



What about first fruits?

I saw where a strawberry farm gave their "first fruits" to the food shelf this year. I thought that was neat. It made me wonder how "first fruits" translate into today's world if I were to attempt to give a "first fruit" offering from our garden. Would it be the first of each type of plant as it matures - or just the first harvest of the season? Do I give the entire first picking or a tenth like a tithe? Do I give it to the church or a food shelf?

That's a great question I received via email several weeks ago from one of our members.

In the Old Testament God instructed His people to bring "firstfruits" on several occasions. The first was when they entered the Promised Land. They were to bring a basket of some of the "firstfruits" of the various things they raised as a way of acknowledging that God had kept His promise to bring them into a good land - and that the fruits the land produced were a gift from and made possible by God. (Deuteronomy 26)

He also instructed them to bring the "firstfruits" of the barley harvest at the end of their annual Festival of Unleavened Bread and the "firstfruits" of the wheat harvest - baked into bread - at the start of the annual Festival of Weeks. (Leviticus 23 & Numbers 28)

No quantities are specified, only the instruction to "*Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God.*" (Exodus 23:19)

It seems the important thing about the various firstfruit offerings is that they were all designed to impress upon the people that the harvest was made possible by God and was a gift from Him. Bringing Him some of the best of the firstfruits was a way of saying, "I'm giving You back what comes from Your hand to show that I know it rightfully belongs to You and that you have blessed me with it as a gift - not something I can take credit for."

Giving away the best of the "firstfruits" is also a way of showing that you trust God will continue to provide *additional* fruits for you to keep and use for yourself and family. i.e. When you give God the *first* of the harvest, there is no guarantee that a hailstorm won't come and wipe out the crop the next day leaving you with nothing. Giving Him that first fruit is a great way to show that you do indeed trust that God will continue to provide you and your family with all you need when you put Him first and give Him the first.

Maybe the bottom line on "firstfruits" is this:

Giving some of the best of the first fruits that come from your garden is a great way to acknowledge God as the giver of those fruits. Whether you bring them to share with folks at church or take them to the foodshelf is up to you.

Depending on the timing of your "firstfruit" harvest, you could actually bring them both to church and to the food shelf. August 9 is our "Foodshelf Sunday" for August, so you could bring your "firstfruits" to church for delivery to the food shelf. That may even inspire some other folks to do the same.

On page 21 in this Newsletter you will find a page from the Willmar food shelf about how to donate produce from your garden. The *New London* Food Shelf (sponsored by The Link) is open Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net