

## The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

**5 July 2020 - Fourth 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.*

*Richard leads us in our opening and closing worship*

O Lord, open our lips  
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;  
let us pray with one heart and mind.

*Pause for reflection as you offer the day to God.*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever. Amen.

Almighty God,  
Unite us with those we usually see on Sundays.  
Unite us with our Family and Friends.  
Unite us with those on our hearts this day.  
Unite us with your Church across the world.  
Unite us in the power of your Holy Spirit.  
And lift our hearts to rejoice in your presence. Amen.

*The Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity:*

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,  
Without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:  
Increase and multiply upon us your mercy;  
That with you as our ruler and guide  
We may so pass through things temporal  
That we lose not our hold on things eternal;  
Grant this, heavenly Father,  
For our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,  
Who is alive and reigns with you,  
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

***First Reading: Romans 7:15-25a***

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word

***Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:16-19,25-end***

Jesus said, 'But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;  
we wailed, and you did not mourn."

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.'

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

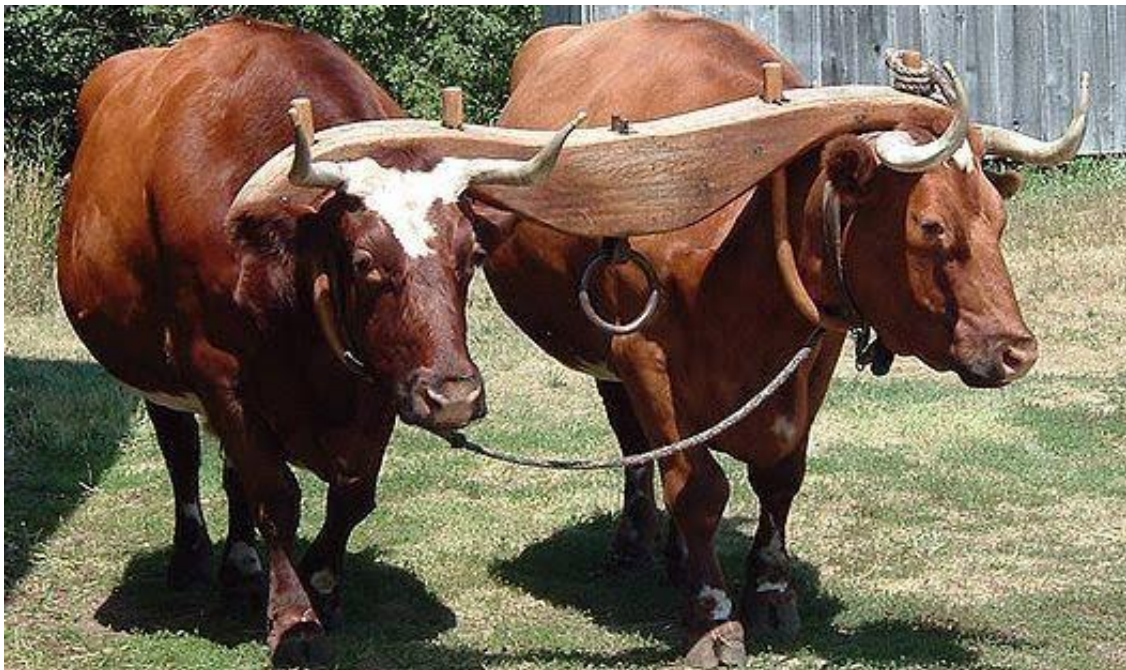
*Suzy leads us in our reflection*

You know that saying "You can please some of the people some of the time, but you will never please all of the people all of the time." That saying comes to mind when we read this Gospel from Matthew. Jesus must be getting quite frustrated with the complaints and objections of the people he is trying to help. John was an ascetic saintly/prophetic character and they said "He has a demon" or in modern wording "He's mad!" Jesus himself is a "normal" kind of guy, who enjoys a good meal and a few drinks with his friends; he isn't too picky about the company he keeps; charismatic and sociable, welcoming and friendly. They say "a glutton and a drunkard who eats with sinners".

Even Jesus himself could not please all the people all the time! How do we deal with criticism?

It is irrelevant what we are being criticised for, the important thing is what we do about it or with the emotions stirred up by it. Nobody likes to be told that they are not good enough or that they have not done well, but God can work through even the most unpleasant experience.

I love the image of the shared ox yoke that Jesus is using in Matt 11. His yoke is one which divides the load evenly between the two beasts of burden.



Jesus promises that we can bring our burdens to him and he will help us to carry them. In effect he 'yokes' himself to us and reduces the amount of weight we have to pull around. So, when we feel depressed and anxious, overloaded and undervalued this is the image to bring to mind as we ask Jesus to help us and to share our burden.

One of the most powerful films I ever watched was Franz Werfel's 'The song of Bernadette' from 1943 in black and white. The young Bernadette comes from a family struggling against terrible poverty and hides her private pain from the world so successfully that she is picked on and bullied by an older nun who feels it is unfair that Bernadette was blessed with a vision of the Blessed Virgin. "Only through suffering can we hope to gain the Kingdom of God."

Bernadette's life story is that of a lovely girl who never complains about her ailments and always seeks to help others. At the very end of the film the older nun discovers the hidden illness and pain that Bernadette has concealed and is overcome by remorse and cares for her lovingly at the end of her life.

I must have watched the film with my father when I was about 13 and I have never forgotten it. The lesson I remember from it is that we cannot know what is going on in the lives of other people. We are often too quick to judge and we gossip or complain. A smile or the outward façade can hide pain and suffering or difficulties that we know nothing about. The lesson from the song of Bernadette is two way. Bernadette is rewarded for her willing, gentle, helpful nature and deep faith. The detractors and critics learn consideration and to open their minds to the possibility that God is working through an unlikely channel in an unlikely location.

I asked about how we respond to criticism and the emotions we feel. We may not know what has driven the person to be critical and so we must not react in an unkind way. Neither when we feel like being critical can we know the background to whatever it is we criticize. There may be good reasons for the action or fault we think we perceive. God may be working in the unlikely.

We have all lived through an unlikely experience recently. As Christians we are called to ask "How can I best serve God in this situation?" We are all called to serve in different ways, each of us is created as an individual with gifts, talents, energy and abilities unique to us. It is what makes the church and the family of the church so very special. It is unlikely that our service will be called upon in ways which are critical of our fellow Christians though. In Romans, St Paul acknowledges that however much he wants to behave in good ways he is a sinner and his nature leads him astray, his human nature. We are all human and by extension imperfect. "How then can he be saved?" asks Saint Paul, if despite his desire to be good he is constantly falling into sin?

The answer is in the mystery that is Grace, we are not deserving of salvation but forgiveness is freely given. Jesus Christ has given himself completely so that we may receive salvation regardless of our sinful nature. Critical of others

or criticised ourselves, we are not empowered to judge others, we are subject to no judgement but God's through our saviour Jesus Christ.

Those contemporaries of Christ were critical of him and of his cousin John. Neither of them met with universal approval. Neither will we.

Jesus tells us that "no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." We thank God for the gift of his Son who chooses to share our burdens and gifts us with forgiveness for our sins.

*Wendy Driver leads us in our prayers*

Father,

For months we have put our lives in your hands, trusted you to 'do' the right thing and at last we are getting slowly through what was and still is a world's great trauma. Is the end really in sight? We'll see! What a lovely past week we have had, if this 'lockdown' has taught us anything, it is to trust in you. To THINK about breathing, good fresh air in our gardens, such joy, and much kindness from so many.

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

Some say, 'God is trying to tell us off.' He doesn't work like that but if we can learn from 2020, we are forced to think deeply about many things – our earth, our environment, our values, our neighbours, not only next door, but in every continent, our oceans, our animals and much more!

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

This virus has taught us that the poor, Ethnic minority groups and the elderly have suffered the most. This must be a lesson to us all and we must do better. Lord, we stand in awe of the dedication shown by the medical profession, not only the 'seniors' but the cleaners, cooks, porters and our dustbin men, food shop workers, in fact all those who have kept going throughout the worst days and don't let's forget the volunteers.

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

We have been watching Brian Cox trying to explain our universe and it was quite obvious that the earth is amazing, squeezed between other planets but utterly unique, everything just right for life as we know it.

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

Father, we thank you for our charities who now struggle, we pray that they will recover and continue their work. We think especially of Water Aid which is one of our Church charities, and our sponsored children, and long may it last.

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

We pray that our children can get back to school soon, parents have done a great job but the children miss their friends and being taught. Thank you, Father, that they seem not to have been too troubled by this virus. 'Let us never forget that these young ones are our future.'

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

Let us pray for the sick and the dying. You care for each one of them and they will always be in your care.

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

Lord, we have made mistakes, we will have let you down, but you have never promised an easy passage through this life and we pray that we have learned much. Now we thank you for your love and we will continue to pray for patience – and of course a vaccine.

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

Matthew 11: 17 says 'We piped for you and you would not dance, we wept for you and you would not mourn.'

Well Lord, perhaps we have recently learnt to do both – dance and mourn. Now we mourn the death of Gordon Bastow, a true and faithful servant to St Matthew's and a friend to so many. He was a proud husband, father, grandfather and recently great grandfather. We pray for his family, left with happy memories and know that the Lord will take care of him and unite him with David in a wonderful, peaceful place.

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

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.

Eternal God,  
Comfort for the afflicted and healer of the broken,  
Teach us the ways of gentleness and peace,  
That all the world may acknowledge  
The kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The Love of God and  
The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with us all, evermore. Amen.

