



**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 18 October 2020 Trinity 19**

Preparation

The Greeting

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

My heart tells of your word, 'Seek my face.'
Your face, Lord, will I seek.

We praise you, O God,
we acclaim you as the Lord;
all creation worships you,
the Father everlasting.
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Psalm 19

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of God ♦
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 One day pours out its song to another ♦
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
- 3 They have neither speech nor language ♦
and their voices are not heard,
- 4 Yet their sound has gone out into all lands ♦
and their words to the ends of the world.
- 5 In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun, ♦
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.

- 6 It goes forth from the end of the heavens
and runs to the very end again, ♦
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart; ♦
the commandment of the Lord is pure
and gives light to the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦
the judgements of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold,
more than much fine gold, ♦
sweeter also than honey,
dripping from the honeycomb.
- 11 By them also is your servant taught ♦
and in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can tell how often they offend? ♦
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
- 13 Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me; ♦
so shall I be undefiled,
and innocent of great offence.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, ♦
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.
- Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

*Christ, the sun of righteousness,
rise in our hearts this day,
enfold us in the brightness of your love
and bear us at the last to heaven's horizon;
for your love's sake. Amen*

O God, forasmuch as without you
We are not able to please you;
Mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit
May in all things direct and rule our hearts;
Through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
Who is alive and reigns with you,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and for ever. Amen

First Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Second Reading: **Matthew 22:15-22**

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

This is the Gospel of the Lord,
Praise to you, O Christ

Reflection by Chris Wilcock

I'm sure most of us will be familiar with the phrase "Catch-22", which is usually used when we find ourselves having to make a decision which could go either way. In other words a dilemma.

The origin of the saying comes from the novel by American novelist Joseph Heller. He began writing the book in 1953 and it was published in 1961. It has often been cited as being one of the most significant novels of the twentieth century. The novel examines the absurdity of war and military life through the experiences of a group of American service men in the Second World War, who attempt to maintain their sanity while fulfilling their service requirements so that they may return home.

In Matthew 22. 15 – 22 we find Jesus in a "Catch-22" situation. The Pharisees put a question to Jesus with the sole intention of catching him out. The question as to whether or not it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar was a serious one and it put Jesus in a Catch-22 position. If he said it was lawful, he would be regarded

as a traitor to the Jewish cause and the Jewish religion. If he said it was unlawful, he could be accused of stirring up rebellion against Rome.

But Jesus is not so easily caught out. His answer implied that there need not be a conflict between the demands of the State and those of God. The State has a role, but its power is limited and does not supplant God. From this principle Christians deduced that they could accommodate loyalty to the State.

Today we have many people who have dual citizenship – citizens of two countries. Every Christian has dual citizenship.

We are all citizens of the country in which we live or in which we were born. We owe to the State many benefits. To its forces of law and order and the fact that we are able to live in peace and security. To its public services we owe transport, water, light etc. In our welfare state we also owe our education, medical care and so on.

All of these benefits mean we are under obligation to the State and the legitimate State has rights, and as Christians we will respect those rights. We will be responsible citizens and, as far as we are able, must play our part in making our country a good place for all its citizens. Failure to be a good citizen is a failure in Christian duty. To cheat the State is to cheat our fellow citizens, and to cheat our fellow citizens is to cheat God.

But, as Christians, we are also citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. To it we owe certain other privileges, and to it we also have obligations. In many cases the two responsibilities do not clash. But at times they may. And when they do, Christians will spontaneously know what comes first.

What Jesus gave us was only a principle. He didn't give a detailed theory of political obligations or a blue-print for Church-State relations. Christians must work out the implications of it. In practice it is not always easy to say this is for Caesar and that for God. Life can't be split into two clearly defined parts – the secular part and the religious part.

However, history shows us that in most cases separation of Church and State is absolutely essential. But when Jesus said, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,” his assumption was that Caesar’s claim would be just. He wasn’t giving Caesar a blank cheque.

Christians can sometimes be faced with a real dilemma – how to be a Christian in a secular world where our laws may often be unchristian. However, if we are to be true Christians, we must strive to be good citizens of our country and at the same time good citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. We will fail neither in our duty to God nor to our fellow men and women.

In these testing times we might be tempted to ignore what our government is trying to achieve in the face of uncertainty. We can set an example by being good citizens and sticking to the rules and government guidance, at the same time fulfilling our obligations as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

As Christians our first and deepest loyalty is to God. To God alone we render worship, but in other things we gladly acknowledge and serve secular powers, praying that they will rule wisely and justly.

Prayers of Intercession led by Astrid Hansen

Lord we come to you today in worship, in praise and thanksgiving for so much in our lives, and because you have invited us to we come also with prayers of intercession, of asking, of trusting in your mercy.

We thank you for the beauty of trees, fields and hills around us and for those favourite places we can visit in our memories. We give thanks for the wonders of nature all over the Earth and pray that people everywhere are inspired to respect and protect our world.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Lord we come to you in awareness that wherever we are joining in worship today we are part of the great family of Christians throughout the world. We pray for the Church throughout the world and that in those countries where Christians face discrimination and oppression, they may feel the strength and

comfort of your loving arms. Wherever your people struggle Lord, through danger or disaster or simply by being surrounded by different values, bring us we pray, strength, comfort and hope.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

As fears and anxieties about Covid 19 continue, we pray for those who are ill, those waiting in isolation, those in our communities at greatest risk, those confused by restrictions, those least able to cope with their altered lives. We pray for all those providing medical and social care and we give thanks for the support provided locally, arranged by church and community and the many who are showing themselves to be such true friends and neighbours at a time of need.

Take a few moments to think of those you know in greatest need and those who are supporting you.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Let us pray for those who are working to understand and combat the virus, and for political leaders who must balance so many, often conflicting, needs arising from this pandemic as well as all the ongoing national and international political issues. Lord uphold men and women in positions of authority and give them wisdom, courage and compassion and the grace to work together for the common good.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Within our parish and benefice Lord we pray for guidance. Help us to work together generously and cheerfully, using the gifts you have given us, to further your work and bring your love to our communities. We pray for all our clergy and lay leaders who help us even in these difficult times to grow in knowledge and love of each other, through all the variety of opportunities for worship, reflection, discussion and virtual social events.

For us all, whatever lies ahead, grant O Lord that we may walk in your presence with your love in our hearts, your truth in our minds, your strength in our wills, that when we finally stand before you it may be with the assurance of your welcome and the joy of our homecoming.

Merciful Father:

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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 for ever. Amen.**

Closing prayer

Christ be with me, Christ within me
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger. **Amen**

Blessing

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

May God who made both heaven and earth bless us. **Amen.**