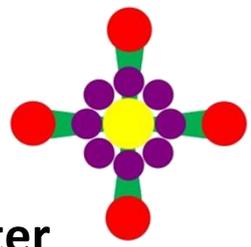


The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 11 April 2021: The Second Sunday of Easter



Chris Wilcock leads our worship today

Preparation

Call to Worship

Alleluia! Christ is risen

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope!

He has raised Jesus from the dead!

God has claimed us as his own,

He has made us light to the world.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Prayers of Penitence

Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed for us.

Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

1 Cor 5: 7,8

All God our Father,
long-suffering, full of grace and truth,
you create us from nothing and give us life.
You give your faithful people
new life in the water of baptism.
You do not turn your face from us,
nor cast us aside.
We confess that we have sinned
against you and our neighbour.
We have wounded your love and marred
your image in us.
Restore us for the sake of your Son,
and bring us to heavenly joy,
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,
who in Jesus Christ has given us
a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
forgive us our sins,
open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will
and give us the joy of his kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Praise and Thanksgiving

Our Lord Jesus Christ, risen from death,
we praise you for changed lives and new hopes at Easter.
You come to Mary in the garden,
and turn her tears into joy.
For your love and mercy we give you thanks:
we praise your holy name.

You come to the disciples in the upper room,
and turn their fear into courage.
For your love and mercy we give you thanks:
we praise your holy name.

You come to the disciples by the lakeside,
and turn their failure into faith.
For your love and mercy we give you thanks:
we praise your holy name.

You come to the disciples on the Emmaus road,
and turn their despair into hope.
For your love and mercy we give you thanks:
we praise your holy name.

You come to your people now,
and turn our weakness into triumph.
For your love and mercy we give you thanks:
we praise your holy name.

Be still for a moment

Risen Christ,
For whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
Open the doors of our hearts,
That we may seek the good of others
And walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
To the praise of God the Father. **Amen.**

THE WORD OF GOD

First Reading

Acts 4. 32 – 35

The believers share their possessions

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there was no needy person among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His word

Second Reading

John 20. 19 – end

Jesus appears to his disciples

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

Jesus appears to Thomas

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'

But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'. Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

The purpose of John's Gospel

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His Holy Word

Reflection by Liz Maitland

I find it hard to choose my favourite of the resurrection appearances; they are all so full of emotion, detail and, also wonderfully understated! The appearance of Jesus to the disciples 'gathered behind locked doors' is no exception and has to be up there on my list. It gives us a picture of the reality of the situation for the grieving disciples, locked in, huddled together and in fear for their lives after what has happened to Jesus. They had followed him, proudly and publicly but they have no desire to follow him to the death torture and death he suffered in their sight. They dared not go out or be seen, so are hauled up together, going over and over the recent events, trying to make sense of things. Maybe they were discussing how the future might look, and, most likely, disagreeing and getting on each other's nerves a bit too.

Does this remind you of anything? Perhaps the reason this reading has resonated with me is that familiar sense of being closed in, afraid of the outside world and endlessly discussing what has happened and might happen next. For so many people, this past year has meant spending time 'behind locked doors' while we talk about a world and our lives which have suddenly become very different. Like the disciples, we have grieved, for people we are missing, places we should have been visiting, things we should have been doing and maybe those we loved who have died. If you are one of the many people who have been shielding, you will probably know how it feels to be afraid to leave the safety of your own home.

However, for the disciples, everything changed once again as Jesus came amongst them. I love the fact that there is no dramatic breaking of locks, smashing of doors or even flashes of light. Jesus was just suddenly there, as if he had never been away. In that moment, hopes were repaired and fears allayed. Jesus is here! It's going to be OK. He speaks of peace and forgiveness and the atmosphere in the room changes completely. I imagine there is laughter, tears and shock and some serious changes of gear as the truth of everything Jesus had said begins to dawn on them.

For us too, in our fears and our waiting, in our ponderings and endless conversations about our restricted lives, if we look for him, we will find that Jesus is amongst us. In fact, he has been there all along. We are so blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus gives to the disciples in this reading from John's Gospel. Because of this, we always have Jesus with us, in our fears, our isolation, our worries and especially as we begin to make tentative steps towards normality (if we can remember what that looked like!)

For the disciples, Jesus' appearance did not change the terrible events of the recent past or take away the dangers of the future, yet it changed everything. It changed them. It gave meaning to what had seemed meaningless and gave them purpose and courage for what was still to face. There is a hymn that goes, 'Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone.' Perhaps that was something of how they felt.

We too have change and challenges ahead - for this is life. But this Easter story, 'our story' is one we tell with joy. Our lives are lived with the risen Jesus alongside us, and this changes everything. It changes us. We are able to have

faith in the future, whatever it may bring, knowing that Christ will be with us, giving us the strength we need. So, let us celebrate Easter and the Saviour whose presence is both miraculous and ordinary, sitting with us, as if stepping into a locked room was the most normal thing in the world. I guess, after resurrection, a locked door was quite straight forward!

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ died for our sins
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he was buried;
he was raised to life on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures;
afterwards he appeared to his followers,
and to all the apostles:
this we have received,
and this we believe. Amen.**

(1 Cor 15: 3 – 7)

PRAYERS

Prayers of Intercession led by Wendy Driver

Dear Lord, Father and Friend: - We journeyed through Holy Week with Jesus and are proud to feel we are his friends. We shared the 'Last Supper' with the rest of his followers, even with his so-called friend who was to sell him to enemies for cash! We heard Peter deny knowing him three times and we walked to the cross with him.

THE END CAME, or so we may have thought, but our Father in Heaven had a 'cunning plan' and on a wonderful morning, Jesus Christ was restored to us, to love and worship to this very day and beyond.

We have all had a damaging year, an unhappy year, a frightening year, but through it all, the Lord worked with us. Through him, our communities did just that, such kindness, such care, such love shown to others. We obeyed, we stayed in, worked from home (where possible), washed our hands, and kept a distance. We kept in touch with each other by technology, phone, and correspondence, so that in fact we never felt neglected.

Lord, when we needed resistance, we found it through your love. We were sorely tested, but we will gradually win the battle!

Father, shall we ever go back to the normal we knew? We have learned to 'worship' other things, the sky, the outdoors, birds, animals, home. Oh, we need money, but it isn't as important as a good family and friends.

Praying has become more urgent, if not for ourselves, for so many ill, in poverty, homeless, hungry, worried, and especially for the countries who are just not in a position to manage.

Lord, we rejoice that a vaccine has been developed so quietly and distributed with speed. We pray that it will bring victory and that we will be happy and willing to share it throughout the world.

When this is over, Father, may we face and win another threat! The environment needs our love, our gardens didn't recognise 'COVID' and are about to burst into bloom. Birds didn't know about 'COVID' and sang and built nests, frogs laid their frogspawn as always. Lord, never let us take any nature for granted, it needs care and protection, and it is up to us to give it.

Finally: -

Lord, we are delighted that Richard, Heather and Penny have settled in at The Rectory, may they get to love it ever more in normal times. We pray that Suzy and her family enjoy their new Parishes. Thank you for all our clergy and everyone in our churches, for all they have done to keep us in touch with Zoom, printed services, quizzes, and even an Inn Churches auction.

How we shall rejoice to worship together again and, Praise the Lord, may it come soon. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

CONCLUSION

The Blessing

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to *you* who believe the gates of everlasting life.
Amen.

God the Son,
who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory,
give *you* joy as *you* share the Easter faith.
Amen.

God the Holy Spirit,
whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples,
empower *you* and fill *you* with Christ's peace.
Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among *you* and remain with *you* always.
Amen.

The Dismissal

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, Alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia.

