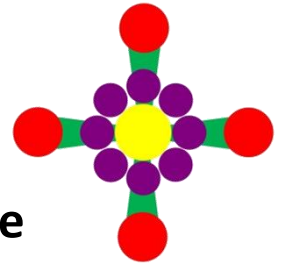


The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme



7 June 2020 - Trinity Sunday

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.

Sue & Tony Mitchell lead us in our opening and closing worship

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was and is and is to come.

Rev 4.8

Loving Father God, we are limited in our understanding of you but we know you care for us and all creation. Thank you for loving us and remaining with us always in our fears and sorrows and joys. Thank you for the life of Jesus who shows us the way to life and happiness and trust. Thank you for your Holy Spirit to lead us.

Be with us all as we come to worship you today. Warm our hearts and unite us that we might open our lives to you to accept all your love. Help us to respond by entrusting ourselves to you with all that you have made us and give us.

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity: keep us steadfast in this faith, that we may evermore be defended from all adversities; 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 forever. Amen

First Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-end

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Second Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

Archdeacon Andy Jolley leads us in our reflection

It's great to be able to join with you in this way today, as we celebrate Trinity Sunday and worship God together.

Sometimes when I'm talking with people, and they realise I'm a clergy person, they tell me that they don't believe in God. It's good then to ask them, what kind of God it is that they don't believe in. Different responses come back: an old man sat on a cloud; a Creator who has let his creation go wrong and doesn't care; a god that let's innocent people suffer and sits back doing nothing. If these are the answers I hear, then I say, "I don't believe in that kind of god either."

So what kind of God are you worshipping this morning? This Sunday especially, Trinity Sunday, we are reminded of God as Trinity – one God in three persons. So, if you're asked what kind of God you believe in, how might you explain the Trinity to a friend, a neighbour, family member or a colleague?

The Trinity can be a bit mind-blowing, and many people have struggled over the centuries to try and explain it in a way that satisfies human intellects. Different analogies have been put forward: water being able to exist as ice, water and steam; one hand with five digits; the Army, Navy and Air Force working together with a shared purpose as the Armed Forces, each with different activities and functions; my being one person with different roles as a son, a husband and a father. The problem is that which each of these analogies only goes so far. If you push them any further, they inevitably lead you into the bog of Trinitarian heresies and understandings of God that are false.

So, maybe it's worth coming at this from a different angle. The first followers of Jesus were good Jewish monotheists. They believed in one God, and could readily recite Deuteronomy 6:5, "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." They understood God as Creator. They knew God as the covenant partner for Israel, and supreme being in the universe. But how did those first Christians hold on to that belief in the one God, but start to talk of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

What changed them, I believe, was what they experienced of God. As they shared life with Jesus, saw his death, resurrection and ascension, and heard Jesus explain the Jewish scriptures in a new way, they came to realise that the man they knew as Jesus was God in human form. The God that they had always known, they now knew in a different form. That's why, last week's reading for Pentecost, Peter quoted from Joel 2:32, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.", and was clear that the one Lord whose name was to be called upon was in fact Jesus.

In that same Pentecost day talk, Peter also explained the new experience of God that he and the other believers had just received – the Holy Spirit, who was now God with them. What had previously been experienced by a limited number of people, in particular places and for a limited period of time, was now on offer to all people everywhere, for the rest of their lives.

How was Peter so sure? Well, what he and the others were experiencing was exactly what Jesus had repeatedly promised them. One such time was in our reading from Matthew 28, where Jesus told his followers that he would be with them – all of them, always, to the end of the age, as they went to all the nations on the earth. As this was just before he ascended into heaven, how could Jesus carry on being with them? And how could he with so many

different people in so many different places at the same time? The answer Jesus had given them was that he was sending another helper, the Holy Spirit, to be the way that he, Jesus, would be with them. The same God, in a different form, as a different person - but now with all of his people, all of the time, wherever they are.

Jesus had been explaining all this to his followers. He kept referring to God as Father, and talked to God in a very intimate way. He kept acting and teaching like he was God in human form – forgiving sins, using “I AM” language, having authority over creation, even death. And he kept mentioning to the Holy Spirit, the new helper, who would come.

Jesus’ followers had been slow to understand. But with Jesus’ resurrection and the day of Pentecost, their experience started to make sense of what they had heard. Their understanding of the one God had been expanded to recognise that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and can be experienced in each of these three persons.

In our reading from Matthew 28, Jesus told his followers to baptise new disciples into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. They were to initiate new believers into a life with God that included encountering God as Father, as Son and as Holy Spirit. This new way of living should involve knowing God as a Father who provides for his children and gives them identity. It should involve knowing God as one who in Jesus experienced and understands all of human life and showed his love for us in suffering and dying for us. It must also include knowing God as the Holy Spirit with us now, alongside us in everyday life.

Our other reading from 2 Corinthians 13 includes the famous three-part sentence at the end of this letter, often known as “The Grace.” “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” I suspect this had already become a well-known part of what Christians said together when they met, and reflected their experience of God. As a saying used by Paul to conclude this letter, it must have also been his experience. It tells us of how we can experience God in three distinct ways.

Firstly, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”: Paul regularly spoke of “grace”. Earlier in the letter, in chapter 8, verse 9, he defined grace as the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich”. Grace is God’s generous

act of self-giving, and Jesus is therefore the embodiment of God's loving kindness, mercy, deliverance and generosity. It is this that Paul came to know for himself, and prayed that the Corinthians (and we) may know.

Secondly, "the Love of God": This could be our love for God, or God's love for us, but I prefer the latter. Paul wanted the Corinthians (and us) to know God's love for them, something into which we enter through the grace and cross of Jesus. God's love is therefore linked with Jesus' love for us. This is what motivated the first disciples to go and make more disciples, as instructed by Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20), and motivated Paul through countless difficulties on his missionary journeys.

Finally, "the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit": This could be understood as the fellowship of believers nurtured and promoted by the Holy Spirit, or as fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The former is about peace in the church, and fits with verses 11-12 (living in harmony, peace, and Christian love). But Paul had already said these things. The latter is more about sharing the life of the Holy Spirit, in partnership with God in what he is doing. But why choose if it can be both? Paul had certainly experienced both. His prayer is therefore for a fellowship of disciples created by our common life in the Holy Spirit and partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Paul's prayer is therefore that we may all experience what he has found to be true of his relationship with God. Like the first disciples, he had been a follower of the one God and a zealous monotheist. He had, however, come to experience God as Trinity in a way which made new sense of the scriptures he knew so well. He had met the risen Jesus, and recognised God's loving kindness and favour made real in Jesus. He had experienced God's love in many ways, and especially in the shared life of God's people and the continued presence with him of the Holy Spirit.

We therefore have three different windows, or doorways, into God. When we go through them, we find that God is three persons in loving relationship. Yes, God the Holy Trinity is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But God is also community: three distinct, but united persons. It is this community into which we are included when we are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God wants to draw us into his life and plans. He has sent Jesus (the Son) to be the means of us coming into this community, and the Holy Spirit so we know we are truly invited and welcome.

So, do you worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit? As I have gone on as a follower of Jesus, I've found it helpful to spend time focusing on God as Father, on God as Son, and God as Holy Spirit. In doing so, my experience of God has filled out my understanding of God, while still shaped by the scriptures in which God has revealed himself. At different times, different persons of the Trinity have felt closer and more approachable. Each one though invites me to keep drawing closer to the Triune God and the communal life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Let's keep accepting the invitation.

Robert Priestley leads us in our prayers

Let us pray.

On this Trinity Sunday we have come before you Lord to offer our praise and adoration. You are God the creator, giving us richly all things to enjoy. You are Christ the Saviour of the world, made flesh to set us free. You are Spirit of truth and love, willing to dwell in us. You are holy and blessed. One God, eternal Trinity, be near to us the people formed in your image, and close to the world your love brings to life.

And Lord we thank you with all our hearts for the help and love that you have shown through these recent months of pandemic across the whole world. We can understand that some people, just like the disciples in the reading today, have had doubts and their faith has been tested greatly, especially when they have seen friends and family fall ill with and sometimes overcome by this terrible virus.

But Lord those words... **'I am with you always, to the end of the age'**, help us greatly.

Thank you Lord.

And so, we say thank you Lord for being with all who are helping to deal with this crisis: --

For the health workers tending the seriously ill.

For the scientists working on a vaccination and treatments.

For researchers analysing data and identifying trends.

For the media keeping us informed about developments.
For supermarket workers and other vital retail outlets.
For the good news stories of recovery to good health.
For our ministerial team introducing new ways of worshipping together.
For the appreciation shown when 'clapping for carers'.
For 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.
And for the awakened appreciation of what is truly important.

Thank you for being there Lord.

But Lord, in these times when restrictions are being eased, people are returning to work and the number of new cases and deaths and the infection rate are all falling it is easy to become complacent and let down our guard. However, there is still a lot to be done before life can get back to anything like normal.

So, we offer our prayers to you Lord: --

For those who are unwell and concerned for loved ones.
For those suffering from anxiety.
For those who are immune suppressed or compromised.
For those vulnerable because of underlying conditions.
For those in the 'most at risk to coronavirus' categories.
For those with much reduced incomes.
For those with no choice but to go out to work.
For those who are afraid to be at home.
For those who are lonelier than they have ever been.
And for those who are bereaved and grieving.

God be their healer, comfort and protection, be their strength, shield and provision and be their security, safety and close companion.

Lord we ask you to lead us into the coming week. Help us to believe that you are close by us, with us always. Keep us from making mistakes and help us never to disappoint you. When we face hard decisions or difficult work and when we have good times enjoying the beautiful world around us, we know you share these times with us. You are.... **'always with us to the end of the age'**.

We ask all of these things in the name of your son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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.

You grant us faith when hearts are troubled,
Perseverance when the going is tough,
Peace when our spirits are low,
Strength enough.
You grant us hope when all seems hopeless,
Your forgiveness when tempted to sin,
Hands reaching out to embrace and welcome us in.
For peace, faith, hope and embrace we give you thanks.

Blessing

We go in the presence of God our loving Father.
We go in the presence of Jesus Christ our friend and companion.
We go in the presence of the Holy Spirit empowering us to be the people our
threefold God would have us be,
Today, this week and always.

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

