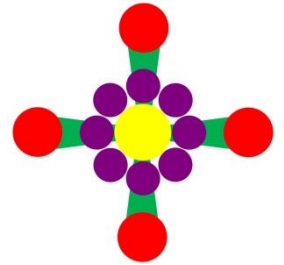


# The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme



**19 April 2020 - Second 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.*

Come, embrace the risen Christ.  
Come, embrace the Prince of peace.  
Come, embrace his pierced hands.  
Come, meet your Lord and your God.

We are the people of God.  
Risen Lord, as we come into your presence today,  
May we see you and hear you,  
May we feel you and touch you,  
May we know your presence with us now.

As the disciples in the locked room reached out and touched you, let us reach out and touch you today, living Lord Jesus.  
Let us feel your scarred hands and feet.  
Let us put our hands in your side.  
Let us be still and know that you are our Lord and our God

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

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
as we rejoice in the loving power of the resurrection,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you and for each other. Amen.

## **First Reading: Acts 2: 14a, 22-32**

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.

‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;  
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,

or let your Holy One experience corruption.

You have made known to me the ways of life;

you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

“He was not abandoned to Hades,

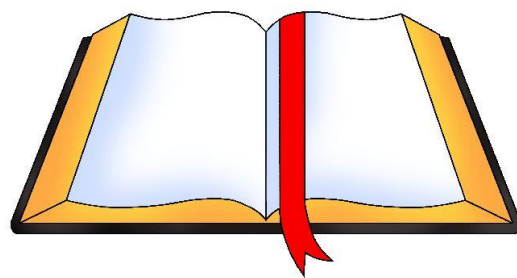
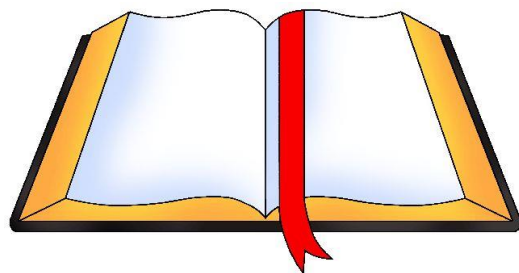
nor did his flesh experience corruption.”

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word

## **Second Reading: John 20:19-end**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’



But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

*Ian leads us this morning in our Reflection*

Last Sunday we celebrated the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. We heard how the two Marys had gone to the tomb and found that it was empty. Then an angel told them to go and tell the disciples Jesus had risen.

Now it doesn't actually tell us here in John's gospel the reaction of the disciples to this revelation from the two Marys, but in Luke's accounts of the story, we are told that the disciples didn't believe them.

But whatever their reaction, the next twelve hours or so, remain a mystery. We can only surmise what the disciples were experiencing during that first Easter day.

This morning's reading however, picks up the story a bit later on

*Verse 19; On the evening of the first day of the week the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.*

So much had happened over the last three days. God's Messiah, their leader, had been arrested, tortured, and then crucified.

Then early on that Sunday morning, Mary came and told them that she had seen Jesus, that he had risen from the dead. But how could they believe such a wild statement.

They were in that room, terrified, confused, and frightened, expecting the Sanhedrin guards to come and arrest them. That they too would be crucified.

It was in this atmosphere of confusion and fear that Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Something, which He has continued to do down through the centuries.

I'm sure that many of us can bear witness to the fact that Jesus has stood among us and ministered to us at various times in our lives, when we needed his peace and healing, and although the situation didn't disappear, we gained comfort from knowing we would get through, as we face things together with Jesus.

Jesus then showed them the nail scars in His hands, and the spear wound in His side, which proved beyond doubt that this was the risen Christ.

The scars of the cross have given Jesus the credibility to come along side us, and minister to us, in our time of need, in our time of pain. The suffering he endured qualifies him to identify with our suffering, and reach out with his hand of comfort.

We are living in frightening times. Times where our lives have been put on hold because of the coronavirus.

Times where many people are risking their lives daily in the battle against this terrible threat.

The message of Easter, the message of hope, the message of resurrection, has never been more relevant than it is right now, as we pray that Jesus will stand among us in this situation.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 21

*"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

The only way the gospel of Jesus was going to reach the four corners of the world, was for the church of Jesus to take it. Every one of us, has a part to play in bringing the message of salvation to this world.

The story goes, that after the ascension when Jesus returned to heaven, an angel asked Him what His plans were to continue His work on earth, and bring people into the kingdom of God.

And Jesus' replied, "I have left the job to my disciples."

But said the angel, "What if that doesn't work? What contingency plans have you made?"

"I don't have any," said Jesus, "My church is the only plan I have."

Jesus is dependent on you and me, His church, to further His kingdom here on earth.

I have heard fantastic stories of how people have rallied round at this time to help other people.

Many people have played a huge role in saving lives. Others however, have played their part by small acts of kindness, getting alongside people, on the telephone, the internet, or even writing someone a letter. We must also never forget the power of prayer.

We are told in verse 24 that Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus came, so the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." Thomas however, doubted and didn't believe them.

I am sure over the years many of us have had doubts about aspects of our faith, but as Jesus comes and stands among us, those doubts have diminished and often our faith has been strengthened. I take encouragement from Thomas' reaction once he realized it was Jesus there in the room. He said "My Lord and my God." All doubt had gone in the presence of Jesus.

We can all help in some way in this time of crisis. We can all play our part in bringing the presence of Jesus into people's lives. Spreading the gospel of Jesus to the four corners of the Benefice and beyond.

*Anne leads us in our prayers:*

As we come together, each of us in our own safe space, can we be together, bow our heads and pray.

We bring before you Lord our own churches and the gifts we bring as we worship together in our Benefice in all its diversity, need and richness. Give us all a fresh understanding of what it means to live in your love.

We bring to you Lord, our nation, our world and our universe; in all the desperation and confusion of what we are experiencing. The doubts, the insecurity, the waiting.

We lift our hearts to you our risen Lord.

We bring to you Lord, our homes and our families, with all the joys and sorrows these relationships bring. We thank you for our homes, places where we eat, relax and where some are trying to work and carry on trying to put some normality into their lives.

We lift our hearts to you our risen Lord.

We pray for:

For the health workers tending the seriously ill  
for the scientists working on a vaccination  
for the researchers analysing data and identifying trends  
for the media outlets working to communicate reality  
for the supermarket workers, hygiene and sanitation providers  
for the good news stories of recoveries and effective planning  
for the singing from balconies by locked-down communities  
for the recognition that isolation doesn't need to mean loneliness  
for the notes through letterboxes offering help and support  
for the internet and telephones and technology that connects  
for the awakened appreciation of what is truly important

We lift our hearts to you our risen Lord.

*Remember before the Lord those you have contacted or who have contacted you in the past week or anyone in your hearts and minds today.*

We bring to you Lord, those whom life has damaged, and all who find it difficult to trust in you. All those who need refreshment and hope, comfort, healing and calm. All those who face death with great fear and those who die unprepared to meet you.

Have mercy on us all, forgive us all that is past and gather into your everlasting kingdom of peace and joy.

We lift our hearts to you our risen Lord.

A final prayer for times of isolation from the Christian Aid website

'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 8:38-39)

God of heaven and earth,  
in these times of isolation,  
apart from loved ones  
distant from friends  
away from neighbours  
thank you that there is nothing  
in all of creation,  
not even coronavirus,  
that is able to separate us from your love.

And may your love that never fails  
continue to be shared  
through the kindness of strangers  
looking out for each other,  
for neighbours near and far  
all recognising our shared vulnerability,  
each of us grateful for every breath,  
and willing everyone to know the gift  
of a full and healthy life.  
Keep us all in your care.

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.

*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.*

Let us take the touch of the risen Christ, and the peace that he gives, out to all those we  
know.

Let us breathe his life-giving Spirit on all those we are in contact with over the coming week.

Let me feel the touch of peace, the touch of life, the touch of the risen Lord,  
Beside me, behind me and before me all the days of my life.

*Let us bless one another with the words of the Grace, aware that, although we are scattered, we are one in Christ.*

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

Let us bless the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

