

For the Journey

September 17, 2026 - Rev. Dave Crawford



In early to mid September my thoughts always return to Eckville and my first exposure to rural life. I arrived there, was ordained there, in July of 1993, and had a great deal to learn about a lot of things, in particular rural things. I'd been raised in a large urban church in Calgary and every Thanksgiving Sunday the organist would pound out the processional hymn "We Plough the Fields and Scatter", but of course very few of us (if any) actually had any experience with ploughing or scattering seeds. We sang the hymn with great enthusiasm, though, thinking of those who actually did the work of farming. In Eckville I learned (and relearned in Crossfield) that when the time was right, when it was time for farmers to get going, harvest was all-consuming. Yet even to this day I don't think I really understand what harvest truly is, at a deep level, to those literally invested in it, invested body, mind and spirit, (and finances). For transplanted city folk who sort of watch from the margins, observe it all from the periphery, it is a time of year to behold with awe, encouragement and gratitude.

This time of year also brings back memories of my brother's wedding. Mark married Desiree in early October, 1993, at that same Calgary church. The young couple asked me to sing Neil Young's 1992 song "Harvest Moon" at the reception, accompanied by one of my brother's buddies on guitar. It was a fun wedding. Almost thirty-four years later they're still going strong.

As most of you know, a harvest moon is an astronomical gift, of sorts. It's the full moon that rises closest to the autumn equinox, which is set for Sept. 22nd, at 6 p.m. this year. The harvest moon got its name from the fact that historically the brightness of the full moon helped farmers gather crops late into the night after sunset.

Is it fair to say the farming life is marked by a significant amount of uncertainty? Timing is everything? Farmers can hope for good timing but they can't force it or control it? Whether it's the season of harvesting or seeding, the conditions are what they are. Some years everything falls into place. Some years not so much.

Many of Jesus' parables have to do with agricultural themes, small scale farming. Parables of the sower, the mustard seed, the weeds, and others provide insights into basic farming truths as a means of exploring the love and kingdom of God. Like farming, in our lives we can make plans and set routines, we can do everything right, try to control our little piece of the planet, but nothing is a given, nothing guaranteed, nothing certain, except the abiding, enduring love of God. At the heart of Jesus' teaching is the promise that life's uncertainty, though real for all of us, isn't the defining point of our existence. Like a light illuminating our paths, a shepherd guiding sheep through darkened valleys into thriving meadows, like a harvest moon brightening and enabling the exhausting work of harvest (for a time), God's love, known most uniquely and fully in Christ, stays with us, come what may. We may not know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future. Thanks be to God!

Grace and Peace!
Rev. Dave

