



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on January 28th 2024 at 10:45, meeting at Bethesda Chapel.

Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our service today is being led by Alec, who after welcoming everyone, reads from **Isaiah 6:1-8**

'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.'

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'

Alec continues:

"Worship begins not with me and my need but with God and His Holiness.

Let us come worship and bow down.

We have come to worship Him. Let us pray."

"Loving heavenly Father, we come to you humbly this morning remembering that you are the One who sent your Son to die for us, to give His life on a cross for us to open the way for us to come back to you the God who made us and sustains us yet from whom we had separated ourselves and cut ourselves off to go our own way. We ask you again today to forgive us if during this past week we have lived in a way that is not honouring to you. You are the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Who is a pardoning God like you and who shows grace and mercy to us like you do? We praise and worship your Holy Name.

The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this:

"I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts."

Alec then invites all to join in our Opening hymn:

Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.

God's grace first taught my heart to fear, his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Through every danger, trial and snare I have already come;
his grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
my shield and stronghold he shall be as long as life endures.

And when this earthly life is past, and mortal cares shall cease,
I shall possess with Christ at last eternal joy and peace.

Jubilate Hymns version of Amazing grace, how sweet the sound John Newton (1725 - 1807) Copyright © Jubilate Hymns Ltd CCL No 5664

Carol leads our Prayers, saying we come to the same God Isaiah saw, the sovereign God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we come boldly because his throne is a throne of mercy and grace. We pray:

Thank you Lord that once again we come into your presence, not because of what we have done but because of what you have done, your sacrifice at Calvary, your death and resurrection. We come not because of who we are but because of who you are, Saviour, Redeemer, King of Kings, God Almighty. Thank you that this is the day you have made. Once again you are faithful to cause the sun to rise and the earth to keep turning. Thank you not just for this day but for every day, for your faithful presence, strength, help and provision. We praise you for who you are and join our worship to those who stand before your throne, saying 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.'

We are so grateful that we can come together without fear to honour you and seek your face. Please forgive us for all the times we have hurt you and displeased you this week. Thank you that you do not treat us as our sin deserves because of the blood of Jesus and because you are willing that none should perish. So we pray for this dark and hurting world, rocked as it is with war, hatred and injustice. Lord, you are the light of the world. Let your light shine and pierce the darkness. Raise up your church to be the salt and light you always intended we should be. Help us to co-operate with you in breaking coldness and healing to lost and broken lives here in Galligreaves, in Blackburn, wherever we go. Restore the honour of your name in the hearts and minds of all people in this nation and across the world.

We thank you that you have not left us as orphans but your Holy Spirit is at work in this world revealing Jesus.

Jesus, you came to set the prisoners free. Please set free all those held by addiction, gang culture and crime. We pray that you would enable the hostages in Gaza to be released, peace to prevail in the Middle East, Ukraine, and so many other places where there is war and turmoil. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem as you have commanded us, and we pray wisdom for the Knesset and for all who are working for justice. We pray especially for all Christians on all sides, that you would strengthen them and give them courage and boldness to share the gospel of Jesus.

Lord, this world is broken and you are the only answer, We pray for all who are suffering, physically, mentally and emotionally. For the lonely, the oppressed, the abused. Would you be the all-sufficient God, whatever the need, turning hearts towards you and changing lives.

We pray for this fellowship, for all those who are ill, that you would restore them to health and strength. We pray for unity amongst us, and a willingness to encourage and support each other, and a willingness to fulfil your plans and purposes in our community.

Lord, keep us close to you on a daily basis. Keeping us looking to you, learning from you, growing to love you more and more, with open hearts and a willingness to serve. Be thou our vision, O Lord of our hearts.

Thank you that you have heard our prayers, and the prayers of our heart. May your spirit be free to move as he will in the rest of the time together, and we ask all these things in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Tony shares the notices for this week, emphasising the Special Members Meeting to be held following the service next Sunday, February 4th, when Future Ministry (and funding thereof) will be discussed.

Alec then introduced 3 Praise songs, (after sharing a comment from Christmas Day when one of the children referred to Bethesda as the Singing House) (At this beginning with a video on the screen:

When all I see is the battle, You see my victory.

When all I see is the mountain, You see a mountain moved.

And as I walk through the shadow, Your love surrounds me,
there's nothing to fear now for I am safe with You,

So when I fight, I'll fight on my knees with my hands lifted high.

**Oh God, the battle belongs to You and every fear I lay at Your feet,
I'll sing through the night.**

Oh God, the battle belongs to You

(and if You are for me,

who can be against me? (Yeah) for Jesus, there's nothing impossible for You)

When all I see are the ashes, You see the beauty, thank You God.

When all I see is a cross, God, You see the empty tomb.

So when I fight...

Almighty fortress, You go before us,

nothing can stand against the power of our God.

You shine in the shadow, You win every battle,

nothing can stand against the power of our God,

So when I fight...

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johgSkNj3-A> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiPNieLnt0s>

We continued in song with Trevor, Kate and Paul playing:

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge— take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

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And finally:

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter, I am the clay.
Mould me and make me after thy will,
while I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Search me and try me, Saviour today!
Wash me just now, Lord, wash me just now,
as in thy presence humbly I bow.

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me I pray!
Power, all power, surely is thine!
Touch me and heal me, Saviour divine!

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me!

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Today's Bible reading, Psalm 130, was read by Shirley

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.
If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

After a short break as one of the membership was unwell and being cared for,

We joined in a song of response: "I will wait for you" shown on the screen:

This is a quieter reflective song from the Getty Collection, and begins and ends ("Intro and Outro") with words being sung to the tune to which we generally sing "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord"

(INTRO

Lord, from the depths I call to You, Lord, hear me from on high
and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry.)

Out of the depths I cry to You, in darkest places I will call;
incline Your ear to me anew and hear my cry for mercy, Lord

Were You to count my sinful ways how could I come before Your throne?
Yet full forgiveness meets my gaze, I stand redeemed by grace alone.

**I will wait for You, I will wait for You, on Your word, I will rely.
I will wait for You, surely wait for You, till my soul is satisfied.**

So put your hope in God alone, take courage in His power to save
completely and forever won by Christ emerging from the grave

I will wait for You...

Now He has come to make a way and God Himself has paid the price
that all who trust in Him today find healing in His sacrifice

**I will wait for You, I will wait for You
through the storm and through the night.
I will wait for You, surely wait for You,
for Your love is my delight.**

(OUTRO

I pray my soul waits for the Lord, my hope is in His word.

More than the watchman waits for dawn, my soul waits for the Lord.)

Interpreted by Keith & Kristyn Getty

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Alec prayed briefly then gave his Message: WORKING ON THE JIGSAW

Doesn't God hear and answer our prayers?

The creator of a jigsaw puzzle gives us on the cover of the box which contains the puzzle pieces a complete copy of the real picture in all its glory and in all its detail. This is the perfect guideline which the maker of the puzzle has prepared for us to use when we are working on the puzzle. All the pieces of the puzzle hang together; they fit exactly, they come together perfectly. Every piece has its special and unique form and shape, colours and content. Each piece has its particular place. At the beginning when we buy or receive the puzzle all the pieces are there; there is nothing missing.

So when I referred to the previous message as a jigsaw puzzle that is exactly what I was talking about. And here is the puzzle.

The challenge of the puzzle is to come to grips with, to come to terms with, to grasp and understand the meaning of the Word of God and what He is saying to us.

If you have been following the messages on the first eight chapters of 1 Samuel which I hope you are reading through thoughtfully at home you will see the challenge and the encouragement that God is giving us.

To put it very simply God calls us to follow Him, shows us His character and his power and might and we all bow down and say yes, yes and then the next minute we turn around metaphorically and literally and say but no, we want to go our own way.

The Israelites have seen all that God has done for them, single-handedly without their help bringing back the Ark of the Covenant of God from the Philistines; then thundering with loud thunder against the Philistines and throwing them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.

But then they reject God and say we don't want you as king. We want to choose our own king; we want to go our own way. God warns them if they go their own way they will regret it and when they are at the end of their tether and are in an awful mess they will come back and cry to God, but He will not hear their cry.

This is really dramatic. This is probably really completely unexpected. Our God, the compassionate, loving, caring, gracious and merciful God does not listen to their cries. But you see the only true living God who's Name will be praised for ever and who sits enthroned in the heavens, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is just, righteous and holy. Without a sacrifice for our disobedience we have no way forward for He cannot compromise his justice, righteousness and holiness. He cannot deny himself.

On the other side of some very large jigsaw puzzles all the pieces are numbered according to blocks a, b, c, d and so on so that if we have insoluble difficulties in putting the puzzle together we get help from the other side.

So today we are looking at the other side of the puzzle which I more than hinted at two weeks ago. With the Creator's help we can move on, move forward and share in the production and re-appearance of a fruitful creatively put-together piece of work. Let's call it for want of a better expression the reality of the living and moving dynamic body of Christ on earth.

We move today from 1 Samuel to the book of Psalms, specifically to Psalm 130. But please go back and read 1 Samuel over and over again and listen to the messages on YouTube.

Psalm 130 begins with a personal testimony of God's rescue from the depths of guilt. From there, the author ascends step by step to a place where he can give confidence to others in their trust in God. Psalm 130 is one of the so-called songs of ascents sung by the people of God on their way up to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the various yearly feasts which God had set up for them.

It is about forgiveness through undeserved grace. It is about being put right with God; it is about restoring our relationship with the living God, it is about sharing this truth about God and about life with others. Go in my Name and because you believe, others will know that I live.

Psalm 130 is very possibly one of your favourite Psalms. It was Calvin's favourite and was Augustine's favourite and it was a favourite of Martin Luther too.

This Psalm was used by God in the transformation of John Wesley. He was at that time a minister and a preacher but not a saved believer. He was moved and felt very much confronted reading Martin Luther's introduction to the Psalms. He visited St. Paul's Cathedral in London where the choir was chanting Psalm 130, with the refrain "if you should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand." Wesley said to himself I couldn't stand before God except as a guilty person". This Psalm 130 was used by the Lord in this encounter to bring him to repentance and faith in God in Jesus Christ.

Luther himself was so struck with this Psalm that 501 years ago in 1523 he wrote a hymn, essentially a paraphrase of this psalm,

“From depths of woe I cry to Thee, in trial and tribulation;
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me, Lord, hear my supplication.
If Thou rememb’rest ev’ry sin who then could heaven ever win
or stand before Thy presence?”

This focuses on, this concentrates on, this speaks of the sorrow we feel for the mess we have made of our lives without God, and our hope in the forgiveness of Christ. It begins in the depths of despair that Luther himself felt as he was in agony over his sinfulness. The hymn continues by emphasising that we can do nothing to earn God’s forgiveness, but God’s mercy towards us is a free gift. The fourth verse reminds us that we wait in hope because we are God’s children and He will not forsake us and the final verse expresses trust that the grace of God is greater than our sins, and that He will redeem us in the end.

You remember Jonah. God told him to go to the city of Nineveh at that time the largest city in the world with a population more or less the same as Blackburn with Darwen today. And Jonah says no and goes in the other direction. Do we say no to sharing the Word of God with the peoples of our area? Jonah landed up in the belly of a huge fish. Jonah ran away from the Lord; do we? Where might we end up if we are disobedient to God?

Augustine wrote: “Jonah cried from the deep; from the fish’s belly. He was not only beneath the waves, but also in the entrails of the beast; nevertheless, those waves and that body did not prevent his prayer from reaching God, and the beast’s belly could not contain the voice of his prayer. It penetrated all things, it burst through all things, it reached the ears of God.”

May I warmly recommend you all to read Jonah ch. 2, indeed all four short chapters of the book of the prophet Jonah?

The only time when Jonah really cried to God was when he was in the depths. Is that true of us? When we realise our need of God do we cry to Him for help? When we see the wrongs we have done and our need of forgiveness do we cry to God in Jesus Christ? You see it is the mercy of God that puts us in the depths. Why does God do that? So that we might cry out to God who is the only one who can save us, the only one who can rescue us from our sin. You know if you are under water it is impossible for you to cry for you are trying not to drown.

Psalm 130 speaks loudly and clearly. It’s a very short Psalm. It is the sixth of only seven Psalms that are called penitential Psalms; that is to say Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. They are called penitential psalms because they are appropriate for prayer during a time of personal or congregational repentance.

This is the link to the jigsaw puzzle; to the hot and cold relationship with God.

These psalms take the form of laments because their subject is lamenting over sin and the problems that arise for the sinner. 1 John 1:8-9 reads, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.

Depths speak of struggling, depths speak of danger, and depths speak of life-threatening circumstances.

Needing dental and other medical treatment, coming to terms with losses in all areas of our lives, struggling to get to grips with our world as it is, facing daily challenges which might appear to threaten to overwhelm us are indeed waters through which we all familiarly try to swim and hold our heads above water. But the depths the Psalm speaks of are of a different nature.

You see we are in the depths of our sin; in the depths of our guilt and in the depths of the judgement of God. Looking inside ourselves for answers will not help. Self-help is in these depths not even a blink of a

source of a solution. Turning to esoteric ideas and other similar modes of thinking is like going down a back alley to hell.

The depths are not that our internet is not working or our car has a technical problem. Of course God is not disinterested in such things. He is able to help us solve these challenges. These are genuine problems but they are not the key to our ability to live.

When people come to me with a problem I aim to listen very carefully to understand what they want from me and what it is that is troubling them to be able as far as possible to help them, maybe sometimes referring them to another person or agency. But often the problem that they say they have is not the main real problem they have but as we talk leads us on to see what the real problem may be and indeed often if not usually is. And I think that it is often the case that God brings us into situations which and into contact with people who are challenging, even problematic for us in order to lead us on, to lead us forward to deal with something much bigger, much more fundamental and much more important where we ourselves need to change, to be transformed one degree further into the image of Christ as He renews our minds, our thinking and our understanding.

I think this is of direct application to every church, to every body of believers, including ourselves. In the histories of Leamington Road Baptist Church and of Bethesda Chapel and more recently in our life as Blackburn Baptist Church we have under God's leading and direction, in His mercy and grace experienced challenges where we have probably come to the realisation that the problem lies not where we initially thought it was but somewhere else, maybe in many different areas of our life and lives.

May I give you a concrete example? Look with me please at the paralysed man in Mark 2:1-12.

Jesus, can you not see what the real issue is? This man is paralysed; this man cannot walk. He needs to be healed.

And Jesus says to them, "May I ask you the same question?" Can you see what ultimately the real issue is?

The problem that we think we have may just be our introduction to the real problem, our access point to the real issue, our connecting point to the God who forgives our sin and gives us new life. So we don't just cry out to God to help us with our internet connection or our voice mail selection key, which He would do and does, we don't just cry out to God for physical and emotional healing, but cry out to the Sovereign God to forgive you for the mess we have made of your relationship to Him. Ask Him for mercy. He will look after the rest. Seek first, put first, prioritise, centre your thinking, your will and your emotions on the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the other things will be yours as well, for your heavenly Father knows full well what you need.

In his commentary on the Psalms Alec Motyer writes that "coming to God with one problem may easily and blessedly expose the real problem that needs to be solved." Do we prefer to receive and to offer visible physical healing or invisible forgiveness? Do we not want God to show us what the real problem or the more important problem is?

In Psalm 130 the Psalmist cries, thinks, waits and shares and speaks the truth with others.

Hear me, answer me, help me is what the Psalmist says in his cry. It is a kind of emergency call seeking an immediate answer. He asks for mercy in view of his sin and guilt and the judgement of God upon him.

"Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold.

I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.

I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched.

My eyes fail, looking for my God."

(Psalm 69:1-3)

What is the problem?

What kind of a view of God do we have?

If we have a low view of God we won't think of sin as being very important. We will relativise it, we will ignore it, we will water it down, and we will deny it. We will think of it as irrelevant, powerless and without consequences.

But if we can see the majesty and lordship of God, his justice and His holiness but also His patience, grace, compassion and mercy we will grasp, we will see, we will understand how serious a matter it is not to obey the will of God for our lives. It is only in our awareness of God as He has revealed Himself in His Holiness that we understand wrong and that we have made a mess of our lives.

"You, God, know my folly; my guilt is not hidden from you." Psalm 69:5

Maybe read through Psalm 69 during the coming days. May it be a great comfort as well as a challenge to you in your walk with the Lord.

If you are in the depths and you are going to call on somebody make sure you call on someone who can do something!

When we are in the depths as in verse 1 we may cry as in verse 2 to the Lord; to Yahweh the God of mercy and judgement and to Adonai who is master and sovereign over all things.

When Jesus is on the lake as recorded in Matthew. 8: 23-27, Mark. 4: 35-41 and Luke 8: 22-25 the boat in which he was in was nearly swamped by waves breaking over the boat from a furious squall. Is that like where you are this morning? Then see what Jesus, the Creator of and sovereign over the universe did. Well it didn't look like he was even aware of the situation for actually he was asleep in the boat! Maybe that's what you think and feel this morning, that Jesus isn't even aware of your situation?

Maybe this morning you are asking yourself the question, "How can I know God?" "How can I know that God is with me?" How can I know that God loves me and forgives me?" This morning on the way to Bethesda I met and spoke with a man who said to me straight off. I am not religious. How can there be a God if there is so much suffering in the world? If there was a God I think he himself would somehow have to come down to earth and do something about it.

The disciples were mainly Galilean fishermen and must have thought they knew they were in a difficult situation just like perhaps you do this morning? They knew about conditions in the water; you know about the conditions in your life. The disciples woke Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

Do you think even if there is a Jesus, even if he is somewhere near you that he is asleep so to speak and doesn't care?

Our God is not a "god" who doesn't hear or speak; a "god" who cannot act, move or do anything. He hears, listens, moves and acts. He is all-knowing and all-powerful.

Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!", then the waves died down and it was completely still. That's what he can do in your life this morning. He can still the storms in your life and the fear and anxiety that you have. He can do that because He has power and authority over all creation for He is the sovereign Lord.

Psalm 46:10 says: "Be still and know that I am God." If we are rushing hectically and unstoppably around in a kind of panic trying to solve our problems maybe by manipulating this that or the other or whatever we are foolish. The body of Christ can rest in the certainty of the sovereignty and love of the Lord. Let us continue to trust Him. With God nothing is impossible.

God is holy and all-knowing and weighs our actions: We know that from Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2.2-3. "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Do not keep

talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the Lord is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed”.

So what are the real depths? We may feel that there are many things in our lives that have been or are or may become depths to us. Grief, depression, illness, poverty, abuse — any of these experiences, and so many more, can plunge us into a darkness so deep that it can feel almost like death. But ultimately they are the sins in verse 2, those sins that demonstrate our separation from God, the separation that we have chosen one-sidedly.

So out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

Is that where you are this morning? We cry out for mercy. We have a troubled conscience. We have a disturbed heart. We realise that we are in need.

You might think or feel that your problem is this or that and you have tried to solve it in all kinds of ways. But the real problem is your relationship to the living God.

“Out of the depths I cry to you Lord.”

Alec invited all to join in Our Closing (offertory) hymn, played by Trevor, Kate and Paul

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Authors: Michael Alfred Baughen, Timothy Dudley-Smith CCLI Song # 224957 Copyrights::Words: 1976 Dudley-Smith, Timothy (Admin. by Oxford University Press) Music: 1976 Michael Baughen - The Jubilate Group (Admin. by Jubilate Hymns Ltd, sub to Hope Publishing for various regions) (The Jubilate Group) CCL No 5664

Alec closed in prayer as finally all said: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.