



The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

Sunday 20 September 2020 Trinity 15

Preparation

We have come from scattered lives to meet with God.
Let us recognise his presence with us.

Silence is kept

As God's people we have gathered;

Let us worship him together

God in Christ has revealed his glory

Come let us worship.

From the rising of the sun to its setting

the Lord's name is greatly to be praised

Give him praise, you servants of the Lord.

O praise the name of the Lord

Loving God, we have come to worship you.

Help us to pray to you in faith,

to praise you with gratitude,

and to listen to your word with eagerness;

through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Greeting

Prayers of Penitence

Jesus says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand."

So let us turn away from sin and turn to the Lord,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,

we have sinned against you, through our own fault,

in thought, and word, and deed,

and in what we have left undone.

We are heartily sorry, and repent of all our sins.

For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,

forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may serve you

in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

May almighty God have mercy on us,
Forgive us our sins,
And bring us to eternal life,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:
grant that your people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel
that, always abiding in you,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
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. **Philippians 1: 21- end**

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God

Gospel reading Matthew 20: 1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

The vineyard had long been an image for Israel, a passage in Isaiah 5 likens God to the vineyard owner who feels sorrow because despite all his care the vineyard produces only wild grapes. Those listening to Jesus would have been expecting the traditional style of prophetic story where God is faithful to Israel and Israel fails to keep God happy. Instead they are in for a surprise. Firstly, the owner of the vineyard in this story doesn't just appoint an overseer and hire a fixed number of workers at the start of the day. He actually cares enough to go to the marketplace repeatedly over the course of the day and hire all those who were waiting, that overemploying was the height of generosity. Then, to everyone's shock he gives all of them all a full day's pay. Such generosity on the part of an employer would be a great shock to the listeners. Those who have worked all day received no more pay than those who worked just a few hours. How unfair! The complaints and murmurs arise – that's just not justice! It is easy to envisage the outrage that the story would have caused at the time. This story is aimed at people who are used to a 'hand to mouth' existence. The point of the story is that the Kingdom of God is different. God does not operate according to human standards or understandings of justice and equity. God is abundantly generous. We do not earn our reward, we are given it out of God's amazing grace.

As human beings we instinctively feel that we need to earn our reward. Deep inside us we still believe that when we come before the Judge we will review our life and service and be praised and rewarded for being 'good'. Jesus blows that idea out of the water. God is not Santa with a checklist of naughty and nice boys and girls. Our salvation is a gift, and not granted based upon merit or long-service, it is a free gift given to those who believe. We should feel better once we grasp this because it means that we don't have to work to pass some hidden test that we don't fully understand. Do you believe in God? Yes. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and saviour? Yes. That's it. The whole story. Why then don't we all feel delighted when we hear this story? Why do we make it so complicated? We complicate because we are people and because we try to make our Great God fit into our little boxes. The Spirit lives to set us free – walk in the light. We are free to walk in the light, to bathe in the light, to revel in the

love God has for each and every one of us. We are free to share the joy of our hope of heaven with everyone we meet, free to rest in Christ or slave for the church. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that we are empowered and enabled to want to help to bring others to the recognition of their freedom in Christ. It is natural to want to share our Joy and bring others along with us. Paul's message is even simpler, "only live your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ." I never used to understand the sentence "I know that I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again." I think I get it now – once we truly grasp the free gift of salvation through Christ there is a 'joy in faith' and of course we 'boast' because when we have found a bargain or won a great prize it is natural to tell others about it. Even those who think we are nuts and just don't get it. We keep telling them and showing them by our example how fortunate we are and how joyful our freedom in Christ makes us, until they catch the contagion of faith too. May your joy shine forth this week.

'Don't worry, Be Happy!'

Amen.

Affirmation of faith

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercessions with Margaret Harrison

God, the source of light and hope, in your grace we thank you for your love which guides us through storm and calm. Grant, in peace in our lives and joy in our hearts, that we may have faith and confidence in you, help us to encourage others to live lives of faith and hope.

God of love, hear our prayer.

Lord of new beginnings you open fresh opportunities for us to grow in your truth and understanding; be with all new students as they move to Universities and Colleges for the first time. May they flourish in friendships and studies, have their minds expanded by ideas and knowledge, and develop into the people of stature you would have them be.

God of love, hear our prayer.

Lord you call everyone to follow you and give us gifts to use in your service; be with all who have lost their jobs and seek paid work. Hold those who are anxious about making ends meet and feel frustrated at loss of position and place. Open opportunities for talents to be channelled constructively, that dignity may be restored, hope renewed, and none feel that they are without worth or value, for, in your sight, all are a unique act of your creation and purpose, and in your love we flourish now and always.

God of love, hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, the help of all in need, we pray for those who are facing a hard task or decision, for those who are going through difficult times because of illness, worry, or grief. We think of those who have given up everything to cross the seas in search of a better life, for those affected by the fire in the refugee camp in Greece, and the wild fires in America, for the medical staff dealing with the ongoing pandemic and all essential workers. We pray for ourselves, for those who we know, and for those whose needs are known only by you.

God of love, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father we pray for those who exercise authority in Government. Grant that they may be wise in judgement, seeking first and foremost the good of the community, and so direct and strengthen them in all their work and planning that they may further your will among us for the glory of your name.

God of love, hear our prayer.

Give us grace, O Christ, for this day, that we may be persons of praise and thanksgiving, rejoicing and delight, compassion and understanding. May we be a blessing to all we meet, and be blessed in them, for your name's sake.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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

Almighty God,
We thank you for the gift of your holy word.
May it be a lantern to our feet,
a light to our paths
and a strength to our lives.
Take us and use us to love and serve
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you,
The Lord look kindly on you
And give you peace:
and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with us all, today and always.

Amen.

Sending Out

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
in the name of Christ. Amen.