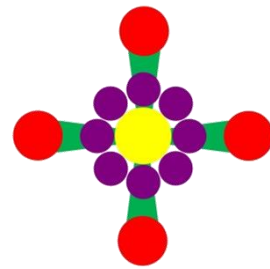


The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme



19 July 2020 - Sixth Sunday after Trinity

*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.*

Ian Slater leads us in our opening and closing worship

As we come into the presence of God, let us give ourselves totally to Him.

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to him I freely give,
I will ever love and trust him
In his presence daily live.
I surrender all
I surrender all
All to thee my blessed Saviour
I surrender all

As we remember the sacrifice of Jesus,
Let us come to the foot of his cross in repentance.

O Lord the giver of life,
We come before you with repentant hearts and contrite minds asking you to forgive us and have mercy on us as we confess our sins.

For our selfish concerns that have affected other people.
How sometimes we turn our backs on those who need us,
find fault in them,
and are slow to do good.

Lord have mercy

Holy God, we often place our needs and desires above everything else
and are reluctant to seek your will.
For our assumptions and prejudices,
which have hurt others and ourselves.
For the fear of change and risk-taking.

Christ have mercy

For our emphasis on differences being negative,
and our reluctance to accept others.
For forgetting about grace, when we are called to be gracious,
And for our determination always to be right.

Lord have mercy.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent.
Have mercy upon us.
Pardon and deliver us from all our sins.
Confirm and strengthen us in all goodness
And keep us in life eternal
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

From the rising of the sun to its setting,
Your name be praise, O light of the world.
Truly, Jesus Christ is our sun of righteousness.
He is a sun which never sets,
He is a light which no one can extinguish.
In faith and love we celebrate the awesome brightness of your majesty
And offer to you our adoration and thanksgiving.
We join in our praise with all your people in heaven and on earth,
Saying;

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory,
Hosanna in the highest

O God, who has prepared for them that love you such good things as pass our
understanding: Pour into our hearts such love toward you, that we, loving you above all
things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire:
Though Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

First Reading: Romans 8:12-25

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the
flesh— for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death
the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of
God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a
spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with
our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint
heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

Liz Moy leads us in our reflection

Summer is certainly a very busy time for gardeners. Gardens are flourishing in the warmer (and often wetter) weather. Beautiful flowers are blooming. Fruit is ripening, ready for picking, and vegetables are filling out in readiness for gathering. For keen gardeners there are always plenty of horticultural tasks to occupy them. Perfect timing for another of Jesus' parables about seeds and growing.

In the parable, we are told that the householder sowed good seeds in the ground, but during the night, an enemy came to sow some bad seeds amongst the good seeds. When they began to grow, the man's slaves immediately recognised the bad seeds growing amongst the good and wanted to uproot them straightaway, but the householder persuaded them to let the good and bad grow together. When they were ready to harvest, he intended to make sure that the bad were separated from the good and would be destroyed.

In a similar way to last week, Jesus gave an explanation about the story to help the disciples understand it. He explained that the sower is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seeds are the children of the kingdom whereas the bad seeds are the children of the evil one. The enemy who sows bad seed is the devil. The reapers are the angels and the harvest is the end of time.

It's all summed up very concisely, but I wonder if that becomes a danger for us as we can dismiss it without thinking about the underlying message. Surely Jesus told the stories in the parables to help us to think about the meaning and about the message he was wanting to share with his followers. If we just glimpse at the story and explanation, how can we hope to draw out any of the meaning which Jesus intended for us? Let us take time to ponder on the story and what it says to us.

One aspect of the parable which struck me is that there is so much waiting. The man sows the seed – and then has to wait for it to grow before the harvest. All gardening requires patience. However keen we are to see shoots of new growth from seeds we have planted, we know that growth is not instant. It takes time. There was a waiting time for the sower. The slaves wanted to pull out the weeds immediately, but the master urged them to wait and allow the weeds to grow alongside the wheat. I wonder if their waiting held a mixture of irritation and frustration as well. We can imagine too that the seeds are waiting – waiting to achieve their full potential, to become the strong healthy plants which they were intended to be.

As Jesus was speaking to his followers, he was sowing seeds in their minds and in their hearts. He was teaching them about the kingdom of God – but this parable shows that he recognised the need for patience as he waited for those seeds to take root and begin to

grow. We are told that the good seeds are the children of the kingdom, but as such the children are also living in a time of waiting; waiting for all to be part of God's kingdom.

When Jesus was speaking to his disciples, their homeland was under oppressive Roman rule. As Jesus taught about God's kingdom, many of his followers were hoping for the end of Roman rule and this seemed to be the answer to their prayers. They were impatient for the new kingdom and anxious to get on with it straightaway without understanding about God's kingdom. But Jesus showed the importance of waiting – giving them a time for reflection, a time for a deepening understanding that God's kingdom is not as earthly kingdoms.

In many ways, we can be like those early disciples. In a time where responses are frequently instant, we can find great difficulty in waiting, in being patient. (echoed in a prayer I once read, Please Lord, give me patience – right now!) As present day disciples, surely we also need time to reflect and to grow into a greater understanding and love of God. We are a “work in progress” as we grow into the people God wants us to become. Jesus shows such love and patience for all of his followers as they grow. I wonder, do we treat each other with such loving patience – and is that how we treat ourselves?

As children of God's kingdom, we yearn for all to know God's love and to acknowledge him as their Lord. We pray regularly, “your kingdom come” but this too is a “work in progress”. We can move forward in the light of Jesus' promises that God's kingdom will come. As the letter to the Romans reminds us, “we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Again, we are in the waiting time – but we can also be part of the answer to the prayer. As we wait, patiently, how are we sharing God's love and the hope and promise it brings with those around us and with those in our communities?

Patience does not mean being passive. After all, a gardener who tends his plants does not abandon them until they are fully grown but he does ensure that they are nourished and supported so that they do not snap under pressure from the elements. How do we care for and support others who are growing in their faith?

In the parable, the grower waited patiently whilst good and bad seeds grew together. We grow in the world which surround us, not in a sanctified space or a cosy community. We are part of the world as much as we are part of God's kingdom. Our mission is to share the hope of God's love in the world. But also, the image of good and bad seed growing together seems to be a reminder of our loving Lord's patience with us. He does not destroy us if we do one bad thing, but if we repent and turn back to him, we will be able to grow in his love. What a wonderful message of hope to share with others. Do we have the patience and compassion to encourage others to make a fresh start?

One small seed sown from Jesus' parable which can grow into a deeper dependence and love of God as we reflect prayerfully. I pray that we will have the patience to spend time

with our Lord in the waiting time, that each of us will grow in his love and that we will nurture the growth of God's kingdom in the world around us.

Mavis Nevill leads us in our prayers

Creator God, we wonder at the enormity and the grandeur of your creation.
We praise you for your sustaining power that holds the planets in their orbit
and yet provides us with the pure air we need to survive.
You brought into being the myriad universes and the tiniest organisms.
How can we hope to understand your nature, how dare we draw near in prayer?

Yet we come, because you make yourself known to us,
not only in the wonder of the created world,
but also, in our Lord Jesus, who revealed in flesh, your great love for humankind.

So, in this morning hour we dare to draw near to you,
because you have already drawn near to us.

When your creation came into being, you saw that it was good,
yet we have polluted our world
and now we are reaping the devastating consequences.

We continue to cry out for a world under attack from the Covid 19 virus,
an unseen enemy unleashed on the world by the casual approach of humankind towards
the fruit of your creation.

We cry out against the injustice that means the poorest communities and nations are
suffering the most.

This day we join our voices with people of faith across the globe, and cry out for all those
caught up in the suffering of this time:

for those struggling to breathe;
for those needing medical attention that isn't there for them;
for those unable to be beside their loved ones in their suffering,
or at their hour of death;
for all those selflessly caring for the sick and dying and those in Care Homes;
for all those supporting the vast numbers of individuals caught up
in lockdown across the world; and
for all Aid Organizations striving to bring relief to devastated communities.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, we feel compelled to pray
because of the darkness and threats of conflict that appears to be engulfing our world.

Yet we hold on, with trembling faith to the fact that in our Lord Jesus,
you gave the gift of light to the world,
light that no intensity of darkness can ever completely extinguish.

May the leaders of the nations, draw back the veil of darkness and let your light in.
We pray that they might be challenged to allow that light
to bring in a spirit of mercy and justice in order that hatred and greed may be defeated.

May we stand with those who declare “black lives matter too”.
May we be those who witness to the truth that, before you, all lives are equal
and that our Lord Jesus gave his life for the salvation of all people.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we pray for our parish and for Richard and our Wardens as they lead
us into the next stage of reopening our churches. We pray that the arrangements we are
putting in place may keep us all free from infection and allow us joyfully to return to
worship you in our Parish churches.

And we pray for those who feel unable to return to church in August. May they still feel
valued members of the Benefice and, through the written Service Sheets, continue to feel
part of the worshipping church family.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we lift to you all on our hearts,
all those in sickness, trouble, or any kind of adversity.
We pause to bring before you those for whom we have special concerns.....

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who mourn the loss of loved ones at this time.
We pray for all those this day who walk the valley of the shadow of death.
We also pray for any known to us, who in the growing struggles of this life,
long to greet death as a friend and the gate to life eternal.
Give them gentle companions to support them,
and a sense of your strengthening presence and love.
May no one in our community be uncared for, or die alone, this day.

**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 for ever. Amen.

God be a bright flame before me, be a guiding star above me
Be a smooth path below me, be a kindly shepherd behind me
Today, tonight and forever. Amen

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown
Jesus thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love thou art:
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above;
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

Breathe, O breath thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast:
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find thy promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning,
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, and it's beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be:
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee.
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder love and praise.

God has made us one in Christ. He has set his seal upon us.
as a pledge of what is to come, He has given the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts.
May God give to us and all those whom we love, His comfort and His peace,
His light and His joy in this world and the next.

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