



The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

Sunday 6 September 2020 Trinity 13

Preparation

Our Lord Jesus is here
His Holy Spirit is with us

The Greeting

silence is kept

We thank you Lord God for today
for those we can be with and for those we are joining in spirit.
Help us to pray,
guide us in your Holy Spirit,
teach us with your word
and inspire us to lift our hearts
to worship you in spirit and in truth. Amen.

Prayers of Penitence

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden,
to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

God our Father,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought and word and deed.
We are sorry and ask you to forgive us.
Have mercy on us,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

May Almighty God forgive us our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you; we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

The Collect

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Romans 13: 8 - end

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Second Reading: Matthew 18:15-20

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection from Richard

That first reading from Paul to the Romans is filled with Love. The word love appears five times in the first three verses alone: Love one another; the one who loves fulfils the law; Love your neighbour as yourself; Love does no wrong to a neighbour; Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Paul leaves us in no doubt as to what is really important about the way we are to live out our faith. We need to make sure that we love one another.

Love is about action, in that it is about the way we live, the things we do to others and the things we say and think. Our love for others is something that they should experience and recognise because of the manner in which it is given.

But this is where the trouble may begin ... Paul tells us to be careful, to wake out of sleep and come into the daylight.

There are lots of things we can do to convince ourselves that we are fulfilling this law of love when actually we are still falling a long way short, and we know we fall short too – but we chose to stay in the dark rather than face up to what we need to do.

Paul tells us to live honourably, not in quarrelling or jealousy. It is so easy to love less than Jesus commanded us to.

Sometimes we do it by choosing the people we will love, rather than loving all our neighbours. Remember the reading last week of the Good Samaritan. This was the model Jesus gave us. The priest and the Levite decided that the man who had been beaten up was too difficult a challenge. They didn't fancy showing *that* kind of love. But the Samaritan knew his duty of love and lived it out, thinking not of himself but loving freely.

Loving those we like is only liking really, not loving in a law-fulfilling way. Loving those who we find it difficult to like enables us to glimpse what love is really all about. Love is lots of things, as it says in 1 Corinthians 13, but above all it is costly and it is not easy!

I am always mindful too of those glorious words in the book of Common Prayer confession, when we say sorry to God not only for the wrong things we have done, but also for the good things we have failed to do. It is so easy to justify any lack of love for those we find it hard to like, by seeing only the depth of love we show to those we do like or who are like us.

However you read the story at the beginning of the Bible, in the Garden of Eden, it is a beautiful story where we again recognise the reality in our own lives. God gave a command and it was broken. When challenged about it, rather than face up to their own wrong, Adam turned the focus on Eve and Eve turned the focus on the Serpent. Each had fallen short, but it was easier to turn away from that and switch the focus, rather than face up to the wrong and put it right.

Our reading today from Romans is such a beautiful reading, but it holds a hard reality. God commands us to love one another. It is a simple command, but not an easy one. Jesus draws attention to the difficulty of it in the Gospel reading too. We find it all too easy to fall out, to choose who we love, to choose not to love, to focus on the good we do rather than deal with what we need to change, to stay in the dark rather than come into the light.



This command to love is the hardest thing, even though it sounds so very simple. But we should not be surprised at the challenge. It was love which took Jesus to the cross and to death. It is significant that our symbol of love in church is not the heart of sentimental love, but the symbol of the cross, an image of love shown through pain and death.



THIS IS LOVE.

And Jesus tells us just how good it can be when we get it right. When we truly love one another, when we get our love as it should be, then he is there in the midst. I am sure you have all known a moment when you have been surprised from experiencing costly love. It may have been only fleeting, a whisp of something truly amazing. It may have unforgettable, or it may have seemed insignificant, but it was there. And in that moment Christ breaks through, for it is a moment when we touch the promise that comes with keeping this command.

I was really moved when we visited Norwich Cathedral last year and discovered that in a corner formed by the walls of the cathedral, bathed in sunshine and surrounded by fragrant rosemary is the monument to Edith Cavell. On the memorial are her words of reflection at her imminent execution:

“Standing as I do in view of God and eternity, I realise that patriotism is not enough, I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.”

Our call from God to “Love our neighbour” is challenging us to search for the same universal and unconditional character in the way we love one another.

It is a hard calling, but it is our vocation in faith. Let us make a difference by seeking to live up to our calling. Let us make a difference in ourselves and see the difference it makes in the blessing it brings to us and others as Christ breaks into our lives.

Prayers of intercession by Anne Jay

Let us pray together
Lord, awaken us to your glory.
Open our eyes to your presence.
Open our ears to your call.
Open our hearts and minds to your love,
that we may proclaim that you are among us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

We pray for all who are seeking to set standards, to raise morale,
for all who are seeking holiness and dedication,
for all who are living heroic lives,
for all striving to live simply.
May we be listening and forgiving churches and people.

Lord in your mercy
hear us and help us.

We pray for all who have lost sight of spiritual values,
all who are caught up in sheer materialism,
all who can measure only by possessions or wealth.
We pray for all who suffer from hunger, poverty or bad housing.
We pray for all who are caught up with frustration and give all of us the understanding and the reasoning to help us to fight this terrible pandemic.

Lord, in your mercy
hear us and help us.

We pray that our homes may reflect your acceptance and love.
Forgive our quarrelling and our jealousy.
Teach us tolerance and compassion.
We give thanks for all who have tolerated us, and given us their love.
We pray that our communities continue being the caring and friendly places
they already are.

Lord, in your mercy
hear us and help us.

We pray for all those suffering from addictions of any kind,
and the families affected by these addictions,
for all who are subjected to violence or abuse in their lives.
Give them inner strength.
May we remember and keep in our thoughts and prayers those who are
suffering from depression and those who are on the verge of giving up hope.
Let them feel your love.

Lord, in your mercy
hear us and help us.

Lord, we give thanks for all our clergy and workers serving your church in the
world.
Can we also keep in mind all our politicians and those who serve and work for
our country.
We thank you for providing us with a sure hope in order that we can face the
worst that life can throw at us, and that we not be overwhelmed.

Lord God, we pray for you to be with all who are ill, at home or in hospital, and
all who mourn.
Comfort and care for them in the shelter of your loving arms.
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 it is 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.**

The Peace

**God has called us to live in peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you,
and also with you.**

Blessing

**May the God of Peace bless you,
May he watch over you,
May He bring you Peace,
Amen**

Dismissal

**Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen!**

