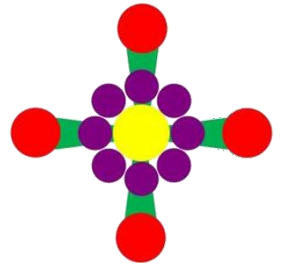


The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
31st August 2025
Trinity 11



Opening Prayer

Sing aloud to God our strength,
shout for joy to the lord of life.
Blessed be the one, holy and living God.
Glory to God forever.

Prayers of Penitence

Let us confess our sins to the lord who is
our helper.

**Lord, all that we have is a gift from you,
yet we do not live lives of gratitude.**
We ignore strangers
and turn away from those in need.
We seek honor for ourselves
and allow pride to take root in us.
Forgive our foolish ways, O God,
and restore us to you,
that we may walk in the way of love.
Amen.

Declaration of forgiveness

Beloved, your sins are forgiven,
for God promises to never leave us.
Therefore, be at peace and stand secure in the lord.

O God, you declare your almighty power
most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,
that we, running the way of your commandments,
may receive your gracious promises,
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;
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.

Today's Scripture Readings:

First Reading: Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.



Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,
“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”

So we say with confidence,
“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?”

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His word.

Gospel reading: Luke 14:1, 7–14

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

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

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable. ‘When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, “Give this person your place”, and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

Reflection by Liz

The themes of humility and hospitality link our readings this week. In the letter to the Hebrews, those receiving the letter are instructed to welcome strangers into their homes. 'This way', the writer continues, 'some have welcomed angels without knowing it'.

This was a struggle for people then, to welcome a stranger, especially if we think of such a person to be, not just someone we don't yet know, but someone very different from us. They had a strong tradition of hierarchy in their society, where people were separated by class, gender and religion and they risked everything by trying to mix this up.

I think it is also a challenge for us today to welcome those who we don't know, who may live very different lives to us. It can be uncomfortable.

I was chatting to an amazing woman at a weekend retreat earlier this year, who was telling me about her experience of welcoming a family from Ukraine into her home. She had thought it would be for just a few months, but it had been years, and it wasn't easy! They were pleasant and grateful, but they cooked different foods to her and at different times and had a different take on parenting and cleaning up, keeping different hours. They hadn't become friends. She did receive some money, but it did not cover the costs of having them there. I had nothing but respect for her for her generosity and kindness.

As I reflect on this in the light of our reading, I am aware that many of us, myself included, have a sense of what is ours, our space, our stuff, our house. I might think, 'what I have earned belongs to me.' In reality, all this belongs to God and we are caretakers of everything for Him.

This person who had welcomed the Ukrainian family challenged me, because she had done exactly what the Bible tells us to do, and welcomed strangers. Whether they were angels, the jury was still out on that!

As a humanity, as children of God, we are all in this life together and no one is more important or deserving of a home and happiness than anyone else. But yet, our 21st Century Western media promotes relentless individuality which implies that we are succeeding if we focus on our ourselves and our own immediate family. Jesus had a different approach and deliberately placed himself with outcasts and strangers and suggests that our neighbour isn't just the nice person next door but also the people from different parts of life that we don't yet know (and maybe don't want to).

In his conversation with the other guests at the dinner party, Jesus tells the parable of the wedding feast, in which he says guests should take the lowest placed seats, with the hope that they may be promoted up to the good seats by the host. This was not advice around social etiquette but a reminder that we all need to humble ourselves before God with the hope that one day, he will welcome us to the good seats with Him.

So, as we see pictures in the media of flags flying in towns and villages across the UK, promoting St George and the British values some see as being under threat, let us remember that St George was also the patron Saint of Palestine. There is nothing wrong with flying flags and celebrating our culture, but we need to remember that God asks us to be humble and welcome strangers and those who need our help.

The lines we draw on maps, and flags we design mean nothing to God who wants all his children to share what they have and welcome one another, learning about our different ways, so that we can all find a way forward together, towards peace.

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 prepared by Helen

Lord, we thank you for the past week and for the comfort of knowing that you were there with us consistently. Remembering that, we pray that this coming week you will empower us to have the confidence to also look out from our own concerns and care for others as God loves us.

Lord, thank you that we have a place at your table:
help us to welcome everyone in your name.

As we embark on a new academic term, we pray for all teachers and children.

We know that schools can be happy or difficult places, that there are those who find learning hard and those who are afraid to return because they are bullied or lonely.

We ask that you give the children courage to speak out and wisdom to the staff to help schools eradicate any unkind and unloving behaviour. Lord, we lift before you for our local schools and pray that they will be places of welcome and refuge for everyone who enters. We pray also for all those who prepare for university, or have had to make difficult and different plans because of their exam results.

Lord, thank you that we have a place at your table:
help us to welcome everyone in your name.

Lord, we pray for all who have had to flee from their homes and build a new life somewhere else. Those who have left because of climate change, war or famine, those who have been trafficked and those who have run away.

Lord, all of these people are precious to you even though they may seem almost hidden from us. We thank you for those who work with them and help them and pray that they will regain their sense of self-worth and safety.
Lord, thank you that we have a place at your table:
help us to welcome everyone in your name.

Lord, we lift to you all those who particularly concern us at this time. We pray for those who are sick; awaiting consultations or operations, those who are grieving and those who are lonely or housebound. We ask you to make yourself known to them through us.

Lord, thank you that we have a place at your table:
help us to welcome everyone in your name.

We pray that our churches will be places of refuge, where anyone and everyone feels safe and welcomed, where all who enter may find the love and joy of community that comes from you.

We lift before you our workplaces, our homes, our families and our communities. They are all places where you are present and active, help us to open our eyes and ears to see where you are at work and to follow and serve you in love.

Lord, thank you that we have a place at your table:
help us to welcome everyone in your name.

Closing Prayer

Faithful God,
in Jesus you show us a way of humility
and hospitality
with power to transform our world.

Give us the grace to love those things that please you and the courage to live them to your glory. Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of our lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the holy spirit be with you,
this day and forevermore