



The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

Sunday 27 September 2020 Trinity 16

Opening Worship

Come let us worship our faithful God together!

We have come together this day,
to praise God's name.

We have come

to reflect on our walk with God,
to open our hearts to his Word,
to bring before him our own needs,
and the needs of those we love,
and to bring before him the needs of our deeply troubled world.

Jesus said: "wherever two or three people are gathered together, in my name, I am with them."

He also said: "come to me all who carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest."

The Lord is here.

His Spirit is with us.

God is good

All the time.

All the time

God is good.

Opening Prayer

**Lord, lift up our hearts to worship you
in spirit and in truth,
direct our thoughts this morning.**

**Help us to reach out to one another with love,
and to receive that love in spite of the restrictions upon us.
Teach us how to pray according to your will. Amen.**

Confession

Knowing God is good and wants nothing to spoil our relationship with him, let us come honestly before God and reflect on how we have lived our lives this past week.

Let us come to say sorry for the times our lives have fallen short, times we have let ourselves down, times we have let down those we love, and times we have let God down.

Silence is kept

So often, when life seems hard, and the Covid road rough, we have forgotten that God walks the road with us.

Lord have mercy on us.

Lord have mercy on us.

So often we have forgotten to persist in prayer for our loved ones and our world.

Christ have mercy on us.

Christ have mercy on us.

So often we have given in to despair in the face of so much suffering and corruption,

we have forgotten that this is God's world, and that God will have the final victory.

Lord have mercy on us.

Lord have mercy on us.

We hear God's promise of forgiveness:

The God of love and power,

forgive you your sins,

heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,

and empower you to live a new life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: **Philippians 2:1-13**

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name
that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

This is the Word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading: **Matthew 21:23-32**

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' So they

answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

This is the Word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**

Reflection by Liz

Many years ago, my brother gave me a small plate which was "a round tuit", because, as it said on the plate, there were so many things that I was going to do when I got around to it! As many who know me will testify, one of my specialist subjects is procrastination. But, when I got round to reading the two readings for Sunday's service, one part in particular made me think carefully about the afore-mentioned tendency.

Jesus had asked the chief priests and elders a question relating to his authority and to John's baptism, but rather than giving a straight answer and making a definite choice of whether the authority was from God or man, the chief priests and elders sat on the fence and said they did not know. So, Jesus told them a story to challenge them. It's a story where they could consider the words and actions of two brothers and by so doing, be challenged themselves to consider their response to God's call on their lives.

It is interesting that Jesus begins by asking, what do you think? He doesn't give the answers but he certainly expects those who hear the story to think about it. How does the story speak to those early listeners? And how does it challenge those of us who have read it today? The story itself has very few details, but there are enough to give food for thought.

The father wants his sons to go to work in the vineyard on that day. Work in a vineyard can be very demanding and also very tiring and physically draining at particular times of the year. But there are other occasions where the work is

much steadier and gentler. The work is dependent on the seasons and on the weather. On certain occasions such as when the grapes are ready for picking, there is a very short time frame for completing the work before the grapes begin to rot on the vines. The story does not disclose where the vines are in the growth process or whether they are ready for harvesting, but it is evident that the father wants his sons to work on that day and not at some time in the future. Does that indicate some urgency?

The two sons respond in different ways. The first one refuses to go to the vineyard initially, but then when he reflects on the request, he changes his mind and goes. I wonder what makes him change his mind. Was he prompted to feel that he ought to go? Did he recognise that it would be a way of pleasing his father as well as being a benefit to all of the community who were dependent on the success of the vineyard? I wonder how that son would have felt when he returned home from being in the vineyard that day.

The second brother responded in a completely different way. He agreed enthusiastically to go to work in the vineyard, but then he didn't go. I wonder if he just couldn't be bothered or whether something else turned up that seemed more inviting or did he just get distracted and find that the time disappeared. And I wonder how he felt later. Did he care or did he feel that he had let his father and the rest of the community down or did he feel disappointed in himself because he had missed out?

In both cases, we can only imagine - or think about it, as Jesus asked, but we need to explore the story more deeply. Jesus told the story to help people reflect on their response to God's call. It is a story about a father and two sons, which shows there is a deep relationship between them.

So let's consider the times when our heavenly Father calls us, his children. We may not be called to go and work in a vineyard, but our loving heavenly Father calls us to serve him. How do we respond?

Are we slow to respond to the call, even saying "no" initially before we do move forwards to love and serve him? For many of us there may be times when we feel reticent about stepping forward to serve God, when we doubt we have the strength that is needed or when we feel that we would not be able to find the right words. But we can find reassurance in knowing that we serve a God who loves us and who is with us and will not abandon us. We do not serve in our own strength but strengthened by our loving heavenly Father.

Or can we be like the second son, enthusiastically saying the right things but never quite getting around to acting in love and service? It may not even be a

deliberate decision as we can all be distracted by so many features in our busy lives. I'm probably not the only person who has gone to check an email and before I've known it, I'm still looking at the computer an hour later. But even worse, have been the intentions to go and visit someone – and then find we are not allowed to visit other people's homes for weeks on end. Jesus calls us to follow him and we know that by doing so, we are blessed as we are used as a blessing for others. Maybe we need to pray that we will focus on serving him rather than being distracted.

As Jesus told the chief priests the story, there seems to be a real sense of challenge. The challenge is to get off the fence, to recognise him as Lord and focus on living their lives in God's service. As we read the story, may we also open our hearts and minds to what Jesus wants us to learn and be willing to serve him without hesitation. May we discern his way forward, as we love and serve our heavenly Father, strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist? **We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God The Son, who took our nature, died and rose again? **We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God The Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world? **We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers led by Beverly Hurst

Blessed are you, Lord our God,

For you welcome us whenever we turn to you:

You are always ready to hear us and to help us.

We rejoice in your presence and ask that we may show your love

And your saving power in the world.

Blessed are you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

We give thanks for your Church throughout the world. May the Church be an instrument of peace and reconciliation between peoples and nations.

Bless the churches within our area: May we learn to work together in unity and in witness to your saving power. We pray especially that our Church will support, help and guide people in these difficult times, when we find we cannot be with our loved ones and those important to us. Please give us strength and hopefulness in our everyday lives to do the right thing, follow guidance even when it means we cannot always do what we want to do. Let us remember others at this time and that these restrictions are in place to help save lives from this deadly virus.

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

We pray for the kingdoms of our world, that they may become the kingdoms of God. We pray that all Leaders and Rulers of people will govern with humility and in these very difficult times across the world, they will seek to truly serve and strive to meet the needs of the people. That they themselves will lead by example and have understanding as to the difficulties people face when they do not have their usual support networks in place due to Covid19 restrictions.

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

We give thanks for all those who give of their time and energy freely for the service of others. For all those involved in supporting and caring for others in our communities, for all those who take time out of their days to make contact with others, this is especially important for those who live alone and have reduced mobility, so find it hard or impossible to get out. We pray that we all may be generous towards everyone and as we have richly received, may we richly give. Teach us to be accepting and hospitable to all in our everyday lives.

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

Father we bring to your love the suffering and sorrow of our world.

We remember in your presence all who are ill at home or in hospital and we remember at this time all those known to us who are recovering from illness or surgery, may they all soon be home and with us in our communities.

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

Father, you created us for yourself and for your love. As we give our love to you, we pray for all our loved ones who are departed from us. May they rejoice in the light of your presence and in the fullness of eternal life.

Merciful Father: **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Collect

Lord of creation, whose glory is around us and within us:
Open our eyes to your wonders, that we may serve you with reverence
And know your peace at our lives' end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Peace

Jesus, the bringer of peace said "let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Let us share with one another a sign of peace

*We share the peace with one another with something like a Mexican Wave saying the words "**peace be with you!**"*

Act of Commitment

**Teach us, good Lord,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest
to labour and not to look for any reward
save that of knowing that we do your will,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The 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, and all those we love and care for,
today and always. **Amen.**

The Dismissal

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