

The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

Last Sunday was Passion Sunday and we have begun the journey to Holy Week, Good Friday and the Cross. But for so many of us it is a time when we are not physically making any journeys at all! It will be a Holy Week like we have not seen before in our lifetimes.

This coming Sunday will be Palm Sunday. How strange not to be able to meet together, to receive our Palm Crosses and to remember Jesus entering into Jerusalem, to remember his suffering and death.

But this year, like never before, we are aware of suffering. Together, as a human race we have seen an illness travel the globe and it has affected the lives of pretty much everyone on the planet.

Take time to be aware of God's presence this Passiontide: Pray that he may be seen in the giving of comfort to those most affected, that he may be seen in the kindness and care of friends and strangers, and that he may be seen too in starting to change the tide of this illness, that we may begin to see hope of solutions.

Watch out for our Holy Week Reflections which will be coming to you with the Sunday Newsletter and let us join together to walk the way of the Cross in the days to come. It is a time when we recognise the darkness and suffering in the world and when we see God's light coming into the heart of that darkness. And never forget that we will see the glory of the light overcoming the darkness in the message of Easter Day.

Keep safe and keep praying!

With every blessing,

Richard

Midweek worship:

Take a moment to be still.

God is with you and unites his church by His Spirit.

Almighty God,
Unto whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Today's Readings:

Daniel 3:14-20,24-25,28

Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?'

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defence to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.'

Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times more than was customary, and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counsellors, 'Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?' They answered the king, 'True, O king.' He replied, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god.'

Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.'

Reflection:

This is a great story of the three men saved from the fiery furnace! They have such memorable names: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego!

The king had set up his statue and decreed that whenever the sound for the musical instruments was heard in the land, the people all had to worship it. But the three men would not worship it, they would only worship God.

And the people who were jealous of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were only too quick to take the chance to tell the king of their failure to keep his law, and were very eager to see them punished and put to death.

The fires were lit in the furnace and heated to seven times the normal heat, before the men were placed in it. But God saved them.

As I read the story I am always aware of two things that I see about how God saves us in times of difficulty.

The first thing is that he doesn't always remove the difficulty that we have to get through. The boys still had to face the fiery furnace. And the second thing is that the fourth figure comes alongside the men in the difficulty they face. They are not alone, but God is very much with them.

They are lessons to take courage from in our current situation. God does not take away the difficulty we face, but he is with us in it and he will bring us through it too.

Prayers:

Be aware of the things you are finding difficult

Be aware of others you know who are finding things difficult

Think of how they might know that God is with them

Think of how you might know that God is with you

Pray for carers, hospital and medical staff

Pray for schools, for shops and for all those working to relieve this situation

Pray for our local communities and church family

Most Merciful God,

Who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ

Delivered and saved the world:

Grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross

We may triumph in the power of his victory;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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

May the blessing of God rest upon you and all those you pray for today.
May you see the presence of God and show his hope to others.

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

Information:

We will be sending out our Sunday newsletter again this week and it will include a service for us to share together at 10.30am on Sunday. We hope you will be able to join in. We'll also be sending out a collection of reflections for Holy Week that you can use during the days between Palm Sunday and Easter Day.

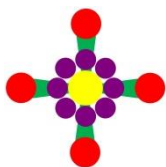


On Facebook, Richard is live-streaming Morning Prayer at 8am and Evening Prayer at 5pm. You can join him live each weekday, or watch later. If you search in your app provider for "Daily Prayer Church of England" you will find the Free Daily Prayer app.

There will also be a Messy Church Stream this Wednesday on Facebook at 4pm. Join for a story and a craft idea!

Follow our Benefice Facebook Page. Search for:

"Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme Benefice"



There are lots of uplifting things in our Facebook community and there will be more regular features in this time when we cannot meet as we normally do!

If you or anyone you know is in need of shopping or you need something collecting from the chemist, please let us know. There are several people who have said that they are willing to help our community in this way. Just ring Rev'd Richard on 01535 273758 or Rev'd Suzy on 01535 270687.



We are also continuing to light a candle in a window each evening at 7pm. Make sure you light it safely! If you have a pretend candle that would be even better. Light it and put it in a window at 7pm each night. "It will be a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished."

If anyone needs shopping or medical supplies delivering:

If you have any news to share:

If you have a birthday, a message of greeting, a prayer request or any news you would like to share through this newsletter please let us know.

You can always contact Rev'd Richard on 01535 273758 or email:

ecrb@live.co.uk or richard.burge@leeds.anglican.org

An Online Lent Group meeting!!!

We successfully attempted our first online Lent Group meeting last Thursday evening at 7.30pm. It was good to see people and we are all getting more used to the technology! If you would like to join the group all you need to do is to email: beneficehwcd@gmail.com to let us know you would like to be part of it and we will be in contact to set it all up. It is very easy and it will be lovely to see anyone who joins in!!

May God bless you in the today and in the days ahead!