The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
15 November 2026
The Second Sunday before Advent

Greeting

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations;
you have been our home throughout all the ages.
You were there before the world was made and will be forever.
From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Silence is kept

The Lord is here,
His Spirit is with us.

Call to Confession

God's love has destined us not for wrath,
but rather for salvation.
Therefore, let us confess our sins to the One who is eager to save.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, we confess that we have sinned against you
by not honouring you or one another.
When we place our iniquities before you,
it is your love that sheds light on our wayward deeds.
As we stand in awe of your constancy for us,
we ask your forgiveness through the mercy of Christ,
in whose name we pray. Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Sisters and brothers,
when we acknowledge our human limitations
and turn to depend upon our everlasting God,
we grow wise in heart to God's commands.
You are freed to love another,
for your sins are forgiven by the mercy of Christ. **Amen.**

Collect

Almighty and eternal God,
you have kindled the flame of love
in the hearts of the saints:
grant to us the same faith and power of love,
that, as we rejoice in their triumphs,
we may be sustained by their example and fellowship;
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**

The Word of God

1 Thessalonians 5.1-11

The Day of the Lord

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His word

Matthew 25:14–30

For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time, the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Thanks be to God for the gift of His Holy Word

Reflection from Stuart Pickersgill

Verse 11 of the Thessalonians reading contains an abundance of meaning. Essentially it carries significant weight in our spiritual lives. It invites us to connect with each other, sharing in joys as well as burdens. The instruction to build each other up is a scriptural principle essential for growth, summonsing us into active participation in a community marked by love and service.

Let's consider the significance of “build each other up.” This phrase conveys unity, reflecting a gathering body of believers who come together in Christ. When we bond over our faith, it strengthens the connections we share, even outside the Church walls. Our encouragement can become a lifeline for someone struggling with doubt or fear. Encouragement thrives within relationships; let us always seek to initiate and participate in those relationships.

Often we may feel we are not doing enough, yet even the simplest of acts of encouragement are essential in God's plan. The everyday gestures towards uplifting others are what God uses to cultivate a vibrant and loving community of faith. This verse vividly teaches us that encouragement is a vital part of our faith walk. It emphasises that uplifting others isn't a once in a while event but rather a consistent practice we should adopt.

Encouraging others can mean a simple word of affirmation, a smile, or a genuine compliment. Words possess immense power. They can build bridges or create divide; when we encourage, we create harmony and trust among each other.

Another significant lesson we gather is the importance of building community. In healthy relationships, we strengthen one another. Our friendships and familial ties also benefit from constant encouragement. We can support and uplift each other through words and actions. Community is away God has designed us to grow: we achieve this through gathering, sharing, and encouraging one another. We must stay connected by prioritizing attendance at events in our four Churches, getting to know one another and praying together.

We have a great Benefice where there is always something going on. Every time I go to an event at one of our Churches there is always a lovely welcome and the opportunity to meet and encourage someone new. This fosters the collective spirit God intended for his Church.

As we gather in our homes or churches, we join our prayers to the never-ending cycle of prayer from time gone by stretching to time in the future. Heavenly Father, we bring our prayers to you, our listening, caring, loving God.

We pray for the church, your family. Lead us to be your true witness and strengthen our mission, here on earth. We pray for our four churches and the communities they serve. We give thanks for the many gifts and talents which you have given to your people and we pray that you will help each of us to use our gifts in your service and in the service of others. We pray for all of those who work so hard to further the work of your church in our communities and we ask that, through them, we can spread your message of love and hope in the benefice. We pray for the connections we have with other churches in the area and ask that we can all support each other as we seek to share the good news of your love in our communities.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Lord, we hold before you all those areas of conflict in the world, remembering especially Israel, Palestine, Gaza, Ukraine and our brothers and sisters in Sudan. We pray for the decision makers, those who have influence over the development of these conflicts and we pray that you will turn their hearts from violence to more peaceful ways of handling their differences. We pray that your justice and reconciliation will prevail. And we pray for all of those innocent civilians who are caught up in the conflicts and live in fear. May your love strengthen and sustain them.

At a time when we have been remembering conflicts of the past, may this be a time where we can all dedicate ourselves to seeking peace whether that be locally or more widely.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

As we give thanks for the beauty of the autumn colours in the sunshine, we are aware of the changing seasons and particularly of the change in temperatures.

Lord, we pray for all of those who fear the colder months, those who dread the increasing cost of heating their homes, those who have difficult choices to make - whether to have heating or food for their families, those who are homeless and have to sleep out on the streets. Heavenly Father, we pray for them all and we ask that they will get the support that they need. We give thanks for different organisations which support the homeless, thinking especially of the work of Inn churches and pray for those who volunteer and those who receive support. And we pray that you will help us to be good neighbours to those around us.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Lord, we bring before you all of those who are on our hearts and minds at this time – the lonely, the housebound, those who are ill or awaiting test results, the bereaved and any with particular needs.

In a time of quiet, we bring them before you, praying that you will meet them in their needs, that your love will sustain and strengthen them and that you will bring to them, those who are sensitive to their needs and who can offer appropriate support and encouragement.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Finally, a prayer for ourselves. Loving God we give you thanks for your presence in our lives. We thank you that you love us as we are and pray that by following the example of your Son, Jesus Christ and through the help of the Holy Spirit, we can become the people you have created us to be. Help us to look beyond ourselves so that we can serve you and those around us.

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

The Lord's Prayer.

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.

Closing Prayers

Gracious Lord,
you give substance to our hope:
bring us at the last
to that fullness of life for which we long;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen**

Blessing and Sending Out

Sisters and brothers,
God in Christ
has given us the glorious treasure of eternal life.
Do not leave this treasure hidden,
but rather enjoy its abundance with everyone.

May God, whose coming we eagerly await,
keep you fervent in faith,
And the blessing of God Almighty
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
Remain with you,
Today and always. **Amen**

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