



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on April 11th 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

The lifting of lockdown restrictions has resulted in the decision to meet in person at Bethesda Chapel once again. We still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet for those unable to attend Bethesda. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

We continue our studies in Luke's Gospel, and our worship today is led by **Tim, who welcomes us all, wherever we are.**

Good morning, hello and welcome, as it says on the screen behind us. Welcome to all who are here in the building with us, and the service is also being live streamed so wherever you are and whenever you are watching, a warm welcome to you. Last week of course was Easter Sunday when we had the joy and privilege of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. But that is not something we should restrict to Easter, we should celebrate it every day of our lives, particularly when we look around on such a beautiful morning as this. We remember the new life that we can share in Jesus Christ. So I thought this morning we would start with another song that celebrates the fact that Jesus is alive. It's a new song written only in 2019, by a group called RESOUNDworship, and it's called 'Christ was raised'. It's a great song for us to listen to, so let's particularly listen to the words, as we celebrate that Jesus is alive, **"Christ was raised"**

(written and made available for use at the current time by Resound Music.)

Christ was raised, even death could not contain him.

We are saved, Satan's power he overcame.

No more shame, no more guilt and condemnation,
in his name, in his name.

Christ is raised, he is seated with the Father,
and the Spirit that raised him gives us life.

So we'll live to the glory of our saviour,
Hallelujah, he's alive.

Christ was raised, the restorer of creation,
by his grace making earth and heaven new.
we are changed, agents of his re-creation
in all we do, all we do.

Christ is raised, so our struggles have a purpose,

he's alive, so our work is not in vain,
and we'll serve for the glory of our saviour,
Hallelujah, Jesus reigns.

Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, he's alive.

Christ was raised, bringing all the world together,
making peace, breaking down our walls of hate.
And one day every knee will bow before him,
for his praise, for his praise.
Christ is raised, with a new and glorious body,
scars of love in his hands and in his side.
So we'll sing to the glory of our saviour:
Hallelujah, King of life.

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<https://youtu.be/Kn7Uh87cNEA>

Tim leads us in a brief prayer.

Thank you Father God that we can come into your presence today, and we can shout: Alleluia he's alive! We thank you that Jesus is indeed raised from the dead and ,as that song reminded us, that could not contain him. We thank you for the hope that the resurrection of Jesus brings us, that we know that his death on the cross was not in vain because you raised him to new life, and Lord we know that because of his death, we too, and because of his resurrection, we too can hope for our own resurrection, we can hope for eternal life with you, that it's not an unsure hope but the sure and certain hope, Lord, that we will one day be with you forever. Thank you Lord, that because Jesus is alive, as that song reminds us, the work that we do is not in vain, he comes alongside us through his holy spirit and works with us and through us in our world. Lord, thank you for the privilege of that, and we thank you for being able to look forward to that day when, as that song reminded us, every knee will bow before him, and everyone will acknowledge who he truly is. So, Lord, we thank you for the Lord Jesus, that he is alive, and we thank you for the difference that that makes to our lives. Lord we pray ,as we continue in our worship before you this morning, that you will be with us and will guide us and help us in our thoughts and draw us closer to you, that you will teach us the things you need to teach us through your word. We ask you all these things in Jesus name. Amen

Tim shares any notices for the week, reminding us that we are still under some restrictions at present and need to follow the guidance concerning social distancing which means we are not able to share as we would wish to, before and after the service, however there is an opportunity to join us and meet through zoom both following the service today and mid-week as well as being welcome to join in our regular prayer meeting at 7:30 pm on Thursday evenings.

Tim continues: We're going to listen to another song now, and we are grateful, in these times when we can't sing together collectively sadly yet, hopefully the time will come when we are able to do so, but we are grateful in these times when we can't do that, that a number of churches have made recordings of their music groups and have made them available to other churches so that they can be used without getting into problems with copyright, so we're going to listen to a song that's been recorded and made available by Bedford Community Church, and it's a song that reminds us of our hope in Christ, it's one that we are very familiar with I think called "In Christ alone"

Those at home can sing, those at Bethesda can only watch and listen, to the now familiar song: In Christ alone.

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones He came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on Him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain;
then bursting forth in glorious day
up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am His and He is mine -
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from His hand:
till He returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Debbie leads us in our Prayers of Intercession.

Debbie begins our prayers with words from Lamentations Chapter 3, verses 20-25 "because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I said to myself the Lord is my portion I will wait for him, the Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him."

Lord, as we start our time of prayer, we want to start with praise. Lord, we praise you for your great love and faithfulness to us, may we turn to you for answers to our problems, for rescue from our difficulties and for hope in dark times. May our first thoughts be to turn to you rather than do things on our own. May we learn to be patient and wait for your ways to be revealed to us, for they are always the best and right ones for us because you love us and want what is best for us.

Lord, at this time, we pray for the Queen and for the royal family at this sad time, as they mourn the loss of Prince Phillip. We pray that her faith in you may sustain her at this time and may she know your arms around her, comforting her and giving her strength. We thank you for Prince Philip's loyal service across the decades, for many years being at his wife's side and in the background supporting her and giving her strength. Lord may it remind us to live lives of service to you and others. We pray Lord, for the funeral arrangements, that they will be carried out safely and will do honour to his memory and bring comfort to his family.

It is right to Lord that we pray for Northern Ireland at this time of trouble. We thank you Lord that last night was violence free and we do believe that that is an answer to our prayers. We pray that you will continue to stem the tide of violence, and to restrain the hand that is bent on committing acts of violence. May men and women of peace prevail. We pray for the safety of the police force, and we pray that the young people who are being involved may be deterred and turned away from the violent pathway. Lord may they not think it is glamorous or fun or right.

Lord, we also thank you that Covid numbers now seems to be falling. We pray for your continued mercy to be shown to our nation, we know that this is of you. However we pray for families who are still losing loved ones or struggling with the after effects of long-covid, for whom the pandemic is not over and then not be for quite some time, may they be given help and support. We pray for common-sense and for restraint as further easing starts this week, Lord we thank you that our country feels it is in a position to start opening businesses up again but we pray that people will be sensible and wear masks and keep their distance and show respect for others. We continue to pray that your hand will be on the vaccination programme, that it may go smoothly. We thank you for all those giving their time and skills and we pray particularly for

wisdom especially surrounding the use of the Astrazeneca vaccine, which has been in the news this week, may it be used effectively and well.

We pray for our European neighbours Lord, that you would help them to soon to be able to roll out their vaccination programmes speedily, and that you will give them wisdom to bring the soaring numbers in cases at the moment under control where this is the case. We pray for countries like Brazil where numbers almost seem to be out of control, we pray for wisdom to their leaders that you will get through to them the right measures to be taken whatever their past answers, we pray that you will be gracious to Brazil as a country especially the many poor, who live in such crowded conditions.

We pray for our town of Blackburn, may you bring it to be a place of safety and unity, a good place to grow up and live. We pray that as part of your church here you would help us to shine your light and be salt in our communities. We pray for a special blessing on the area of Galligreaves, that we may meet the needs of those who live around our church..

We pray for our fellowship, for those who are down bring them hope and lift them up; for those struggling with health issues grant them patience peace and healing; for those with specific difficulties they are experiencing may you bring them the answers and support they need.

Above all Lord, we thank you for your enduring love for us, your faithfulness that loves us day by day in the little things of life as well as the big things. Thank you that your love inclines you to listen to our prayers and act on our behalf. Lord would you be our portion today because we know you are sufficient unto all our needs. We pray these things in your name O- Lord. Amen.

Shirley reads our Bible Passage for today, Luke 6, verses 1-11

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shrivelled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shrivelled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

"This is the word of the Lord - thanks be to God."

Tim shares the sermon:

Introduction

Traditions

During a service at an old synagogue in Eastern Europe, when a particular prayer was said, half the congregants stood up and half remained sitting. The half that was seated started yelling at those standing to sit down, and the ones standing yelled at the ones sitting to stand up. The new rabbi, learned as he was in the Law and commentaries, didn't know what to do. His congregation suggested that he consult a housebound 98-year-old man who was one of the original founders of their synagogue. The rabbi hoped the elderly man would be able to tell him what the actual tradition was, so he went to the nursing home with a representative of each faction of the congregation. The one whose followers stood during the prayer asked the old man, "Is the tradition to stand during this prayer?" The old man answered, "No, that is not the tradition." The one whose followers sat said, "Then the tradition is to sit!" The old man answered, "No, that is not the tradition." Then the rabbi said to the old man, "But the congregants fight all the time, yelling at each other about whether they should sit or stand." The old man interrupted, exclaiming, "THAT is the tradition!"

Traditions can be very good, in fact they're essential, when they are upholding the basic truths of God. But when we're sticklers for tradition in things that don't really matter very much, or worse, things that reflect man-made ideas that are opposed to God's values, then they're worse than useless. This was the problem that we read about in today's passage that brought Jesus again into conflict with the Pharisees, the religious leaders. We saw some other examples of the wrong attitudes and traditions of the Pharisees in our last passage in chapter 5 of Luke – there it was to do with their views on who it was OK to associate with and about fasting. But now another area of conflict crops up – their views on the Sabbath.

We read here about incidents on two separate Sabbath days where Jesus pointed out that their traditions were completely at odds with how God saw things. The first was to do with doing things that are necessary for human wellbeing on the Sabbath, the second was to do with good deeds on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath

Since we're talking about the Sabbath, it would perhaps be good to remind ourselves of its origins. The command to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest was one of the 10

commandments, given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, which we read about in Exodus 20. However, the command given there was to 'remember the Sabbath' so it was something that they already knew about – and this is confirmed if we turn back a few chapters to Exodus 16 where the Sabbath is mentioned before the giving of the law. The principle of one day in seven as a day of rest was linked back in the commandment to the pattern in creation that we read of way back in Genesis 2, where God had ceased from his six-day work of creation and rested. The Sabbath was about a *rest to be enjoyed*, not rules to be obeyed. It's interesting, too, that when Moses repeated the 10 commandments in his sermons to the people many years later recorded for us in Deuteronomy, he gave a different reason to the people for remembering the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 5:15) – because they were slaves in Egypt. When they were slaves, they could not observe the Sabbath rest. It took the intervention of God to set them free from their slavery, so the Sabbath was also designed to remind them of God's provision in saving them – it was God who had provided the possibility of rest.

So the Sabbath was intended to be a great blessing to the people, but over the years, an elaborate system of dos and don'ts had been built up as tradition around the basic principle and the religious leaders of Jesus' day had completely lost sight of the real reason for the Sabbath. Jesus wasn't trying to reform the rules somewhat but rather to tell them that they'd missed the point entirely!

Luke 6: 1-5 : It Was Right to Do on the Sabbath What Was Necessary for Human Needs

The problem on the first Sabbath arose from the disciples' plucking and eating corn as they walked through the fields (v 1). There wasn't a problem with what they were doing in itself – that was explicitly allowed for by the law (Deuteronomy 23 verse 25) to support the poor in the land. The problem was the day they were doing it on. The Pharisees pop up straight away to accuse them in verse 2 – you get the impression that they were there watching for just something like this to jump on (just like we see later in verse 7)! According to the Pharisees' interpretation of the Sabbath rules, what the disciples had just done constituted reaping, threshing and grinding, all of which were banned on the Sabbath – a triple whammy!

[This approach to the Sabbath continues among Orthodox Jews. In early 1992, it is reported that tenants let three apartments in an Orthodox neighbourhood in Tel Aviv burn to the ground while they asked a rabbi whether a telephone call to the fire department on the Sabbath would violate Jewish law. Observant Jews are forbidden to use the phone on the Sabbath, because doing so would break an electrical current, which is considered a form of work. In the half-hour it took the rabbi to decide 'yes' because it was an emergency, the fire had spread to two neighbouring apartments.]

Jesus responds to the accusation with two important principles. First, he goes straight to God's word – always a good thing for us to do in any case of dispute – and gives the example of what David did as recorded in 1 Samuel 21 verses 1 to 6. David and his men were fleeing from Saul, who wanted to kill David, and he and his men were hungry and ate the consecrated bread provided by a priest because there was nothing else to eat in the place where they were. Normally this bread would only have been eaten by the priests. This showed the first principle: that human need is more important than religious ritual.

Jesus says, “Have you never read...?”, a not-so-subtle criticism of the Pharisees who were so proud and confident in their knowledge of the Scriptures but had missed their real meaning. Time and time again in the Gospels, Jesus criticised them for this. If they had really read and taken notice of the Old Testament scriptures and not been so obsessed with their traditions, they would have understood this principle. For example, they would have known that:

- what God really wants is mercy, not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6)
- the true sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17)
- the fasting God chooses is to loose the chains of injustice and set the oppressed free (Isaiah 58:6)

God is not a God of legalism, but a God of mercy, who doesn't want religious observance that ignores the suffering of others. We need to learn this lesson too. I imagine this made the Pharisees' blood boil!

The example Jesus chose was a great one, because the Pharisees wouldn't dare to criticise the actions of Israel's great king. After all, David was God's anointed king... but so was Jesus! That is what he had claimed about himself when he quoted from Isaiah 61 a couple of chapters ago in the synagogue in Nazareth. And that brings us to the second principle: that he, Jesus, God's anointed king, was Lord of the Sabbath! He was saying that *he* had the authority to determine if the disciples' action broke the Sabbath law, not the Pharisees – and he had no problem with it. When Jesus made that statement, he was clearly claiming to be God, because it was the Lord God who had established the Sabbath. I'm sure that the Pharisees did not miss his and would have been even more angry, probably echoing the thoughts we read about in chapter 5 verse 21 when they considered Jesus to have uttered blasphemy for claiming to be able to forgive the paralysed man's sins.

Jesus was never at all concerned with being seen to be doing the right thing according to the thinking of the culture around about him in first century Judea – what mattered to him was doing what was right in the eyes of God. I wonder, if we reflect on our own attitudes and actions, what they are motivated by? Traditions? Looking good to other people? If Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, he's God - he should be the Lord of our lives too and our primary motivation should be to do what's right in his sight.

Luke 6: 6-11 : It Was Right to Do Good Deeds on the Sabbath

We then read about another Sabbath where Jesus came into conflict over the Pharisee's rules. Incidentally, I was struck on reading verse 6 that Jesus, despite the rising opposition to him that Luke describes, still went to the synagogue. We might well think he had good reason to avoid it – but he did not forsake the gathering together of God's people, just as we are encouraged not to in Hebrews 10 verse 25.

And there in the synagogue is a man with a damaged hand (interesting that, of the three Gospel writers to record this incident, only Luke notes that it was the man's *right* hand - the close attention of an author who was a doctor), and the Pharisees and teachers of the law were watching closely to see if Jesus would heal the man on the Sabbath (v 7) – maybe

they had even purposely 'set Jesus up' by bringing the man into the synagogue that day. This verse is almost unbelievable, isn't it? By their actions, they showed that they knew that Jesus had the power of God to work miracles, but instead of rejoicing in this and acknowledging him for who he was, they just wanted to trap him for their own purposes. The Bible is right when it says that the heart of man 'is deceitful above all things and beyond cure' and asks, 'Who can understand it?', (Jeremiah 17 verse 9). The religious leaders watched Jesus closely, but it was not with a heart of love for him, or concern for others who needed Jesus' help. In the legalistic approach taken by the religious leaders (which went far beyond the commands of the scriptures), they clearly neglected acts of compassion and love to the needy. If we're not careful, we too can observe Jesus, but our hearts can be far from him and we can be unconcerned with those who need to receive his healing touch.

Jesus knew exactly what their motives were and asked them a telling question: "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" Well, there was really no answer that they could give to that, was there? In his question, Jesus emphasised the truth about the Sabbath - there is never a wrong day to do something truly good.

Jesus told the man to stretch out his disabled hand. He commanded him to do the very thing that was impossible in his present condition. But Jesus gave both the command and the ability to fulfil it. That's a great lesson for us, too. When Jesus asks us to do anything, he also gives us the power to fulfil it, unlikely though that may sometimes seem. As the man started to obey, he suddenly found that he could do what he was being asked – that's the way we need to operate too. It reminds us of what we read earlier in Luke, spoken by the angel to Mary – 'For nothing is impossible with God' (Luke 1: 37).

The last verse is really shocking - instead of rejoicing in the great miracle that Jesus had done and the restoration of the disabled man, the religious leaders were filled with fury. Even according to their own understanding of the Sabbath, their rage and plotting of murder were far greater violations of the Sabbath than the healing of the man's withered hand. Yet this is what Jesus was faced with all the time. In Mark 7, Jesus had to say to them, "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men... thus you nullify the word of God by the tradition that you have handed down."

Let's make sure that our own traditions don't get in the way of our relationship with God. That relationship is not based on the rules we keep or what we do for him, but on what *he* has done for us in Jesus.

What About the Sabbath and Us?

So what about our relationship as Christians to the Sabbath? There has been debate through the centuries of the church, particularly in the early days that we read about through Luke's second volume, the book of Acts, as to whether Christians should observe the Jewish Sabbath, or whether the Sabbath is in some way replaced by an observation of the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection, our Sunday.

To a large degree, these debates are missing the point of the true meaning of the Sabbath. Paul says in Colossians chapter 2 verses 16 and 17, 'Do not let anyone judge you by what

you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath Day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.' We have seen in Luke that Jesus was doing something entirely new, establishing a new covenant. And many of the things that we read of in the old covenant which were physical and external, have a significance under the new covenant which is spiritual and internal – as Paul says they are 'shadows of the things to come'. The Sabbath is an example of this. The old covenant Sabbath was about freedom for a day in the week, a rest from physical labour (which remains, of course, a good practical guiding principle) and about keeping the *law* that instructed this. But the new covenant says that, because of Jesus' work on our behalf on the cross, we have entered by *grace* into a permanent 'spiritual Sabbath', a constant, unchangeable place of peace and rest where we never have to strive any more to work to try earn God's favour, but only work in his strength, at his prompting, as an expression of our gratitude to him. Have you entered into that wonderful Sabbath?

Just as the Israelites were reminded by the Sabbath of their deliverance from physical slavery in Egypt, we are reminded of our deliverance by Jesus from our slavery to sin and death, and that we can rest secure in him. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Conclusion

So, as we reflect on this passage this morning, let's ask ourselves:

- What are we motivated by – sticking to traditions, looking good and conforming to other people's expectations, or truly seeking to do what's right in the sight of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath?
- And have I entered into the permanent Sabbath rest that Jesus has won for me?

Our final hymn today is very familiar, though with a new take - Jesus shall reign where'er the sun - this was originally written by Isaac Watts but has some additional words by Keith and Kristyn Getty, and Ed Cash, as a refrain. For those who are unable to watch the video today, you can imagine the well known tune, with the refrain words following a melody of your own making! When you are able to watch or listen to this being sung by Kristyn, you can see how your songwriting skills compare with the composers!

Jesus Shall Reign Where'er The Sun

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
till sun shall rise and set no more.

Blessings abound where'er He reigns,
the prisoner leaps to lose his chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all the sons of want are blessed.

To our King be highest praise,
rising through eternal days,
just and faithful He shall reign:
Jesus shall reign!

People and realms of every tongue
dwell on His love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on His name.
To our King be highest praise....

Let every creature rise and bring
blessing and honour to our King,
angels descend with songs again
and earth repeat the loud amen!
To our King be highest praise....

Isaac Watts, refrain Keith and Kristyn Getty and Ed Cash

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<https://youtu.be/BE4DDB5whyk>

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Tim closes the service:

"Let's share the Grace with one another:

**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. "**