



It is a rather big day for our Covenant family as we return to in-person worship after yet another multiple-month pause. However, let's be honest: for most Americans, and even people scattered throughout the world, it's a rather big day because of a certain sporting event that will kickoff in about nine hours' time. For some, they will actually care about the outcome. Others, it's about the gambling prop bets: what color will the beverage be that is poured on the winning coach, how many times will the commentators mention the age of a certain quarterback, heads or tails for the coin toss? Others will tune in for the pre-game festivities or the halftime show. And then the rest will turn on their television or streaming device just for the commercials: to see what so many millions of dollars can do in a thirty-second timeslot.

Nevertheless, eight years ago, one such commercial struck a chord with many in the heartland of America that advertisers had not pulled off for quite a while. It was produced by Dodge, but the majority of the images were not of their pickup trucks, but of farmers across the country. And the voiceover was the beloved Paul Harvey, who wrote a poem back in the late '70s, when he was speaking at a Future Farmers of America convention in Kansas City, Missouri. I could not help but think of that ad this week when reading through the line of the Psalm for this morning: "God provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they cry." The food may not miraculously drop from the heavens now, but that does not make the journey of those who bring the essential nourishment to feeding troughs and to our own tables just as meaningful. Plenty of people we often take for granted in feeding America and the world, including the animals, serve as rather holy intermediaries, in a sense.

That led Paul Harvey to proclaim such modern Good News in his speech to an FFA convention decades ago, and was brought to life, yet again, with hundreds of millions watching. The poem goes something like this:

*And on the eighth day, God looked down on [the] planned paradise and said, "I need a caretaker." So, God made a farmer.*

*God said, "I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board." So, God made a farmer...*

*God said, "I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt. And watch it die. Then dry his eyes and say, 'Maybe next year.' I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps. And who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain 'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours." So, God made a farmer...*

*God said, "I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bails, yet gentle enough to tame lambs and wean pigs and tend the pink-combed pullets, who will stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadow lark. It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners. Somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church.*

*Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son says he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad does.'" So, God made a farmer.*

That may not be exactly how the human story goes for us, but it does go to show that God is perfectly fine with the food not dropping from the heavens. Instead, being brought to life by people God thoroughly trusts to do their holy part in feeding the world not just with crops, but with insistent love and tender compassion. So, while hundreds of millions watch the multi-billion-dollar enterprise tonight, there will be quite a few who will not watch a single minute, because they're too busy driving a semi-truck hundreds of miles in a day to get the food where it needs to go. Others will sleep through all the pomp and circumstance, because they have to work throughout the night stocking the shelves for us to rummage through tomorrow. And, in the heartland of America, after the postgame festivities come to an end, it will only be a few hours before cows have to be milked and other animals fed, perhaps not directly by God's hands, but still through hands God undeniably cherishes.

And, lest we forget, our own hands are what God cherishes, too, because God so shaped them for us to share the holy helpings of grace and kindness and hope. It also so happens that we do have more than enough of all that eternal goodness and then some, to be holy intermediaries of God's love in this world right here and now. It turns out God has already blessed us with an over-abundance not just from the heavens, not just from a cross long ago, but in this life, each and every day with the same passionate love that conquered sin and death then, now, and forevermore. And for that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!

*Image: Getty Images/iStockphoto (JLVarga)*

*"God Made a Farmer" (Paul Harvey):*

*[American Rhetoric: Paul Harvey -- So God Made A Farmer FFA Speech \(transcript-audio\)](#)*

*"Farmer" Commercial (Ram Trucks): ["Farmer" | Ram Trucks - YouTube](#)*