

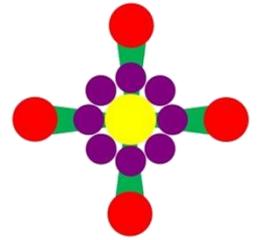
The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

Sunday 15 March 2026

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Mothering Sunday

Today's service prepared by Alison



Call to Worship

O Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Praise God who loves us.

Praise God who cares.

**Gather your little ones to you, O God,
as a hen gathers her brood to protect them.**

Opening Praise

Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you;
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
Often you weep over our sins and our pride,
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgement.
You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds,
in sickness you nurse us, and with pure milk you feed us.
Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life;
by your anguish and labour we come forth in joy.
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness;
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.
Your warmth gives life to the dead,
your touch makes sinners righteous.
Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;
in your love and tenderness remake us.
In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness,
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

from Anselm of Canterbury

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

Call to Confession

Let us call to mind our sin, our failure to value the love of others
and our failure to love as Christ has loved us.

Silence for reflection

Your love gives us life from the moment of conception.

We fail to live as your children.

Lord have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

You call us to do good.

We seek our own good.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

You hear us when we cry for help.

We ignore the cries of others.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The God of love

brings us back to himself,

forgives us our sins,

and assures us of his eternal love,

in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences,
that through your bountiful goodness
we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins, which by our frailty we
have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our
blessed Lord and Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the
Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Reading 1 Samuel 1 .20-28

So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfil his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always."

"Do what seems best to you," her husband Elkanah told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the Lord make good his-word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his word.

Gospel reading: John 19.25-27

And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

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

Reflection from Brenda

It seems appropriate that on Mothering Sunday our Bible and Gospel readings today are about 2 mothers and their sons. One, Hannah, who calls on God to give her a child, Samuel. The other, Mary, who is visited by God and His Angel singled out for a special purpose. To give life to His beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour the Messiah. Both women are facing the joy of motherhood but also the pain of loss and grief, Hannah bargained with God that if He allowed her to be a mother she would give her child back to Him by devoting his life to the temple once he was weaned. So for a few months, possibly a year at most, she would swap a lifetime of mourning to be Samuel's mother for her joy at spending limited time with him.

Maybe she would be comforted in the years to come by the legacy her sacrifice gave to God, Devotion in the temple. Do you think any of us could make such a bargain? I'm not sure I could.

Then, what of Mary? When the Angel visited Mary do you think she knew what would be asked of her.

God told her she was blessed amongst women, but Mary had also been told "a sword would pierce her very soul".

I wonder if she really knew what pain she would bear as she watched her beloved Son die in such an horrific way. I hope Mary was comforted in her loss by the legacy her Son left to the world. After all, as we know, 'He redeemed our sin's so that we may have life eternal, but did Mary realise that.

I also think about what pain our Heavenly Father experienced. After all, this suffering, bleeding, dying, young man on the Cross was His 'Beloved Son in whom he was well pleased' It must have hurt God's heart to know he had to offer Jesus as a Sacrifice for his people on earth.

What of Jesus and his legacy still resonating over 2000 years later. Mary possibly did not envisage that.

But as we know his message was one most mothers understand that of love. Can you imagine the pain Mary must have endured as Jesus died.

In some way I can.

I experienced such loss when I was 22 and I hope you will forgive me if part of my reflection on this Mothering Sunday is to share my experience with you.

I guess many women who give birth to their first child feel they are blessed. I know I did. For the first few days of my daughter, Tracey's life I could not stop gazing at her in wonder. I felt I had been given my own miracle.

She was beautiful. As the months went on and I watched her grow and develop her own little personality, charming and spirited, my joy became limitless.

I became a mother for the second time when Tracey was only 17 months old. I was very young, 20 at the time but I loved my life. A kind loving husband who worked hard to provide for us. A cottage, not far from my extended family, who all rejoiced in our growing family. A pretty girl child and a gorgeous boy child. I lived in a rose-tinted bubble. Then the bubble burst. My sweet little girl became very sick when my son was 3 weeks old. After 6 months of tests we were told the awful news, our darling child had Leukaemia and her life expectancy was no more than 2 years, of which we had already had 6 months. For the next 18 months I stood at the bottom of my own personal cross and watched as our child and we were crucified.

She was 3 and a half when she died. At that time leukaemia was incurable but the doctors sent to London for a little used new drug which they gave to my daughter days before she died. It did not work for her but all these 54 years later 4 out of 5 children diagnosed with blood cancers live, and eventually if they survive 5 years, can be classified, as cured. That drug is now one of the mainline treatments not just for Leukaemia but for many cancers. That is my Tracey's legacy. Alongside the grief, she gave me great joy. Thanks be to God. However I do not want this reflection to be all about loss and grief.

Being a mother, a grandmother, a great grandmother as I am now, can bring great joy and blessings every day.

Some of you at St Saviours may have met my great granddaughter Delilah last Sunday. A true little charmer 16 months old, at times a little diva and the unexpected blessing in the autumn of my years. My heart soars when she smiles at me.

Again Thanks be to God.

As we think about this Mothering Sunday perhaps I should belatedly ask What is the definition of a mother.

The dictionary tells us

Usually Mother a term of address for a female parent or a woman having or regarded as having the status, function, or authority of a female parent. It goes on to say, a woman providing care or exercising influence or authority like that of a female parent.

With the qualities characteristic of a mother, such as maternal affection, protectiveness, responsibility, etc.. I know many men can fulfil this role but today it's Mothering Sunday so Dads will have to wait for their own reflections.

Many of you will know I help at St Saviour's Chatterbox where we have several Foster Mums who bring their children to our meetings.

There I have witnessed these incredible women give freely of themselves to their charges. I have also seen them cry brokenly when a child moves on to adoptive parents, sometimes after 2 years. When the child may have lived with them since they were a few hours old because their birth Mother, for whatever reason could not fulfil their role. These Foster Mums are all the true epitome of love.

I am so proud of the way our other parents and care givers reach out to our foster Mums and comfort them when their charges are placed. As they do for parents and grandparents when their little ones are ill. Our Chatterbox is a place of joy and happiness every Tuesday morning.

Mothers, or those in that role mostly provide affection nurturing, guidance, influence. Those are the qualities of a good Mum. My Mum is no longer with us, she lays just a few yards away from my home in St Saviours Churchyard. She had a tough life with quite a brutal experience of mothering herself through no ones fault but she cared and did her absolute best for her 4 daughters. She worked hard; she took on parenting roles for some of her grandchildren alongside my Dad. She loved us all, she too experienced the pain of losing her daughter, my sister when she was in her 70s.

I remember her today with gratitude and love. She gave me the precious gift of life. For all of us sharing this reflection today we have a universal truth in common. We all were born of a woman.

Whatever your experience of mothering ,good or less so Give thanks for the life you were given. If you still have your Mum or the person that raised you with affection, nurturing and guidance Tell her, not just on this special day, but any chance you get, that you love her because she will leave a unique gap in your life when she is no longer with you.

I will leave you with a verse my late husband sent to me once

Memories are like threads of Gold. They never tarnish nor grow old. Those we love don't fade away. They walk beside us every day.

Amen

Affirmation of Faith

Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself,
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession with Beverly

Dear Lord, our Father, in this time of Lent as we travel towards the crucifixion and the mighty resurrection, we ask for your loving support and guidance as we look at ourselves and our relationship with you. In this time of reflection and examination, whether that be with ourselves or in our Lent groups, help us to think clearly and pray confidently.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lord, we ask your blessings on our communities.
We ask that through your love and guidance we understand the need for compassion and helpfulness in our relationships with friends, family and neighbours. That we have the courage to accept and acknowledge that we may not always be right and that we have the strength to face the need to apologise and build bridges with people when there has been discord and anger.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lord, it seems we live in a world full of anger, conflict and war.
A place where some Leaders feel that their way is the only right way and to achieve that, they have to use guns and bombs and shrug aside diplomacy.
We ask that all leaders and those in positions of power, think about what they are doing and look towards more negotiated and peaceful means of ending conflicts across the world.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

With the world we live in suffering from change and power struggles, let us remember the people themselves who struggle each day to make ends meet.
We ask that we use our resources wisely, at home, in our local communities and abroad and we think about the way we live, the food we eat and how we can live in a sustainable way, so that everyone has food, water and shelter.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all who lead us in our services across the Benefice in this time of Vacancy, both clergy and Lay people and all those who each week help to keep our churches running smoothly. We also pray for all our PCCs as they meet together to help each church provide for the needs of their parishioners.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who are ill at this time, those in hospital, hospice, care or nursing homes or at home.
We also pray for those who have died and are now in the safe and welcoming arms of you Lord. We know they have been welcomed and are experiencing the glory of heaven. Help us to accept this and to rejoice that they are with you in your everlasting kingdom.

Merciful Father,
Accept these prayers,
for the sake of your Son,
Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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.**

Closing prayer

God of Grace and compassion
your son, Jesus Christ was part of a family in Nazareth.
He knew the love of a mother and of a father,
and by dying on the cross brought us all together as new family.
help us in the Christian Journey to strive for that day when the whole of
humanity is one family together. **Amen.**

Blessing

May the love of the Father fill our hearts;
May the love of the Lord Jesus fill our homes;
And may the grace of the Holy Spirit,
bind us together in love,
in our families and communities.
And may the blessing of God be with us,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Sending Out

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

