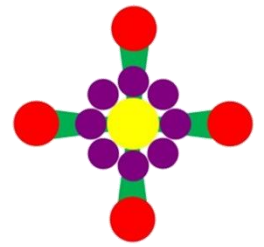


**The Benefice of  
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme  
19 November 2023**



**The Second Sunday before Advent**

**Greeting**

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations;  
you have been our home throughout all the ages.  
You were there before the world was made and will be forever.  
**From everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

*Silence is kept*

The Lord is here,  
**His Spirit is with us.**

**Call to Confession**

God's love has destined us not for wrath,  
but rather for salvation.  
Therefore, let us confess our sins to the One who is eager to save.

**Prayer of Confession**

**Loving God, we confess that we have sinned against you  
by not honouring you or one another.  
When we place our iniquities before you,  
it is your love that sheds light on our wayward deeds.  
As we stand in awe of your constancy for us,  
we ask your forgiveness through the mercy of Christ,  
in whose name we pray. Amen.**

**Declaration of Forgiveness**

Sisters and brothers,  
when we acknowledge our human limitations  
and turn to depend upon our everlasting God,  
we grow wise in heart to God's commands.  
You are freed to love another,  
for your sins are forgiven by the mercy of Christ. **Amen.**

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have kindled the flame of love  
in the hearts of the saints:  
grant to us the same faith and power of love,  
that, as we rejoice in their triumphs,  
we may be sustained by their example and fellowship;  
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**

Our Collect for Growth

**God of mission  
Who alone brings growth to your Church,  
Send your Holy Spirit to give  
Vision to our planning,  
Wisdom to our actions,  
Joy to our worship  
And power to our witness.  
Help our church to grow in numbers,  
In spiritual commitment to you  
And in service to our local community,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**



Leading your Church  
into Growth

**The Word of God**

**First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12–18**

Be silent before the Sovereign LORD,  
for the day of the LORD is near.  
The LORD has prepared a sacrifice;  
he has consecrated those he has invited.  
At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps  
and punish those who are complacent,  
who are like wine left on its dregs,  
who think, 'The LORD will do nothing,  
either good or bad.'  
Their wealth will be plundered,  
their houses demolished.

Though they build houses,  
they will not live in them;  
though they plant vineyards,  
they will not drink the wine.”  
The great day of the LORD is near—  
near and coming quickly.  
The cry on the day of the LORD is bitter;  
the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.  
That day will be a day of wrath—  
a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of trouble and ruin,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and blackness—  
a day of trumpet and battle cry  
against the fortified cities  
and against the corner towers.  
“I will bring such distress on all people  
that they will grope about like those who are blind,  
because they have sinned against the LORD.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their entrails like dung.  
Neither their silver nor their gold  
will be able to save them  
on the day of the LORD’s wrath.”  
In the fire of his jealousy  
the whole earth will be consumed,  
for he will make a sudden end  
of all who live on the earth.

**Thanks be to God for the gift of His word**

### **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 Holy Word**

### **Reflection from Robert Smith**

I have a big problem;

I am a typical Yorkshireman, I don't like to blow my own trumpet and in most situations, everything is "alright".

A group of us from the benefice have signed up for the Personal Growth and Leadership course run by the Diocese. One of the first tasks was to think of 100 positive words that would describe me. This was not easy, but Richard sent me 5 words to start.

When I saw the reading for today was about talents, these were the first words that came to mind, and it made me think of the talents I possess.

Do we know what are our talents?

The man delegates the management of his wealth to his servants, He gives five talents (a 'talent' was 30kg weight of gold or silver used as currency in Roman times) to the first servant, two talents to the second, and one talent to the third. Two of the servants make a 100% return by trading, but the third servant hides the money in the ground and earns nothing. The man returns and rewards the two who made money, but severely punishes the servant who did nothing.

This parable goes well beyond financial investments. Our "talents" includes our abilities, our skills, education, and life experiences, we are teachers, cooks, preachers, accountants, welcomers, supporters and much more. The talents that God has given to us as individuals and to the whole of mankind are a wide variety of talents and he expects us all to employ our talents in his service.

Yet often we ignore or are unaware of them. We should not hide or ignore our talents. Like the three servants, we do not all have talents to the same degree. The return that God expects of us is based on the talents we have been given. The servant who received one talent was not condemned for failing to reach the five-talent goal; he was condemned because he did nothing with what he had been given.

We should all invest our skills and abilities, but also our wealth and the resources that are made available to us. It is a privilege to be entrusted with talents, resources, and opportunities to work toward God's purposes in the world. The parable implies that if we do so, we take our place among all the faithful, trustworthy servants of God, no matter how big or small our accomplishments may seem. We are to use whatever we have been given for God's purposes. God made us for a special purpose; he has a job for each of us that nobody else can do as well as you. When you know that something is right for you, do it and trust God.

## Prayers with Jasmin Smith

Blessed are you, Lord our God.  
You never leave us or forsake us.  
You are a present help in our troubles.  
You are our strength and our salvation.  
In you, O Lord, we trust.  
Blessed are you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We give thanks for all who have shared their faith with us. And all who have witnessed to you in times of trouble. We ask your blessing upon all who are struggling with their faith at this time, all who are caught up with doubt or who are giving way to despair. May the light and love of Christ bring them new hope. We remember before you all who are being persecuted for their faith. We pray for churches that are suffering from war, violence, or vandalism. We pray for all who have lost their place of worship. We give thanks for the clergy who serve in our benefice and those who give so freely of their time for the care of our congregations and buildings.

Lord, you are our strength  
**and our salvation.**

Lord, guide and strengthen the leaders of the world. Give wisdom to all who rule and who are in government. We pray for all who are involved with famine relief or who seek to bring peace among nations. We remember all who have been made homeless or driven off their own land. We bring to you the situation in Israel and Gaza, and we pray for Ukraine and all areas of the world where there is conflict.

Lord, you are our strength  
**and our salvation.**

We give thanks for the shelter and security of our homes. We remember homes where it is hard to be a Christian and where faith in you is discouraged. We pray for children who are not given any sense of faith or confidence in the future. We pray for those recently baptised and those who seek to know you better. We ask your blessing upon our families and all our loved ones.

Lord, you are our strength  
**and our salvation.**

We remember all lonely and uncared for people; may they know your love and your presence. We ask your blessing upon all who are ill and those who fear the future. We pray for those who are in care. And for all who cannot cope on their own. Bring them your comfort and peace.

Lord, you are our strength

**and our salvation.**

We give thanks to all who have witnessed to your love, even to death. We pray for all who have died for their faith in you, and we remember the holy martyrs. We ask your blessing upon our loved ones departed from us. May we share with them in the joys of your eternal 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 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.**

Closing Prayers

Gracious Lord,

you give substance to our hope:

bring us at the last

to that fullness of life for which we long;

through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen**

Sisters and brothers,  
God in Christ  
has given us the glorious treasure of eternal life.  
Do not leave this treasure hidden,  
but rather enjoy its abundance with everyone.

May God, whose coming we eagerly await,  
keep you fervent in faith,  
And the blessing of God Almighty  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
Remain with you,  
Today and always. **Amen**

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

Ways you might like to use your talents in our churches!

Reading the lessons from the Bible  
Leading the prayers  
Helping with cleaning  
Helping with the flowers  
Doing the teas and coffees after church  
Helping at our Messy Churches  
Helping with the Lunch Clubs or Warm Spaces  
Volunteering for Inn Churches  
Helping at our Toddler Groups or Storytime  
Serving on our PCCs  
Helping to run our Websites or Facebook pages  
Telling someone about church and bringing them along  
Praying for the people around you  
Singing in the choirs which lead our music in church  
Coming Carol singing at Christmas!

**There are lots of ways. Talk to Richard if you have talents you would like to use more in our churches!**