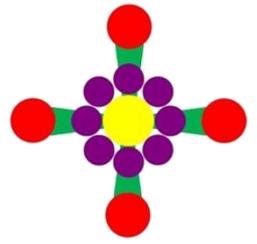


**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 3 April 2022
The Fifth Sunday of Lent: Passion Sunday**



Alison has created our Liturgy today

Call to Worship

As people formed by God, we give praise to God:

**Dry ground in the sea, rivers in the desert,
Christ among us—
God is doing a new thing!**

As people restored by God, we give praise to God:

**Dry ground in the sea, rivers in the desert,
Christ among us—
God is doing a new thing!**

As people pressing on in faith, we give praise to God:

**Dry ground in the sea, rivers in the desert,
Christ among us—
God is doing a new thing!**

Silence is kept

The Lord is here
His Spirit is with us.

Prayers of Penitence

If we ask God to restore us to the way we have been,
then we have not asked for as much as God intends to give.
God is not content simply to return or restore us to former things.
Instead, God seeks to give the gift of resurrection—a new and abundant life.
With confidence in God's generosity,
we confess our sins and seek the new life offered in Jesus Christ

**Purifying God,
we grow comfortable with the way things are
in our lives, in the church, and in the world.
We do not always welcome the new life you offer in Christ,
for you overturn our notions of power and protocol.
Sure of our own righteousness, we are critical of others.
Wanting to control our assets,
we hoard the gifts you give us.
Forgive us, we pray, for seeking our gain at the expense of others.
Help us bend our lives toward your own life of self-giving and sacrifice.
Fill us, our homes and churches, the whole world,
with the abundant love of Christ until all are made new.
In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.**

Declaration of Forgiveness

The apostle Paul reminds us that we do not make ourselves righteous.
Our righteousness comes through faith in Christ,
who has made us his own.
Hear the good news!
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.
The old life has passed away—and a new life has begun.
**Forgetting what lies behind,
and straining forward to what lies ahead,
we press on toward the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.**

The Collect

Most merciful God,
by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
you delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
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 First Reading: Philippians 3: 4b-14

even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had; these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal;^[c] but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his word.

The Gospel: John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Holy Word.

I was a teenager in the 1990s and when I was growing up, I remember singing a worship song by Graham Kendrick called 'Knowing You, Jesus.' Some of you may remember the lyrics of the first verse;

'All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now compared to this'

It's based on today's reading from Philippians 3. I remember becoming quite taken with this passage of scripture as a young teenager growing up and wondering what these impactful words might mean for me. I used to wonder what it was that I should be losing? Did it mean giving up my most prized collection of second-hand copies of Smash Hits magazine? Or my highly fashionable faux suede jacket from C&A bought with my own savings? And if I did this would I gain a more upmarket jacket in return or a subscription to Smash Hits? What does it really mean to lose everything and yet gain it all at the same time? It's a paradox, isn't it? One which, as a teenager, I wrestled with in my own way!

Jesus is pretty famous for turning things upside-down. The kind of kingdom Jesus proclaimed was the reverse of what people at the time were expecting. There was no warrior king leading a rebellion to overthrow the Romans. Instead there was a servant king who washed the feet of his disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about how we are 'blessed' when others insult, persecute and lie about us and many of his parables refer to social norms being turned on their head. The first are last and the last are first. He even literally turned tables upside down in the temple too!

Following Jesus requires us to turn our lives upside down. It means rejecting the old and embracing the new. Turning and walking in a new direction. Giving up everything in order to gain everything God offers. Giving in to our own selves and placing ourselves inside Christ.

Philippians 3 invites us to think about what it is that we think are our 'gains' (v7) and to understand that these are no longer the things to strive for. Instead we can 'gain Christ and be found in him' (v8). It's one of the great mysteries of

salvation and a continuous process of 'taking hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me' (v13). It's a daily decision to keep going, to not give up, to be renewed, to focus on Jesus and to follow him. Now I'm older I don't think God was too interested in my Smash Hits magazines or my choice of clothing back then even though they were the most precious thing I thought I had, but he was interested in my priorities and how I responded to other people. He is still interested in that today!

Maybe we think we are successful and have made lots of achievements in life. Maybe we are proud of all that we own and possess. Perhaps we feel we have lots of skills and abilities we have developed and that we deserve recognition for all we do. The challenge is to recognise that we are who we are because of the grace of God not through our own work, however hard working we think we may be. The work of Jesus on the cross supersedes all of that. We rest in his grace alone.

So, to finish, I'll leave you with the words of the chorus of the song I mentioned at the beginning. Take a few moments to meditate on the words and allow them to enter your spirit. Allow God to move and to inspire you as you go deeper into him today. My prayer for you is that you will continue to know Christ more and to be found in him. Amen.

'Knowing You, Jesus, Knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord'

Affirmation of Faith

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

**I 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.**

**I 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 with Anne Jay

As the Cross stands over all our worship, in sorrow and in Joy, teach us to proclaim Christ as our Saviour in his suffering and in his triumph ...

Knowing the great cost of our redemption, may we declare that all things are in your hands and are working together for good.

Gracious Father, we pray for peace in our world:

for all national leaders, that they may have the wisdom to know and the courage to do what is right; for all the men and women that their hearts may be turned to yourself in the search for righteousness and truth; for those who are working to improve international relationships, that they may find the true way of reconciliation; for those who suffer as a result of war: the injured and disabled, the mentally distressed, the homeless and hungry, those who mourn for their dead, and especially for those who are without hope or friend. to sustain them in their grief.

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

O Lord Jesus Christ, who in the hour of your agony prayed for those who nailed you to the Cross; enable us, by the might of your Holy Spirit, to pray for aggressors. Break the power of all who seek domination and delight in war; open the eyes of all who are blinded by fear, idolatry or hate; strengthen the hands of all who love truth and right, that when this dreadful war in the Ukraine has passed, we may with them seek justice and peace on the earth and freedom in the souls of men.

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

O Lord our God, open all our hearts, from politician to the men and women on the street, to the plight of all the families, men, and women of every age from the Ukraine, who are desolate and in despair after being driven out of their homes looking for a safe place to lay their heads. May every country welcome them and show them God's everlasting love.

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

O Lord Jesus Christ, pour your blessings on Elizabeth, our Queen, in this her platinum jubilee year, that she may continue to fulfil her calling as a Christian ruler and show by example your compassion and understanding. Support her in the ceaseless round of duty she still tries to fulfil despite her problems caused by age and infirmity; continue to inspire her in the service of the many peoples, as she has done in all her 70 years as our Queen. Give her wise and selfless ministers, bless her home and family and grant that through her, the Commonwealth may be knit together in one great family and be a strength and joy to all its peoples. May she be an instrument of peace in our troubled world, with your continued help and support, O Lord.

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

O Lord we pray for our Benefice. Give all the members of our ministry team your help and let them feel your support and loving arms around them as they do your work. Strengthen Nick our Bishop and all your Church in the service of Christ, that those who confess your name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

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

O Lord as we remember those who have gone before us let us open our hearts and minds in love as we keep them in our hearts in the sure knowledge that they are at peace with you in your kingdom.

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 it is 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.**

Call for our Continuing Journey

By her gift, Mary prepared for the day of Jesus' burial.
By our prayers and presence,
we prepare for this Lenten turn toward
Palm Sunday and Holy Week.
Remembering that our fickle passions and mixed motives
are no match for the steadfast love of God,
we continue the journey to the cross.

Blessing

May God guide you through the desert places,
may Christ lead you into knowing him more deeply,
and the Holy Spirit fill you with faith overflowing:
that as you share in Christ's suffering,
you will also trust the power of his resurrection.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Rest upon you this day
And always,
Amen.

Sending Out

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