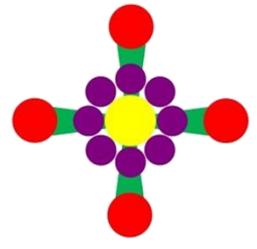


The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 20 June 2021



Third Sunday after Trinity

Helen Ludkin leads us in our worship

Preparation

Loving and sometimes silent God,
we come into your presence,
thankful to quieten our hearts and to wait for you to speak.
We bring our joys, our challenges, and our questions.
We open our hearts honestly to you,
and we wait in that space beyond questions
to feel you hold us in compassion. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer

Jesus on the boat in the storm said:
'Peace! Be still!'...and there was a great calm.
We come to God, just as we are.
Sometimes at ease.
Sometimes confused by life's storms.
Let us trust God with our big questions and listen for God's still small word to
restore us to a sense of peace.

Call to Worship

God of our questions and our struggles,
when we too quickly mistake silence for indifference:
forgive and help us.

When the voice of our own needs silences the voices of others:
forgive and help us.

When we abandon others in their storm and watch safely from the shore:
forgive and help us.

When we lose faith because things get tough:
forgive and help us.

In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

Absolution

Almighty God,
Who forgives all who truly repent:
Have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins;
Strengthen us in all goodness and keep us in eternal life,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Almighty God,
You have broken the tyranny of sin
And have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
Whereby we call you Father:
Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
That we and all creation may be brought
To the glorious liberty of the children of God;
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.**

THE WORD OF GOD

First Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

‘At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.’

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and

see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his word

Gospel reading: Mark 4: 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Holy Word

Reflection by Robert Priestley

The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills, except for a valley dip at one end, which can act like a funnel for the wind. This means that the water can go from glassy calm to choppy white horses very quickly, as the wind whips up the water. As seasoned fishermen on this large freshwater lake, this will not have been the first time that the disciples have experienced this phenomenon, but this time it must have been particularly severe.

Their complaint to Jesus is about the apparent mismatch between their peril and his continuing nap. They don’t wake him and yell, ‘Help!’ or ‘Do something! We’re sinking’. They say ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ It is a cry from the heart, an exasperated rebuke from friends who feel abandoned. They question whether he cares. Perhaps all they were looking for is another pair of hands to help in bailing out water from the boat.

However, Jesus simply uses his voice. He addresses the stormy lake with 'Quiet! Be still!' And we read that the wind died down and it was completely calm. Imagine the expressions on the faces of the disciples. But Jesus goes on and says 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' These are 'Big Questions' that I'm sure all of us have problems answering.

The way the world is today, difficult things will happen to us and to those we love, and we can't avoid them. We know there is disease, accident, natural disaster, redundancy, failure and more. Our first instinct might be to say: 'Take it away, God!' But we will probably accept that this is not always possible, because that doesn't seem to be how the world works. So our next urgent question to God might be: 'Don't you care that this is unbelievably hard?'

I certainly asked that question of God several times just over 4 years ago when, out of the blue, my eldest grand-daughter, only just turned 5 years of age, was rushed to Leeds General Infirmary diagnosed with a rare type of leukaemia. I asked all of the usual questions of God. 'Why a little child like my Lily?' 'Why couldn't it be me instead?' 'What are you doing about it?' It was a testing time, feeling abandoned, a bit like those disciples in the boat. Where was God in all this?

But he was there. I heard him when the consultant said 'Yes, it is a rare type of cancer but we have a very successful treatment which will make her better.' He was there when I witnessed a doctor singing Lily's favourite song from Frozen to her, to distract her from one of her many painful injections. He was there with a whole team of doctors and nurses who worked all night to keep her alive following a severe reaction to a new drug. He was there 24/7 looking after Lily through the actions of others.

It took about 30 months but Lily is amazingly well now and only returns to hospital for check-ups. Thank you God.

I know that sort of story is not unique to my family but it shows that at some time in our spiritual journey all of us will have difficult, big questions to ask of God. There will be shouts, protests, denial. We may know that God can't rescue us. But if our faith is true, we will want assurance that God cares for us in our troubles, that God has heard us.

And knowing that we have been heard can make all the difference. It can give us strength for the challenges. It can give us new ways of opening ourselves up to love and joy. It can help us know the really important things in life, and how distracted we have been. It can bring us to a new and deeper faith.

So, I have opened up and told you about one of my difficult times. Now it's your turn.

Recall a difficult period in your life. What questions did you ask of God? Did you keep on asking, even though at first there only seemed to be silence? Did you eventually find any sort of answer?

Affirmation of Faith

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

**We 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.**

**We 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 Intercession led by Pamela Sides

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you are ever with us
And your presence brings us close to your power and your peace.
You are ready to hear our cry and to help us in our troubles.
Blessed are you, God, for ever, Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

We give thanks for the many blessings we receive living in this country; that we live in peace, that we are free to worship, that we are cared for by the NHS.
Lord be with us in our stormy seas.
But we remember areas where there is strife, persecution, extreme poverty and inadequate health care.
Lord be with all in trouble in the world.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

We pray for those charged with the responsibility of leadership. That they may make fair judgements and decisions which help all, especially the least advantaged and those whose voice is often not heard.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

We pray for everyone in our community, remembering especially those who have been disappointed and disadvantaged by the postponement in the lifting of the lockdown restrictions.

We pray for local businesses, the schools, the health care services and all who provide support to those in need.

We give thanks for the on going distribution of the vaccine, but remember those who are troubled by the implications of compulsory vaccinations for health care workers.

We pray for wisdom over the decision about when children should be offered vaccination.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Lord God, be with those who are ill and in need. Be with those in pain, those who are worrying about a diagnosis and all those dealing with serious and life changing diagnoses. Be with those suffering from dementia, those who are in great anxiety and stress. Be with all those who care for loved ones,

In a moment of quiet, help us to remember those known who are known only to each of us and who are in particular need of your love and care.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Living God, you promise that you will comfort all who mourn. Be with all those who have hearts heavy with grief; those who are recently bereaved and those who mourn the death of loved ones from weeks, months or years ago.

Lord in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

And finally let us pray for all who lead us in our benefice;;for those leading services in our church buildings, and those leading worship on line. And we remember Alison and Anna as they prepare to join us. We look forward with excitement to the gifts that they will bring.

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.**

CONCLUSION

Closing Prayer

Thank you Lord Jesus,
you do not let us sink when our faith is going under.
You do not let our boats overturn when the seas of our life get rough.
You do not let our questions swamp us or our failures destroy us.
Rather, you forgive us, you save us,
you encourage, challenge and calm us –
and for this we are thankful.

Amen.

Blessing

May the Father strengthen you with his Spirit,
So that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
Be upon us now and remain with us always.

Amen.

Sending Out

Go in peace.
May the whisper of God's wisdom
go with you today
into all your relationships.

Amen.



The Sea of Galilee