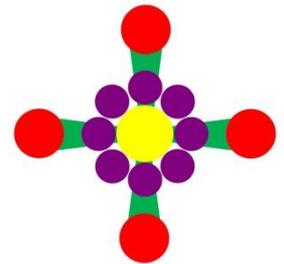


The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme



26 April 2020 - Third Sunday of Easter

If you can, start at 10.30am.

Do not worry if you cannot keep to that time, still join in!

Take a moment to be still. Perhaps light a candle or hold a cross.

Be aware that others will be saying these same words and prayers.

We are united in prayer and worship.

Opening words:

We are friends of Jesus,
Distanced today, but together in Spirit.
We come to walk a journey,
Separately but yet together
And wherever we are, Jesus is walking with us.
Thank you, Lord for coming alongside us today.

Let us send a few moments saying thank you for the good things we have experienced this week and the ways we have encountered Christ. (If it helps, you could write a list and add to it during the coming week.)

Opening Prayer

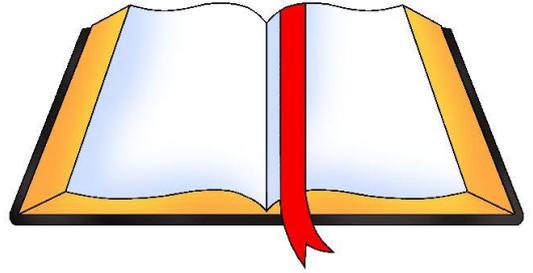
Lord, we haven't always recognised you,
We may feel alone, sad or confused
But you bring us together this morning.
Touch us with your love and care.

Our journey might feel long and tiring,
We might feel worried or anxious.
But you bring us to a place of rest.
Join us at our tables this day.

In your company we sit and share,
Togetherness which breaks barriers
As we speak of your story and your friendship.
Stay with us as we celebrate our Easter joy!

First Reading: Acts 2: 14a, 36-41

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.



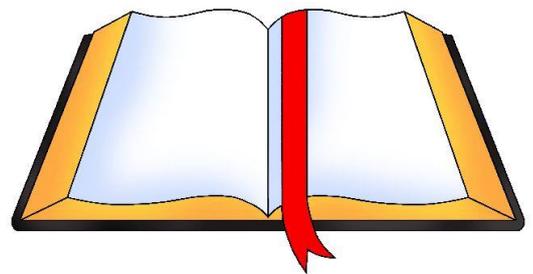
Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word

Second Reading: Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.



While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his

body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

Mavis & Gordon leads us this morning in our Reflection

It wasn't meant to be like this! A very dispirited couple make their way home to Emmaus, after celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem.

It was a journey of some seven miles and they passed the time in animated conversation about recent events in Jerusalem. On their way up the Feast, they were no doubt excited in anticipation of hearing more teachings of Jesus, and maybe witnessing more miracles. They were among the many followers of Jesus who believed that he was the long-promised Messiah.

I wonder if they had been in Jerusalem for the exciting events of Palm Sunday? If not, they had no doubt heard of the excitement of the crowd who turned out to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem, spreading their cloaks before his donkey, and crying ecstatically, "Hosanna!" So, no doubt on their journey up to the Passover, they may have excitedly anticipated being part of another uplifting experience.

They say a week is a long time in politics. A week certainly was a long time in the life of Jesus. 5 days after those heady scenes, Jesus was arrested, tried before the Jewish High Priest and Pilate, and then was taken out and crucified. What an ignominious end to their hopes and dreams. We read of them bemoaning these events, saying to each other, "we had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel."

The risen Jesus draws alongside them, but they didn't recognise him. The stranger asked them what their animated conversation was about. Their response was very reasonable, "are you the only person in Jerusalem who doesn't know what has taken place these last couple of days."

The Romans gloried in crucifixion, that vile, cruel form of execution. To serve as a warning to other would be rebels or bandits, they would take the dead bodies, still on the crosses to line the road out of the City. Had this stranger not even heard a whisper that one of the victims of the recent crucifixion was the popular teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. Admittedly, his body had been released for burial, but the City would have been abuzz with the notorious events that had taken place.

The response of the stranger must have amazed them. He went through the Scriptures and pointed to the various passages that foretold the suffering and death of the Messiah. They were no doubt enthralled and challenged.

We fast forward to the end of the story. When the small party reached Emmaus it was nearly evening and the light would be fading. They entreated the stranger to come and stay with them. It was over a meal that recognition came, it was as Jesus broke bread and gave it to them. Then they realised that there must be some truth in the words the woman had said earlier in the day, the grave had not been able to hold Jesus. He had risen,

Such was their excitement that they rushed back to Jerusalem, burst in on the disciples, in the Upper Room, and shared their strange tale. While there Jesus appeared to them all with that reassuring greeting, "don't be afraid!"

The Gospel account says that they recognised Jesus "in the breaking of the bread", something he had no doubt done many times with his disciples before that Last Supper.

We too meet with the living Jesus in the breaking of the bread at the Eucharist. As Richard shared in this Wednesday's Reflection, though we are not able to meet together to share the Eucharistic bread at present, we can still meet Jesus in an act of "spiritual" communion and look forward to the relaxing of the current restrictions when we can again break and eat the consecrated bread together. We will value that simple act so much more.

As with the Emmaus couple, Jesus walks with us through heartache and pain. As Captain Tom and Michael Ball remind us "we never walk alone!"

Debbie leads us in our prayers:

Let us pray to the Father who understands the chaos of our world and brings order to it.

Loving God we give thanks for this opportunity to share worship together and for this time set aside to reflect on your word and seek your will. We thank you for the hope you have given us in the risen Christ, the meaning and purpose, joy and fulfilment you bring to us through him.

Hear our prayer for those who find it hard to hope, those for whom life is overwhelming, thinking especially of those who have lost family, colleagues, friends and carers. We pray that you and we will reach out to each of them in their need.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for the Church, for our diocese, our bishops, clergy, laity and all who minister in your name. Grant them vision and discernment, a living knowledge of your presence and a daily sense of your guidance at a time when they may have to rethink how they love, support, lead and encourage others. We pray that, with your help, we too will have the inspiration and courage to be able to discern the way forward and to be confident in your love.

Lord in your mercy

Father God we pray for the world with all its problems. We pray for the Government and all ministers as they struggle to find a way through this unprecedented situation. We pray that leaders across the world will work together sharing information, expertise and research in order to turn the tide of Covid 19. We pray for all those who are adversely affected by the virus, those who have no work and no money, for those who will now struggle to feed their families or pay their rent, for those are afraid about being able to cope. We remember also those who are struggling to support their employees and those who have lost their businesses and their livelihoods.

We give thanks for nurses and doctors, for care workers and cleaners, for volunteers and for all those behind the scenes helping hospitals and care homes to function. We pray for all key workers in many different posts and all those who are putting their lives at risk to serve others during the crisis.

Lord in your mercy

Father we bring before you all those who suffering either physically or mentally. We pray for those who are seriously ill and without family or friends beside them; we pray too for the families and friends who are separated from loved ones who are ill. We pray especially for all those who are lonely and for whom the isolation is having an effect on their mental health. We pray for all those we know personally in need of our prayers.....

Lord in your mercy

We bring each other before God and pray for all that is going on in people's lives – for the things they share with us and the things they cope with alone. We take some time to pray for our congregations and the communities in our villages.....

Father we give thanks for each other, for the sunshine, for all the love in our lives, our church communities and the privilege of sharing with and caring for each other. We ask your blessing on each of us, that we might recognise the freedom you have given us through the death and resurrection of your Son; we give thanks for the grace of the risen Christ in our lives. Remind us that endings can lead to new beginnings and from the old, new life can spring.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

And we draw all of our prayers together in the words of the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
On earth, as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
Now and forever. Amen.

As we draw our shared Act of Worship to a close, we commit ourselves to God's service and we offer one another a blessing.

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The God who brings life from death can meet our every need and bring us from sorrow and confusion to hope and joy. Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, may we be open to meeting Jesus and experiencing Easter in our hearts.

As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote,
'Let him Easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us'.

May the love of God the Father keep us in his care,
May the friendship of Jesus keep us company on our way
And may the touch of the Holy Spirit hold us in fellowship together.
Amen.

