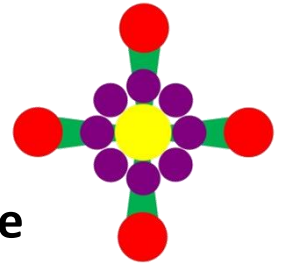


The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme



15 November 2020 Second Sunday before Advent

*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.*

Richard leads us in our opening and closing worship

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Let us lift our voices and praise him together

Almighty God,
Unto whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Heavenly Lord,
You long for the world's salvation:
Stir us from apathy,
Restrain us from excess
And revive in us new hope
That all creation will one day be healed
In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

First Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

Second Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

Janice leads us in our reflection

This weekend marks an important anniversary for me. It is exactly twenty years ago since I stepped into what, at that time, was known as Denholme Edge Church. The rest as they say is history.

Like many people of my age, I attended Sunday School on a regular basis but, as a teenager, drifted away and only attended church in later years on high days and holidays, often dragging my feet behind my husband who always wanted to attend the high days of the Christian year.

Those early years of attending church did stay with me though and when I realised what the Gospel reading was for today it brought back memories of sitting in the Methodist Church at Eldwick listening to a sermon on this parable of the talents. It's quite possible that my immature mind misinterpreted the words of whoever was leading worship at that time but it stayed with me at a subconscious level for many years. I was confused. Why was it right for people to "gamble" with the money they had been given? Why was the person who ensured that his Master's money was there in its entirety for when he returned vilified?

It took an awfully long time for the penny to drop and that happened one Sunday morning in Denholme. I can't remember who led worship at the time or how soon it was after my initial attendance, but I do recall a subconscious load being lifted off my shoulders, a real Eureka moment. It wasn't about gambling after all; it was about the gifts and talents we have been blessed with and ensuring they are used for the greater good.

Maybe it's time to consider what gifts and talents we may be withholding. Sometimes it's easy to gift a donation to a favourite charity but how about gifting some actual time instead? Within this year of Covid it may not be practical but, with a vaccine on the horizon, maybe we could use the time to consider where or how we could support others.

When I returned to church in 2000 I was in real need of spiritual nourishment and came to realise that as food is required for our physical bodies so we need to ensure that our spiritual lives are kept fed and watered as well. Are there any parables or passages in the Bible you struggle with or don't want to admit not understanding? I'm sure there are lots of them for lots of us. How about either investing in or borrowing a commentary on the Bible or a commentary on a specific book of the Bible? There is an abundance available and it can be rewarding to delve into the minds of different authors.

Give it some thought. You may even be rewarded with a Eureka moment!

Robert Priestley leads us in our prayers

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we give you thanks and praise for everything you have done and continue to do for us. We thank you for the life of your son Jesus Christ, whom you sent to live amongst us, to teach us, to love us and to set us a wonderful example of life. Help us to learn more about you and work out how we can serve you better.

Heavenly Father, this morning we bring you our concerns in prayer. We pray for your world-wide church, asking especially for your blessing as countless of your people continue to find new ways to worship in the current emergency and long for the day when churches will be fully open again.

Oh Lord, we pray for your world. We bring before you our concerns for the many places where there are natural disasters, droughts, floods and terrible storms. We especially think of the earthquake in Turkey where many people have lost their loved ones. Be with them all Lord and let them know your love.

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

We pray for our world leaders, for those who hold authority and affect the lives of so many others. There are countless places around the world but we especially think about situations in America, Hong Kong and all over Europe where governments, Prime Ministers, Heads of State and CEO's all have heavy burdens of making huge decisions that affect the future of so many people. Help them to make good and wise decisions so that they might take their countries and organisations forward at this very difficult time.

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

We remember also, Lord, the places in which we live, work and see our families and friends. Even now, in this period when we are restricted in our face-to-face social interaction, we ask your blessing on our efforts to care for those in need. We thank you Lord, for all of the public bodies who are leading the provision of help and care in so many ways in all of our localities. Strengthen their resolve Lord, so that they might continue in their amazing efforts through these difficult times.

Lord in you mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we remember in our prayers all those who have been directly affected by the current Covid pandemic. We offer prayers for all those who have tragically passed away, leaving people to mourn the deaths of family members, relatives and friends. Also we think about all who are in poor physical and mental health but we give thanks for the people who look after and care for them.
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

And finally Lord we pray for ourselves. Whatever lies ahead, we know that we have the confidence that you walk with us, and your support gives us loving hearts to carry on and do your work to the very best of our abilities.

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 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.

Sending Out

Jesus Christ is the light of the world
A light no darkness can quench

Stay with us Lord, for it the days are dark
But your light brings hope and peace

The darkness is not dark to you
The night is as bright as the day

Let you light scatter the darkness
And fill your church with your glory. Amen

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.**