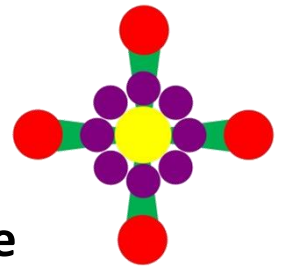


The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme



21 June 2020 - Second Sunday after Trinity

If you can, start at 10.00am.

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.

Judith Drake leads us in our opening and closing worship

Praise the Lord, all you nations:

extol him, all you peoples

For Great is his love towards us,

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever

(Psalm 117)

Loving heavenly Father, you are glory and love, power and possibility. We come before you in adoration and in worship. We come, as members of your Body, the Body of Christ, numbered as many, yet brought together, in faith and action, as one.

As we praise your greatness, we see in ourselves the reflection our own frailty and brokenness. Forgive any lack of worship in our lives, any grumpiness or selfishness, any frustration with the situations in which we find ourselves. We are sorry for the times when our despair of the current situation has caused us to lose hope. Come to us as one of us, our strength and help in times of trouble.

Thank you, God, that you are mercy and love, and that you have forgiven us. Help us to accept that, and also to forgive ourselves and other people.

Open our ears to hear your good news; draw us to yourself; accept and heal and empower us, so that we may draw others, too, to love and praise and live for you. Amen

First Reading: Romans 6:1-11

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 10:24-39

‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

‘So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

Robert Smith leads us in our reflection

Today is Father’s Day and I am looking forward to spending some quality time with Jonathan, Kate and Sarah this afternoon. I know if they were asked who the best Dad was, they would point to me!

So, today’s Gospel reading presents us with some big challenges, “For I have come to set a man against his Father”, I hope this is not what I can expect from my family today.

In the reading we see that the training of the disciples was a vital part of Jesus’s mission. The task of spreading the Good News about eternal life would rest with them in the future following his death. Jesus is preparing to send them out for the first time. They are told they will encounter hardship, but they should put their trust and faith into Gods care; and fear no one.

Nowhere is the challenge of Jesus more vividly displayed than in this passage. Here he sets out the Christian demand at its most uncompromising. He tells his

disciples exactly what they might expect if they accept his commission to be the messengers for God.

Our relationship with Jesus comes with the health warning; “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” The sword is not a weapon, but is representative of conflict. A sword that can split family bonds with those who oppose the change that faith brings. By the time of writing of this Gospel many Christians were estranged from their families because of their decision to follow Christ. This can be difficult for us particularly when other members of our family do not share our faith.

God created the family and gave it to us as a gift for our benefit. Our families can be our refuge. Separation from our families, as many have recently experienced in the Covid lockdown, can feel nearly as bad as being separated from God. The ‘love’ for family members that Jesus tells us we need to consider is the love that values them above Jesus.

The aim is not to divide families; but it is to change our priorities, while accepting that our identification with Jesus can bring a negative response from others. Our ever-changing political and social circumstances are blurring the notion that persecution of Christians only occurs somewhere else in the world. It could happen here. The promise that Jesus leaves us is that ‘those who lose their life for my sake will find it’.

Jesus does not advocate disloyalty to our families but instead calls us to place our loyalty to God above loyalty to family.

Jesus calls us to boldly and publicly proclaim his teachings—all of them. We are not to tiptoe around the truth in the fear of inviting persecution. But Jesus says, Preach the truth boldly—and in love! Do not fear the limited power of our opponents. They can kill the body, which will die soon anyway, but they have no power over the soul. Only God has power over eternity.

Nowadays we prefer to think of our Father’s love rather than our Father’s judgment, and if we are not careful, we can lose our sense of awe in Father God’s presence. It is appropriate, however, to fear the Lord, because God has authority over body and soul throughout eternity. God will have all eternity to right the wrongs that people inflict.

To be a follower of Jesus is a lifestyle choice. Jesus spells out the challenging realities of being his disciple with both good and not so good news. The good news is that we are hugely valued by God, and God knows every detail of our lives. So, never be afraid, Jesus says – God loves you. On the other hand, the not so good news, he says, is that it will not always be easy to be a disciple.

Jesus does not offer us life without problems. Rather he promises to help us through the difficulties we will experience. We are not immune from the problems of the world that everyone has to face, our health, our circumstances and death or loss. We also have the additional challenges created by living out our faith. But Jesus encourages us to recognise them and to face them with a resilience that comes from an assurance of our value in God's sight.

So, should it be different for us, as we are sent out to share the Good News of Jesus and his saving love? We have to try to be like Jesus, in his teaching and in his work, and we should expect to share the same challenges, sufferings and reward.

With God, our Father, on our side, what is the worst that can happen to us?

Richard leads us in our prayers

Think of something beautiful you have seen this week

Almighty God, we thank you and praise you for the good things that are around us, for your generosity in creation. Thank you for the things that we have noticed this week that have lifted our hearts, giving us a glimpse of your presence around us. We thank you that you care for us, even down to each hair on our heads. Open our eyes to see you more and more and to trust you each moment of every day.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Think of somewhere you have been or would love to visit.

Father we bring before you the needs of our world. We pray that our current experience, shared as a human race, will bring us closer together so that we

can help and support one another better. We pray that all people and all nations will be honoured and respected, supported and valued.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Think of those who lead us

Heavenly Father, guide our leaders and all who bear the burden of responsibility in leadership. May they recognise that in leadership they also serve and that they are charged with the good of all people. Give them wisdom and insight in difficult areas. Give rulers and leaders the courage to do the right things, even if it means changing their minds.

Be with those who report the news, that they understand and respect the role they play.

Bless our national leaders, our local leaders and our community leaders and help us to pray for them in the offices they hold.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Think in your mind about the streets of your village and community

Lord God, bless our communities.

We give you thanks for the way that we have valued our communities and neighbours over these past weeks. Help us to be more and more aware of those around us. Help us to follow your commandments: to love you and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Holy Spirit fill our hearts that your fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness and self-control may find fertile ground in us and in our communities.

Bless your churches as we prepare to give people the opportunity to come into our buildings once again. Move those who need to come to seek you so that they will have the courage to come and find you.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Think of your family

Lord God, be with our families and all those we love. Protect and watch over us, especially those who we are unable to see at present. Bring us safely together again and enable us to rejoice in your love.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Call to mind anyone you know who is ill or struggling - it may be you

Father, be with all those who are struggling in any way at this time. We bring before you the lonely, the ill, the dying, those who are anxious about going out, those anxious because of the effects of staying in, those worried about finances and employment, those in depression and pain, people in abusive relationships and uncaring families.

Lord hear our cries and the voices of all those who call upon you. May they know your presence so close that they feel your peace breaking into their lives. Bless all those who seek to help others; our home carers, social workers, GP's, Residential Care Home carers, doctors and nursing staff.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Think of someone who grieves - it may be you

Lord, comfort all who mourn. Be with those who are missing someone who they still love but cannot see. Hold in your loving arms those who have been bereaved recently or many weeks, months or even years ago, who still find the scar of death deeply painful.

Be with our local funeral directors and all who minister to those who walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Think of something you will be doing in the week ahead

And so Lord, be with us. Lord God, guide us and bless in all the things we do. Help us to see your way and to walk in your steps. Bless us and make us a blessing to all those we speak to, think of and interact with this week.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour 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.

Create in us a renewal of hope, a deepening of trust,
a strengthening of faith as we seek to follow you,
our Sovereign, Saviour and Sustainer,
to whom be glory now and for ever.

May the God who knows each one,
bless us and keep us,
surround us and hold us in the days to come,
with bright hopes and deep joy.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is
strengthen and sustain us, and all those whom
we love, now and forever. Amen