s Work (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8),” March 26, 2022 — read the complete reflection at: <https://benedictus.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-Harvest-of-the-Hearts-Work-260322.pdf>



Harmony by Leon Zernitsky, Russia

How might I/we hold an awareness of the whole?