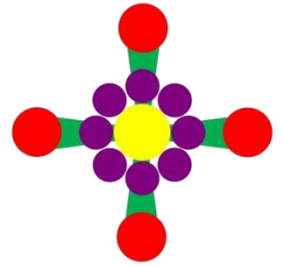


The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
2 August 2026



The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.

Let us recognise his presence with us.

Silence is kept.

As God's people we have gathered:

Let us worship him together.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,

we can often feel very ordinary and inadequate,
worrying that we are not good enough.

Teach us in these moments

to treasure ourselves as your creation,

and let your hospitable love flow through us to others. **Amen.**

Lord God,

'The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.'

We gather at your feet today, awaiting the spiritual succor you offer.

Help us to be worthy of this honour, open to receive. **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,

we come to you in sorrow for our sins,

and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,

and not by the power of your resurrection.

In your mercy, forgive us: **Lord, hear us and help us.**

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us: **Lord, hear us and help us.**
We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us: **Lord, hear us and help us.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw us to himself,
and cleanse us from all our sins
that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Collect

Gracious Father,
revive your Church in our day,
and make her holy, strong and faithful,
for your glory's sake
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Readings

First Reading: Romans 9: 1-5

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit— I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his word

Gospel reading: Matthew 14: 13-21

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Holy Word

Reflection with Robert P

Some children really enjoy wrestling. I have three brothers who were 10 years and more, older than me and I remember wrestling with them when I was around 6 years old. They were much bigger and stronger than me, but I, with my boundless six-year old's energy would fight on and on until they said that I had won. They would match my efforts, just enough, so that I had fun and no one got hurt. Their aim was never to defeat me but to let me test my strength and to enjoy the fun.

In Genesis this week, Jacob is 'in a bad place'. He has already sought reconciliation with his brother Esau, whom he cheated out of his birthright earlier in Genesis (25:29-34). But Esau has only responded by setting out towards Jacob with an army of 400 men. As far as Jacob knows, all his efforts at reconciliation have failed and Esau is intent on retribution. As a final effort, Jacob decides to separate his wife, children and everything that he owns from himself, to send them into Esau's land ahead of him, hoping that Esau will show them mercy.

Jacob remains by himself – alone and destitute. However, during the night, as he waits, uncertain about the fate of his family, Jacob is confronted by a stranger with whom he wrestles until daybreak. We are told that Jacob wrestles all night, but the man has the power to damage Jacob's hip with a touch, and so Jacob doesn't win the fight, but he perseveres until the stranger ends it and agrees to bless him.

And with the renaming of Jacob, as 'Israel' (one who strives with God) the stranger reveals, or at least implies himself to be God.

Jacob had been at his 'lowest'. He feared what Esau was going to do. He had just sent all his possessions and his whole family ahead of him to an uncertain fate. His emotions will have been in turmoil: full of anxiety, anger, guilt, regret and more. Maybe it is this that keeps him fighting even though he doesn't win.

Sometimes we think God cannot handle our anger and frustrations, but perhaps God welcomes us bringing those emotions to him – even when we think we are kicking and hitting out at God. We can't hurt God and we need his blessing. So perhaps this passage gives us permission to come to God with all that we are carrying and to express all our emotions, positive and negative, to him in prayer. In the same way that my 'big' brothers wrestled with me, managing my fights with them with love and care, God can handle all that we bring him.

Affirmation of faith

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of intercession by Alison

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

Lord our God, you remain faithful even when your people struggle, doubt, or turn away. We pray for your Church throughout the world, for courage to speak truth with compassion as Paul did, for hearts that long for all to know your mercy, for our own communities that we may be signs of hope and hospitality.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Compassionate Christ, you looked upon the crowds and fed them with abundance. We pray for all who hunger today, for those without enough food, warmth, or security, for refugees and displaced people seeking safety, for families under financial strain, and for all who feel forgotten. Bless the work of foodbanks, community kitchens, and all who share what they have.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of justice, guide those who hold authority in this country and across the world. Give wisdom to act for the common good, courage to protect the vulnerable, and integrity to resist corruption and division. Where conflict or oppression reigns, bring peace, where people cry out for dignity, let justice roll down like waters.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Healing Lord, you welcomed the weary and restored the broken. We pray for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit, for the sick, the anxious, and the lonely, for those nearing the end of life and those who care for them, for any known to us who need your gentle presence today. Surround them with your peace and bring them your wholeness.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of eternal compassion, we give you thanks for Daniel's safe arrival among us. Bless him in his ministry, bless his family, and bless our benefice as we welcome him with joy. Help us to embrace the changes and new possibilities that come with his presence, trusting that you lead us into growth, renewal, and deeper discipleship.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We remember those who have died, trusting in your promise that nothing can separate us from your love. Comfort all who mourn, and bring us, with them, to the feast of your kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayers

Loving God,
thank you for using our small contributions.
Help us not to doubt
that each of us has something to offer,
and that, when we trustfully offer it to you,
you do amazing things for us, among us and through us –
in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Blessing

Go forth into the world in peace;
be of good courage;
hold fast that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour everyone;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
be with you today and always.

Amen.

Sending Out

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