

Wendy's August Prayer Thoughts

At this year's Wimbledon Tennis Championships people devoured over 2 million strawberries, costing £2.85 for a serving of 10 strawberries, topped with fresh cream. In 2025 7500 litres of cream were used. The treat has been enjoyed since the tournament began in 1877, when the attendance was just 2,050. The iconic treat comes from High Lowe Farm at Mereworth between Maidstone and Tonbridge. Freshness dictates flavour; hence picking begins at dawn each morning until midday. The hulling process is also done by removing the leafy tops with a spoon. The strawberries are packed and dispatched to travel 31 miles by train, then to the eagerly awaiting servers... Strawberry is an English name, from the Old English 'strewaiberige,'

The strawberry belongs to the rose family Rosacea, sharing lineage with many other fruits; apples, pears, plums apricots, peaches, cherries, raspberries, blueberries, quinces, also rose hips... They have been eaten for thousands of years, probably dating back to Neolithic times. Wild plants were native to N.America, Europe and Asia. Early Roman writers mentioned strawberries. Ovid wrote of a garden filled with fruit, the strawberry among them. Virgil warned boys picking wild flowers and strawberries near to the ground, of an adder lurking in the grass. The Romans mainly used the leaves of the plants for medicinal purposes, to cure sore throats, depression etc. King Henry V111 was treated for his leg ulcer with water of strawberries, which had been grown in his garden at Greenwich. Strawberries were served at banquets in Medieval Europe. In 1509 they were served with cream at Cardinal Wolsey's banquet for Henry V111, in the Hampton Court Palace.

Thomas Hariet 1560-1621, a brilliant English astronomer and mathematician, who studied the oceans and created maps for navigation, went on an expedition to Ranoke Island, off the coast of Carolina, America in 1585-6. He commented later on the new variety of strawberry *Fragaria Virginiana* found there. "They are as great as we have in English gardens." Roger Williams 1620-1683, a Puritan minister who emigrated to America, recorded how the indigenous people made strawberry bread, mixed with oats, but that "the English have exceeded and make good wine."

Cross breeding began in Brittany, France, after Lieutenant Amadée Francois Frezier brought wild plants from Chile... In 1712 he had been sent by King Louis XIV to study defence, but he also studied flora and fauna. He wrote about the native strawberry *Fragaria Chilensis*. "They there cultivate entire fields of type of strawberry differing from ours by their rounder leaves, being fleshier and long strong runners, its fruit usually as large as a white walnut and sometimes as small as an egg. They are of white, red colour and a little less delicate to the tongue than our native strawberry." *Fragaria Vesca*. Frezier landed in Marseilles with 12 plants, but only 5 survived. The French gardeners noticed that the Chilean strawberry bore only white feminine flowers and no fruit, so they planted their own woodland plants among them. They hybridised and flourished. *Fragaria Ananassa* is still the favourite today. Seeds from every variety in the world are stored in Kew's Millennium Seed Bank, at Wakehurst Place...

The redder the strawberry, the sweeter it will be' It contains more vitamin C than oranges. Figures produced by FAO show China as the the world's largest producer with 4; 1 million metric tons, million tons followed by USA and Turkey... The fastest time of eating 1 pound of strawberries is 1 minute 23 seconds. The largest grown was in Japan at 8ozs /250 grams 'Strawberry' is really a misnomer, for a berry is a fruit with a seed at its centre, The strawberry is the only fruit to bear seeds on the outside, some 200 average on each. It's a 'false fruit, a pseudo carp, and the seeds are nuts.....

.....There are many references to seeds in the Bible. In fact it's hard to imagine life without them. They are integral to Creation and to our existence. "Then God said, 'let the earth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit within the seed in it'. And it was good." Genesis 1:11. The seed is a symbol of life, growth and multiplication. Thank You Lord for the natural order, which we so often fail to acknowledge. It reveals to us Your meticulous planning. Thank You that seeds are essential for well being, for nutrition and medicines, for the present and the future.

The Hebrew word for seed *zera* occurs over 200 times in Scripture, and it has a dual meaning. It has an agricultural use and a botanical use, but it may also refer to offspring and descendant. Significantly it is a feminine word. We read in Genesis 3:15 how God promises, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring *zera* and her offspring *zera*. He will bruise your head and you will strike his heel." This is the 1st Messianic prophecy. There will be a Saviour. The serpent's strike did not end the offspring of the woman, nor Jesus, the ultimate seed, who would be bruised and suffer death by Crucifixion, and be buried, but he would be resurrected, triumphing over death and fulfilling God's mission by crushing Satan's head.

Thank You Father God for enveloping us in Your divine love. Thank You that through faith we are adopted into the family of God; that as Your children there is a place for us at Your table; and that we are the recipients of Your great grace. Lead us not into temptation.

Turning to the references for seed in the NT, Jesus Himself used the seed as a metaphor to explain the need for His death. "Very truly I tell you, unless a seed of grain falls into the earth and dies, if it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." John 12:24. Creator God who created the natural world and the spiritual world so that life would come from death. The seed must fall into the ground and die, so that it could produce fruit and more seeds. Every believer must die to self to live a transformed life in Christ.

Thank You Christ that through Your death and resurrection we are redeemed to God, assured of forgiveness and eternal life. May the Holy Spirit empower us to live a life of fruitfulness, and further the kingdom values. May we live as ambassadors for Christ.

Jesus Himself used the imagery of the seed, in His parables and teaching to plant spiritual truths. Jesus scattered His seed over 4 different grounds, to give a picture of the heart into which the good seed of the Word would fall. It never penetrated the hard heart, and hardly took root in the shallow heart. It entered the divided heart but was soon stifled, but, it took root in the open heart and grew, yielding a harvest. Mark 4:3-8. This is followed by the parable of The Seed growing secretly, which speaks of the mystery of spiritual growth Mark 4:26-29... Each of us can evangelise by sowing the seed of the Word, but it is God who develops the growth and the harvesting. Jesus continues with the parable of the Mustard Seed. It's the tiniest of seeds, barely visible, yet when it can erupt it can reach the clouds. Its bushy branches are home to a flock of birds. This is a parable about the growth of the Church which occurs when the seed of the Word is germinated by the Holy Spirit, and the power of the Word. Mark 4:30-32.

Lord may we each grasp the moment to spend time in reading Scripture, that the seed may grow and transform our lives, in order that we may be eager sowers of the Gospel, actively living for Christ. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever... Amen