



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on April 16th 2023 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.

Today's service is led by Alec, as we begin a new series entitled **FAITH IN ACTION** from the book of James.

After a Welcome & Introduction from Alec, we listen to a song new to many of us: "Consider it joy" by Graham Kendrick, shown on the screen.

Though trials will come don't fear, don't run,
lift up your eyes, hold fast, be strong, have faith, keep on believing;
Lift up your eyes for God is at work in us,
moulding and shaping us out of his love for us,
making us more like Jesus.

**Consider it joy, pure joy when troubles come, many trials will make you strong.
Consider it joy, pure joy and stand your ground then at last you'll wear a crown.**

Though trials will come won't fear, won't run
We'll lift up our eyes, hold fast, be strong, have faith, keep on believing;
We'll lift up our eyes for God is at work in us,
moulding and shaping us out of his love for us.
making us more like Jesus

Joy, pure joy, consider it joy, pure joy
Joy, pure joy, consider it joy, pure joy

Patiently trusting him, ready for anything
'Til we're complete in him, in everything more like Jesus.

Consider it joy, pure joy when troubles come...

Author:Graham Kendrick CCLI SONG #3312814 Copyright © 2001 Make Way Music (Admin. by Make Way Music Limited)CCLNo 5664
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7X4ljhCToRE>

After an opening prayer, Alec reads Psalm 143

Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy;
in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.

Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.

The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground;
he makes me dwell in the darkness like those long dead.

So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed.

I remember the days of long ago, I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.

I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land.
Answer me quickly, Lord; my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit.
Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.
Rescue me from my enemies, Lord, for I hide myself in you.
Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;
may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.
For your name's sake, Lord, preserve my life; in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble.
In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

We lift our voices as we sing our opening hymn "Immortal, invisible, God only wise"

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, your great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, you rule us in might;
your justice like mountains high soaring above,
your clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life you're giving, to both great and the small;
in all you are living, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish, uncertain and frail,
and wither and perish, but you never fail.

We worship before you, great Father of light;
while angels adore you, all veiling their sight;
our praises we would render: O Father to you
whom only the splendour of light hides from view.

Author: Walter Chalmers Smith CCLI SONG # 124466 Words and Music: Public Domain CCL No 5664

Notices for the coming week are shared by Tony, then we spend a period of time Alec refers to as Praise and worship, singing 3 songs: firstly "I will wait for you"

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.)

Authors: Jordan Kauflin, Keith Getty, Matthew Merker, Stuart Townend CCLI SONG # 7118914 Copyrights ©2018 Getty Music Publishing (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.) Jordan Kauflin Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Matthew Merker Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Townend Songs (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) CCL No 5664

We continue with: "All my ways are known to you"

In days of peace and days of rest,
in times of loss and loneliness,
though rich or poor, Your word is true,
that all my ways are known to You.

No trial has come beyond Your hand,
no step I walk beyond Your plan,
the path is dark outside my view
still all my ways are known to You.

**And oh what peace that I have found wherever I may be,
for all my ways are known to You, Hallelujah, they are known to You!**

I do not fear the final night
for death will be the door to life,
You take my hand and lead me through
for all my ways are known to You.

And oh what peace that I have found....

(bridge)

Open up my eyes so I may see
that You have made these ways for me.

Open up my eyes so I may see
that You my God, will walk with me. (Repeat)

**And oh what peace that I have found wherever I may be,
for all my ways are known to You, Hallelujah, they are known to You
Hallelujah, they are known to you!**

Authors: Jonny Robinson, Rich Thompson, Michael Farren, Dustin Smith CCLI SONG # 7073327 Copyrights © 2016 CityAlight Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) Farren Love And War Publishing (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) Integrity's Alleluia! Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) CCL No 5664

And finally: "Only a holy God"

Who else commands all the hosts of heaven?
Who else could make every king bow down?
Who else can whisper and darkness trembles?
Only a Holy God.

What other beauty demands such praises?
What other splendour outshines the sun?
What other majesty rules with justice?
Only a Holy God.

**Come and behold Him, The One and the Only;
Cry out, sing holy, forever a Holy God;
Come and worship the Holy God.**

What other glory consumes like fire?
What other power can raise the dead?
What other name remains undefeated?
Only a Holy God.

Come and behold Him...

Who else could rescue me from my failing?
Who else would offer His only Son?
Who else invites me to call Him Father?
Only a Holy God.
Only my Holy God.

Come and behold Him....

Songwriters: Michael Farren / Rich Thompson / Dustin Smith / Jonny Robinson CCLI SONG # 7073332 Copyrights © 2016 CityAlight Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd)Farren Love And War Publishing (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd)Integrity's Alleluia! Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) CCL No 5664

Our Bible Reading, James 1:1-11 would have been read by Shirley but as she was unwell, Alec read it in her place.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

Trials and temptations

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation - since they will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

Alec shares his Message:

FAITH IN ACTION

We begin this morning with a new series from the letter of James which is really about our faith in action. The letter that James wrote is intensely practical, the kind of practical help that we as the people of God here in Lancashire need in our everyday lives. We see more or less straightaway when we look at this letter that God's Word is not primarily nor ultimately given to us so that our knowledge might increase, (though we are to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:18), but rather that our lives might be changed and that we grow in grace, (same verse).

The emphasis in this letter of James is not in itself upon becoming disciples of Jesus, because these are the people to whom James is writing, but it is rather on our lives as disciples of Jesus, how we live in the world. And it is very, very important that those of us who would profess to be Christians would face up to these specific and pressing challenges. And they are challenging. Right at the beginning I should say that it is a big responsibility to preach from this letter for the simple reason that everybody listening to what is being said in this series will compare it with what I myself do and say and probably see many of the flaws in my behaviour.

Whenever faith doesn't issue in love; whenever biblical teaching, however orthodox, is unrelated to the living of life; whenever we're tempted to settle down for a kind of self-centred Christian experience that ignores the social and material needs of other people; or whenever our conduct doesn't match the beliefs that we talk about, then these five chapters, some 108 verse, have something to say to us that is really important. There are 60 imperatives, 60 commands in these 108 verses. Do this! Don't do that!

If the book of James takes root in my life, in your life, in our lives, then there will be a visible impact on Blackburn. What we believe must inevitably find itself on display. Our faith must inevitably begin to function in a way that is unavoidable and difficult to miss.

So looking at James together will be very challenging.

This is not like following some influencer on social media and deciding whether this or that idea or behaviour fits in with our present lifestyle or not.

This is not like belonging to a club and fitting in with whomever and whatever seems to be controlling the show.

This is not like being invited to go on a private tour of a fitness centre without allowing ourselves to be tested on the exercise machines. In the book of James we will be faced with getting measured again and again against standards with which we would perhaps like not to be compared and at the end of the day others should be able to say that there are observable differences in our behaviour, in our lifestyle, in the way we express ourselves and in the ways in which we respond to the situations with which we are confronted in our lives. It is important as James 1:22 says that we become "doers of the Word".

But who was or is "James"? Right at the beginning of the letter he introduces himself as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ".

Actually James was Jesus' brother. So why doesn't he say that? He probably didn't say it because he understood that the wonder of his relationship with Jesus did not come from the fact of them sharing the same birth mother. It was not a natural relationship that caused James to marvel. Because in John 7:5 we read that not one of Jesus' brothers was at that time a believer!

Many people were then coming to believe in Jesus, but those in closest contact with him every day didn't believe in Him as the Son of God.

It is not being in contact with Jesus in the sense of being connected to the family of the church that counts; it is about God opening our eyes to understand who Jesus is, receiving forgiveness for our sins and entering into a relationship with Him as our Lord and Saviour; it is about becoming children of God and living in the power of the Spirit according to the Word of God.

It was the miracle of God's goodness to James that he opened his eyes to understand that Jesus was the person He declared himself to be. In 1 Cor. 15:7 we read that in one of the resurrection appearances, Jesus appeared specifically to James. And in Acts 15:13-19, this James, the brother of Jesus, is at the very heart of the council of Jerusalem, where the Jerusalem church is working out the relationships between the Jewish and non-Jewish believers and James is at the very centre of this.

So he was an early leader of the Jerusalem church becoming a very experienced and able Pastor and the first Bishop of Jerusalem. But he doesn't say that either; because our life in Jesus is about being a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, no more and no less. Is that how we introduce ourselves? Is that what we want to have engraved on our gravestones?

But is this letter of James written before he was martyred in AD 62 of any relevance to us in the 21st. century? This letter which was regarded for a long time with suspicion in many areas of the early church? This letter which was only finally really properly included in the New Testament from the middle of the fourth century?

Yes, yes, yes, it is. This letter was not rejected in the beginning by the early church but it was neglected. And this letter is for us, for us here today. Let us not neglect it!

Let's look at verse 2. James writes to what he says are the twelve tribes scattered among the nations. So to whom is he writing? Just to the Jews?

In 1:16-18 he writes to "my dear brothers" whom the Father "chose to give birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created" and at the beginning of chapter 2 he speaks to the "believers in our glorious Lord Jesus".

So if we have believed the word of truth, repented of our sins and received forgiveness from God then we are the believers to whom James is writing. This letter is for us and instructs us how we are to live. That's really a great help for us isn't it? This letter actually tells the people of God, tells us, how to live in the world! For actually as we all know we need that kind of help!

In this letter James confronts his readers with the disturbing and yet liberating fact that the demonstration of the Christian faith to the world is not shown in some blissful, otherworldly unreachably super-spiritual experience but is revealed in the rough and tumble of everyday life. That sets us free. As Jesus said we are not of the world we are in it. At the end of the day we don't belong to it but we are in it for a while. We are pilgrims on the way to our Father's house which is being made ready for us. That's not just a nice thought or a convenient way of thinking so as to escape facing up to the challenges of our everyday lives. It is true. It is reality. But for now we are here. For the present we face all the trials and challenges that everybody else does and a lot more besides; because we have taken a stand for Jesus, for His truth and for His Kingdom. So what do we do with these challenges? How do we look at these tests and trials?

Philippians 4:4 is one amazing verse. You know it already I am sure. Paul, who is sitting in prison either in Rome or in Ephesus writing this letter, says: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice!" He is in prison because of his faith. Is he ill or something? Is he crazy? Is he deluded? No, he is none of these things. In his trials, in the tests he is facing, Paul does what James is calling us to do and is rejoicing.

James writes: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

Maybe this kind of thinking, this kind of behaviour is completely unknown to us? The song that we heard Graham Kendrick singing at the start of this gathering this morning centred on this verse.

James writes: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance." Do we know that? Do we understand that? Do we recognise that? Do we accept that?

Our lives are full of trials and temptations aren't they. No test or temptation that comes our way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All we need to remember is that God will never let us down; he'll never let us be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help us come through it; that is what God says in 1 Corinthians 10:13.

In the world in which we live we are by no means exempt from trials of all kinds. But instead of pretending that everything is OK, instead of pretending they are just going to disappear if we get on our yoga mats or go into an esoteric whirl, instead of thinking we would be really happy if we didn't have to face these tests James says we should consider it unalloyed joy, pure joy. Why?

How can this possibly be? This seems to be an absolute contradiction, doesn't it? Joy in a time of testing? Joy in a time of hardship? Joy in an ongoing time of suffering? Joy in trials? Most of our time is lived trying to deal with life in such a way that we don't have to have trials. And we think sometimes if we can avoid trials THEN we'll have joy. But if we have trials, we can't possibly have joy. Therefore, we aim to get rid of these trials in some way, to escape from the scourge of these trials in some way so that we can get on with joy. James says, "No. If you want to know pure, unadulterated joy, then you will find it IN your trials; through your trials." Why? It is because the testing of our faith produces perseverance.

You know what happens? We just get through one trial and think we are happy again and then the next one starts! And maybe we want to deny it, or ignore it, hoping it will go away but it doesn't. Then maybe we get angry and bitter or resent it. Why has this happened? Why now this problem? Why this sickness, this suffering, this loss, this family problem, this financial difficulty, this problem with the house, this problem at work, why this problem now? Am I ever going to relax and be happy?

And James says in verses 2-4, (read)

This seems to be an absolute contradiction, doesn't it, joy in and through trials? Most of our contemporary life is lived trying to deal with life in such a way that we don't have to have trials. And if we can avoid trials, then we'll have joy. But if we have trials, we can't possibly have joy. Therefore, we deliberately aim at getting rid of these trials in some way so that we can get on with joy. But James says, "No. If you want to know real joy, pure joy, then you will find it in your trials."

We reflected on the following quotations from Elisabeth Elliot:

- 1) "Joy is not dependent on circumstances."
- 2) "The things about which we are tempted to complain may be the very answer to our prayer to be made like Jesus."
- 3) "The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances."

Faith becomes significant under stress. So the very things that we often seek to avoid are exactly the things that make us. Trials come to make us and to remake us. They produce perseverance, patience and steadfastness which make us mature and complete! That is faith in action.

Our Prayers are led by Brenda.

'Prayer is like the air we breathe. Wherever we are we breathe.'

Please join me again now as we pray together here where we are now.

O Holy God, our Heavenly Father, once more we come before You, and bring our thanks and praise to You for all You have given us, and for Your guidance, peace comfort and joy You give in our lives. Thank you that You sent Jesus into the world to be our Saviour and for His death for us on the cross and resurrection which we commemorated and celebrated last week.

We marvel again as the spring moves along and as we look around we can see the beauty and design of each living thing You have made. Thank You for this wonder and magnificence.

Lord, we are guilty though of getting things wrong many times and we can all think of things we have omitted to do recently and mistakes we have made. We come to You now and confess and ask for forgiveness in the name of Jesus.

Dear God, we all have many concerns to bring to You today.

First, we pray for our country where many people are struggling. Every time we see or read the news there are more and more difficulties. Rising prices make life a real challenge and bring increasing mental health problems and unhappiness. People are in pain, are suffering and needing care. We thank You for our NHS though are aware that much improvement is needed and we ask that the many problems may be resolved. We remember our King at this time as he prepares for his coronation. May he be a witness for You as he is anointed and crowned as a Christian monarch.

We pray for our town and its inhabitants, asking that all may live in harmony together and that Christians can take any opportunity to share their faith. We especially bring to You the work of Nightsafe who we supported with our offering last week and for the vulnerable young people for whom they care.

Now, Lord God, we remember many other countries in the world where the situation is much much worse than here. We bring Ukraine before You again and ask that very very soon a way is found to end the awful war which is causing terrible suffering. Lord, may there be help and comfort for the many grieving, traumatised, injured and hurting people there. We also bring before You other countries suffering because of war and discontent. Not only is there fighting, but there's homelessness, refugees travelling, and lack of medical help, food and money. Also, Heavenly Father, many are living with the aftermath of floods, fires, earthquakes and other disasters which have destroyed everything. We continue to pray for help and comfort where it is needed. There is persecution, abuse of rights and horror beyond belief. We put all these things into Your Almighty hands.

Lord, our thoughts now turn to those we know who have problems at this time. Young and old are confronted with challenges of different types. We ask for comfort for those who have recently been bereaved, praying especially for the family of Geoff Bradley, our oldest member, and the family of Barry Walmsley, a former member. Give peace in the hearts of those mentally distressed, help for those with domestic issues and healing and care for the ones with health and mobility problems and those needing care. In a quiet moment we mention our concerns before You now.---- Lord, please hear our prayers for those for whom we have prayed.

We thank You for our church here at Blackburn Baptist and our fellowship with one another. We thank you for the work that has been done to repair and improve the building and ask for your guidance, especially for the management team and church meeting today, as other things are planned. We continue to put our future ministry in Your hands and pray for our ability to reach out to the needful community around here. We ask that You will be close to our pastor Alec and the deacons and those who take on various responsibilities. We thank

you for them all. We bring before You the many things that happen in this building and may all coming here be shown love and find out more about You in the different meetings and events that we have and we ask for Your guidance for plans for the upcoming coronation party.

Once more we thank You for all You give us and as the next hymn says the 'privilege to carry everything to You in prayer'. Thank you for Your message Alec has given to us and Your presence with us this morning. May we be inspired to serve You in whatever way You lead us in the coming days, as we hold on to our faith and put our trust in You. We offer all these prayers to You in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We sing once again: Our Closing (offertory) hymn "What a friend we have in Jesus"

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.

Authors: Charles Crozat Converse, Joseph Medlicott Scriven CCLI SONG # 27714 Public domain, CCL No 5664

After Alec says a short prayer of thanks, we say together the Grace:

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.

All our songs and hymns today were played by Trevor, Kate, Paul W and Judith, and Nigel was responsible for the audio/visual technology!