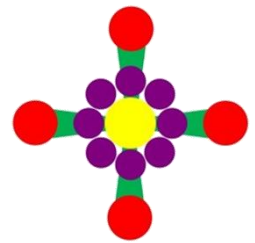


**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 27 April 2025
The Second Sunday of Easter**



Richard has prepared our worship today

Come, embrace the risen Christ.
Come, embrace the Prince of peace.
Come, embrace his pierced hands.
Come, meet your Lord and your God.

We are the people of God.
Risen Lord, as we come into your presence today,
May we see you and hear you,
May we feel you and touch you,
May we know your presence with us now.

As the disciples in the locked room reached out and touched you,
Let us reach out and touch you today, living Lord Jesus.
Let us feel your scarred hands and feet.
Let us put our hands in your side.
Let us be still and know that you are our Lord and our God

Pause for reflection as you offer this day to God.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
as we rejoice in the loving power of the resurrection,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you and for each other. Amen.

Call to Confession

Christ our passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.
Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil
and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

Words of Confession

O King enthroned on high,
filling the earth with your glory:
holy is your name,
Lord God almighty.
In our sinfulness we cry to you
to take our guilt away,
and to cleanse our lips to speak your word,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

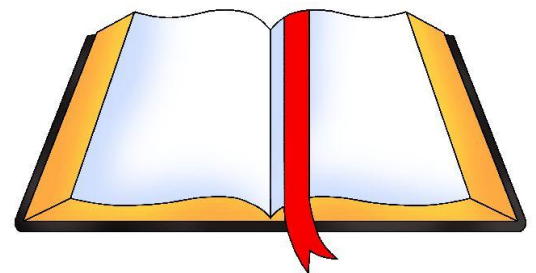
The Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 5: 14a, 22-32

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.



You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

“He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.”

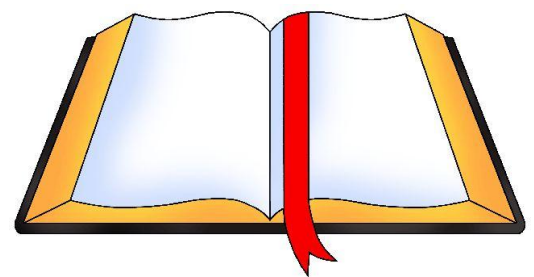
This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word

Second Reading: John 20:19-end

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews,

Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’



But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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

Liz leads our Reflection

Already, we are at the first Sunday after Easter! I wonder if you also feel that Easter week is a time to take it steady and catch your breath after the activity and emotion of Holy Week. There seem to be such highs and lows in one week as we progress from the jubilation of Palm Sunday, the reflective times that Jesus spent with his disciples early in the week, the fellowship shared in the meal on Maundy Thursday, to the tension of Jesus' betrayal and trial, the cruelty, pain and suffering of his death upon the cross and then the joy of Easter Day as the Risen Lord is seen by his disciples and the Good News of his victory over death is shared by his followers then – and continues to be shared with all those who are open to receiving the Good News in the present day.

At times, it can feel like quite a harrowing journey for us as we travel the way of the cross, taking time to imagine and prayerfully reflect upon those events. But, I always feel that we are quite blessed as we consider those events because, however painful we find them, we are always seeing them through the eyes of those who know what the outcome will be. We know that all of that pain and suffering leads to those glorious events of Easter day, when the risen Jesus is met by several people. The day when we can celebrate his risen life which proclaims that Jesus' love for God and for all people is stronger than death, stronger than the sins which separated people from their loving creator God, stronger than anything which can separate us from our loving heavenly Father.

But it must have been so much harder for the followers of Jesus on that first Easter Day. We can only imagine how difficult that day was for them. They had been with their friend, Jesus, for some time – and he was more than a friend to them. He was their teacher. He listened to them. He showed them that he cared about them. He opened new possibilities for them as he taught them about his Father's kingdom – a kingdom which was unlike any with which they were familiar, but a kingdom in which God is their Lord and in which people live as

the people that God created them to be, a kingdom of love, compassion and peace. He has shown them that there was an alternative way to be. They knew that they were loved by him. And yet, in the days leading up to his crucifixion, they had seen Jesus treated in ways which they had never anticipated. They had seen him cheered and applauded as he rode into Jerusalem. He had been welcomed like a victorious leader. They had spent precious time with him at that special meal where he had cared for them with such humility as he washed their feet – but also as he had shared bread and wine with them and encouraged them to remember him in that way. They had seen him being arrested and the brutality with which he was treated – and then they had seen their beloved friend suffer and die on the cross. Their emotions must have felt as if they had been battered and that by Easter morning they were in the depths of grief as they mourned their friend.

And even though several people had encountered the Risen Lord, it seems that the disciples did not fully appreciate the Good News. It must have been too much to take in! I wonder how we would have reacted in those circumstances. A day later they were keeping themselves to themselves, spending time in the upper room together, afraid to go out and mix with others, afraid of what the authorities would do. They were still living in fear. No doubt, all their emotions would have been swirling around their minds.

But then Jesus arrived – with a further Easter gift – as he shared with them that familiar greeting, “Peace be with you!” The Prince of peace came to share the gift of peace – the gift which they all needed to still the turmoil in their minds, the gift which would bring calm to their troubled minds and hearts and which would help them to deal with everything else that was going on. The gift of peace which would help them see through the pain and suffering of the recent days to the promise which was now before them. The promise which Jesus had spoken about was now becoming more real – a promise of hope, a promise of joy, a promise of eternal life with God who loves them so much that he allowed his son to die for them. A gift which Jesus shared later with Thomas, at a time when Thomas was also struggling with his doubts and fears. A gift which has been described as that peace which passes all understanding – a deep inner peace which is God-given and which sustains and strengthens even when it feels as if there is turmoil all around. It was a gift which Jesus brought to the first disciples when they needed it, and it is a gift which we can also receive as we trust in him.

At times we can feel that there is turmoil around us. Maybe its because of world events or events more locally, maybe its events in our own lives or with those we love. Whatever the circumstances, we can feel as anxious or afraid as those first disciples. But as we continue to celebrate this joyful Easter season, may we also know that Easter blessing of peace from Jesus, our Risen Lord – a gift which lasts so much longer than any Easter eggs! And may we be channels of love and peace for those around us.

Peace be with You!

Our prayers of intercession:

We give thanks today for the wonderful news of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

**On this day that the Lord has made,
let us pray for the people he has redeemed.**

That we may live as those who believe in the triumph of the cross:

Lord, fill our hearts with the power of eternal life and the love which is stronger than death. Open to us the wonder of the resurrection, that like the disciples we may come to recognise more and more the impact of Easter on our lives.

May the world come to know you more and may we know your peace.

**On this day that the Lord has made,
let us pray for the people he has redeemed.**

That all people may receive the good news of his victory:

Lord, we pray for those who face the danger and fear of war. We pray for the leaders of nations, that they would work harder for a just peace in places of violence across the world. We pray for those who live with the daily reality of death and amid the devastation and ruin of battle. We pray for those working hard to bring aid to people in need. We pray that your peace may come to places of war: we pray this for places we see each and every day, for places we see rarely and for the many places across the world which we never hear about.

**On this day that the Lord has made,
let us pray for the people he has redeemed.**

**That those born to new life in the waters of baptism
may know the power of his resurrection:**

We pray for the Church across the world, remembering especially at this time our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church. We give thanks for the life of Pope Francis and pray that his example of humility and discipleship will continue to inspire and encourage people in their daily lives. We pray for the prayerful search for his successor. And we continue to pray for your call to come to the person you would have be the new Archbishop of Canterbury.

**On this day that the Lord has made,
let us pray for the people he has redeemed.
That those who suffer pain and anguish
may find healing and peace in the wounds of Christ:**

Lord God, we lift to you all those we hold on our hearts. We remember those in pain, those in the darkness of stress and strain, those awaiting surgery or results and those recovering from medical intervention. We pray for those with dementia and those living with mental illness. We pray for all who watch over loved ones and who care for others.

**On this day that the Lord has made,
let us pray for the people he has redeemed.
That in the undying love of Christ
we may be united with all who have died in the faith of Christ:**

Heavenly Father, we remember all those who grieve the loss of those they love. We remember those who we care for in our funeral ministry. We pray for your comfort to all those who mourn. For those bereaved recently and those who feel loss from weeks, months, years or even decades past.

**On this day that the Lord has made,
let us pray for the people he has redeemed.
Let us commend the world, in which Christ rose from the dead,
to the mercy and protection of God.**

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

And we draw all of our prayers together in the words of the Lord's Prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Let us take the touch of the risen Christ,
and the peace that he gives,
out to all those we know.

Let us breathe his life-giving Spirit
on all those we are in contact with over the coming week.

Let me feel the touch of peace,
the touch of life,
the touch of the risen Lord,
Beside me,
behind me and
before me all the days of my life.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

