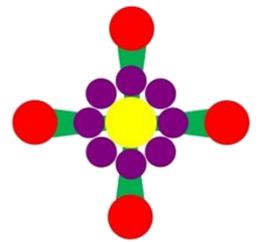


**` The Benefice of  
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme  
Sunday 24 October  
Bible Sunday**



Richard has put together our worship for today

**Preparation**

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus,

**Giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ**

Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

**Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.**

Open our lips, Lord:

**And we shall praise your name.**

Call to Worship

Lord, direct our thoughts, and teach us to pray.

Lift up our hearts to worship you in Spirit and in truth,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer

The Word of God is living and active.

It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

All is open and laid bare before the eyes of him

To whom we give account.

We confess our sins in penitence and faith.

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,**

**we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,**

**in what we have thought, in what we have said and done,**

**through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.**

**We have wounded your love and marred your image in us.**

**We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins.**

**For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,**

**forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness**

**to walk as children of light. Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

The Father of all mercies cleanse you from your sins,

and restore you in his image to the praise and glory of his name,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Absolution

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:  
Help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them  
That, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,  
We may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,  
Which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
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 Timothy 3:14-4:5**

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

### **Thanks be to God for the gift of his word**

**Gospel reading: John 5:36-end**

Jesus said, 'The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have

life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?'

## **Thanks be to God for the gift of his Holy Word**

### **Reflection from Gordon Nevill**

Today we are keeping Bible Sunday. We may wonder why we have a special Sunday celebrating a book that is so central and sacred to our faith. We may ask, "Don't we read (and celebrate) the Bible every Sunday?" Well yes – we do. But we may wonder whether it is one of those things that we just 'do' in church, week after week, without thinking or explaining why we do what we do.

Now, for some of us the Bible will be a very familiar text. We grew up with its stories; we may recall colouring in pictures of Bible stories at Sunday School. We may regularly read passages of the Bible. But the problem with familiarity is that it becomes too easy to take something for granted and forget its real value or worth.

Others may see the Bible as a completely alien text. Just what does this book, written thousands of years ago, have to say to people of the modern world? How is it still relevant? It can seem to be just a random collection of ancient law, history, poetry, hymn books, letters and accounts of pretty far-out visions. But, despite its age and its variety of different kinds of literature, over two billion Christians across the world find that it is completely relevant to us today, living in the modern world.

Yes, there are some parts of the Bible that are difficult to understand, that we find confusing. We may find the random bloodshed and violence in many of the Old Testament stories off-putting. I know that some of my non-Christian friends do, and they use this to justify their not believing in the Christian faith. So we have to read, and treat, the Bible carefully.

Despite the difficult and confusing bits, the Bible is primarily a message about God's love for us - for each and every one of us – for **you**. It tells the story of how God created the world and its people, how he loved them so much that

even when they turned away from him, he sent his only Son Jesus Christ to die so that they might be saved and find a way back to him. He created every one of us, and he loves us enough to sacrifice that which was dearest to him.

But that's not to avoid the more difficult parts of our biblical text. We have to read, and treat, the Bible carefully. It comes down to a question of **interpretation**. We need to understand that the Bible is the word of God, inspired within humankind, but the Bible was written by people broken and fallible as we are.

The Bible is a powerful text and, sadly, throughout history it has often been used as a tool of oppression and prejudice – much to the church's shame. It has been used to justify the abuse and suppression of women. It was used to justify slavery, anti-Semitism, and it is still – in some places – used to justify murderous prejudice against gay people and homophobia. But gradually, many Christians have learnt – and are still learning – that to take a line or phrase of the Bible out of context to affirm their own prejudices is not God saying that this is right (or indeed wrong), just because – 'it's in the Bible'. Similarly, when we read about those acts of violence and brutality in the Old Testament, this is not God saying that this is good, just because it's in the Bible.

There's a story in one of the Bible's history books that tells how Jehu is anointed by the great prophet Elisha to commit mass murder on a massive scale, to obliterate the large family of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, and everyone associated with them. The story is presented in the Second Book of Kings as a triumph of God's righteousness. But in the book of the prophet Hosea, just a few generations later, when Hosea talks about the same story he describes it instead as a time of great shame within Israelite history, not triumph, and writes that Jehu's atrocities are to be condemned.

Since the words of the Bible were first written, millennia ago, humankind has been working out how to interpret them, trying to understand, just what they mean. That was Jesus' accusation of his contemporaries in today's Gospel – they had been looking at the right book but reading it in the wrong way. And still we try and figure out the meaning of this book – because it is powerful. It has changed the world, and for people of faith it is our guide and points us in the direction of God.

The Bible is not just a collection of laws which we absolutely must obey. Some scholars think it is not always the most accurate of histories. You won't immediately or easily find the answer to every single question you ever have within its pages. But that's not the point. The Bible is not – however much some would like to believe – the flawless word and instruction of God, written by His

own hand, without error. But the Bible is the story of how people heard God and how they responded to that. It is the story of God's amazing love and God's amazing grace and it contains within it the truly wonderful story of how God loved the world and its people so much that he sent his only Son, the living word, to die for our sake.

The Bible tells us about, and is written by, people who have encountered God in some way and have just responded to that word, that love, that grace and mercy of God. The question we need to ask ourselves is how are we listening out for the word of God - in our worship today, as we go about our everyday lives in the week to come? How are we listening out for the word of God, and how are we going to respond to what we hear?

### 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.**

### Prayers of Intercession with Judith Drake

We come as children of our heavenly Father,  
trusting in his will and capacity to care for us all.

Let us pray.

Lord God, we pray for all those sitting in darkness,  
those who feel that they have little to offer,  
those who cannot see light in the darkness that they currently endure.

We pray for those who are unsure of the way ahead,  
who struggle to discern the right thing to do.

Give them insight and wisdom, that they may perceive  
the right course of action and understand what is needed.

We pray for those who are spiritually blind and ask

for the candle in their hearts to be relit, to allow them to see your truth and grace. We pray that they may find peace and transformation, and a greater understanding of the new life you offer.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

We pray for the healing of the nations; for a turning away from all that is evil. We pray for all in authority and worldly power, that they may be guided along right paths, recognising, and responding to the needs of the world. As world leaders prepare for COP26 we pray for action as well as words. We pray for the restoration of justice where there is misery and tragedy of wrong decisions, a re-aligning of right values and a reawakening of mutual respect and trust.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

We pray that the Church may be alive to God's beckoning, quick to obey his will and always ready to act in his loving service for the good of the world.

We pray for our church leaders of all the denominations, and those who lead ministry in our churches in the Benefice and we pray for ourselves, each local church fellowship. We are grateful to be able to gather in worship; and for the care and love we share with each other.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

God of compassion and love, Jesus healed the sick and brought comfort to those who are ill. We ask today that you bless and comfort those in need, those who need your supporting arms around them, and uphold those who care, and support loved ones either at home or in hospital. We pray for the countries where populations still wait for supplies of the vaccine and where Covid infections are rising.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

Heavenly Father be with those who mourn the loss of a loved one. Bring them comfort and strength and let them know there is light after their darkness. May those who have died rest in the eternal peace of your presence, their burdens laid down and their suffering ended.

Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

Today is Bible Sunday and we give thanks for the written Word of the Bible and all those who have made it possible for the gift of the Holy Scriptures to be

shared in many different languages and translations. May we be alive and prompted by the Spirit to see beyond the words on the page open before us.  
Lord, in your mercy ***hear our prayer***

*A prayer by John Birch for Bible Sunday*

Your Word is the light we see, a guide for our footsteps to where you are found.  
Your Word is the strength we find when darkness threatens to overwhelm.  
Your Word is the power we need to become servants of a Heavenly King.  
Your Word is the reason we live in the sure knowledge you are everything.  
**Amen.**

Merciful Father

***accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.***

**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 for ever. Amen.**

**Conclusion**

**Closing Prayer**

God of all grace,  
Your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry  
With the bread of his life and the word of his kingdom:  
Renew your people with your heavenly grace  
And in all our weakness sustain us by your true and living bread;  
Who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**You have opened to us the Scriptures, O Christ,  
and you have made yourself known  
in the breaking of the bread.**

**Abide with us, we pray,  
that, blessed by your royal presence,  
we may walk with you  
all the days of our life,  
and at its end behold you  
in the glory of the eternal Trinity,  
one God for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

**Blessing**

Cast your burden upon the Lord:  
**he will sustain you.**

Create in us clean hearts, O God;  
**renew a right spirit within us.**

Cast us not away from your presence;  
**take not your Holy Spirit from us.**

Give us the joy of your saving help;  
**sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.**

Blessed be the Lord day by day:  
**the God of our salvation, who bears our burdens.**

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 you today and always  
**Amen.**

**Sending Out**

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