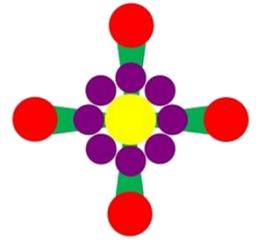


The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

Sunday 22 March 2026

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Today's service prepared by Liz



Call to worship

Let us worship the living God.

Yes, Amen!

Let us bring God our lives.

Yes, Amen!

Let us honour God's name.

Yes, Amen!

God of tenderness, God of furious love,
God of strength, God of kindness,
we come to you in confidence
through your Son and what he did for us,
asking you to bring us into new life
by the power of your Spirit.

Breathe on us again
that we may live to glorify your name.

Amen.

Confession

**Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have wandered and strayed from your ways
like lost sheep.**

**We have followed too much the devices and desires
of our own hearts.**

We have offended against your holy laws.

**We have left undone those things
that we ought to have done;
and we have done those things
that we ought not to have done:
and there is no health in us.**

**But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us sinners.
Spare those who confess their faults.
Restore those who are penitent,
according to your promises declared to mankind
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may live a disciplined,
righteous and godly life,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Praise response

This is love, not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son.
He is the sacrifice for our sins,
that we might live through him.
If God loves us so much
we ought to love one another.
If we love one another
God lives in us.

Collect

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 your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

First reading: Ezekiel 37: 1-14

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

Second reading: John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.'

Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Reflection with Janice

The story of Lazarus is so well known that it can sometimes be difficult to look at it afresh. However, I have tried ...

We're surprised to learn that Jesus delayed returning to his friends once summoned. Surely he would have gone straight away had he really cared? However, the historical setting here is important; we know from the previous chapters in the Gospel of John that there had already been several attempts to arrest or murder Jesus following which he had crossed the Jordan, with his disciples, to a safer place.

Then came the news that Lazarus was ill and Jesus assured his disciples that the illness wasn't serious so presumably they were relieved that he doesn't immediately rush back. However, they must then have been horrified when Jesus said that Lazarus was now dead. They must go to the home of Lazarus and Thomas knows exactly what this means; both he and the disciples are laying their lives on the line. We learn that Jesus will restore the life of Lazarus at the cost of not protecting his own life. He will die for Lazarus. Therefore, through the drama of this story, John points us to the very heart of the Gospel message.

Jesus deliberately allowed Lazarus and his sisters to taste the horror of death so that they and the disciples may learn the truth that he is “the resurrection and the life”.

Generally, in the western world we’re not very good at talking about death. The mere topic can cause an awkwardness, especially if we know someone who is ill or dying. However, we can never forget that, as Christians, our whole journey comes from the death of Jesus. As we continue on our journey through Lent we will travel through Good Friday to the glorious resurrection of Easter morning. Jesus died for us, his followers, and we too can have eternal life. I hope to see you at the Sunrise (or, as I prefer to call it the Sonrise) service at Denholme on Easter Sunday when we can truly celebrate.

Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession with Jasmin

Blessed are you Lord our God, who sent your Son to be our Saviour. In your love, you have opened for us the way to eternal life and rescued us from perishing. Blessed are you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Come, Lord, to refresh and renew your church, which without you is dull and dry. Come fill the church, which without you is dead. Fill the Church with your life-giving presence and give it the power to proclaim the resurrection to eternal life. Lord, renew our faith in you.

Give to your church a new sense of mission and outreach. Bless all preachers and ministers of the sacraments with the joy of the good news.

Come, Lord, revive us.

Renew your people.

Come, Lord, be known in all who share in your saving purpose. We remember doctors and nurses, ambulance workers and paramedics, and all who risk their lives in the care and service of others. We pray for all who are carers within our communities.

Come, Lord, revive us.

Renew your people.

Come, Lord, let your presence be known in our homes and in our lives. Bless us in all our relationships and dealings with others. Come, Lord, with your light and love to lives that are struggling with poverty and debt, with bad housing and broken-down communities.

Come, Lord, revive us.

Renew your people.

Come, Lord, to all whose hope is gone, the lost, the despairing and the deeply depressed. We remember the overworked, the world weary, the exhausted and the worn out. We ask your blessing upon those who feel wrung out and dry, all who feel numb and those whose senses are deadened. We pray for all suffering from deep stress or trauma and their loved ones caring for them.

Come, Lord, revive us.

Renew your people.

We give thanks for the hope of life eternal. We remember in your presence our friends and loved ones departed. May we all come to know the joys of your Kingdom and the fullness of life eternal. And finally, a prayer for ourselves. May we stay firm in our faith and in full knowledge that you are always with us, wherever we are, and that when we stumble and fall, you hold us up with your love.

Merciful Father.

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

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters
we do also for you:
give us the will to be the servant of others
as you were the servant of all,
and gave up your life and died for us,
but are alive and reign, now and for ever.

Amen.

Life-giving God, go with us,
in the bustling lives we lead.
May we know your strength and peace,
surrounding us always.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Blessing

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you
always. Amen.

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.