



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on April 25th 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 was scheduled to be led by **Colin, however he is unwell, so we have the pleasure of Joy in his place!** (Thank you to Joy, Paul and Tim for being last minute stand-ins.)

Joy welcomes us all, wherever we are, and explains that she is deputising for Colin, who has not been well with a bad cold, he has tested negative for Covid, but took a turn for the worse overnight- possibly because he is a man and didn't do what he was told!

Colin had asked Joy to say that today is **April 25th, and its only 8 months to Christmas!!**

She also shared the good news that she became a great-auntie for the 2nd time yesterday, with the birth of Alfie George to her niece, Emily, and those who know the family will appreciate where the name George has come from.

Whilst at present those meeting in the chapel are not allowed to sing aloud, those at home may lift their voices as we watch, listen to or read the words of our opening hymn, Crown him with many crowns, which seeks to encourage us and extols our Saviour as Lord and King. Those in the chapel may still have their spirits lifted by the words and music.

Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne;
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee
and hail him as your chosen king
through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife

for those he came to save:
his glories now we sing
who died and reigns on high;
He died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of love,
who shows his hands and side
those wounds yet visible above
in beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends his burning eye
at mysteries so bright.

Crown him the Lord of peace
his kingdom is at hand;
from pole to pole let warfare cease
and Christ rule every land!
A city stands on high,
his glory it displays,
and there the nations 'Holy' cry
in joyful hymns of praise.

Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres
in majesty sublime:
all hail, Redeemer, hail,
for you have died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail
through all eternity!

Words by Matthew Bridges (1800 - 1894) and Godfrey Thring (1823 - 1903)
© Jubilate Hymns Ltd, CCL No 5664, used by permission.
Sung by Evangelical movement of Wales, Aber Conference 2019
https://youtu.be/s7OCs0d_4vM

Joy leads us in prayer:

Gracious Father, we praise and adore You. Thank You for being our Lord and King. You are an awesome God, and you love us very much. Lord, let all that we are praise You. Thank you for sending your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Thank You for reconciling us back to You through Jesus. We join with the heavenly host this morning to crown him, our sacrificial Lamb, with many crowns, with all that we have and are. We thank you that we are surrounded by your forgiveness at all times and that your mercies are new every

morning. Your faithfulness towards us is beyond measure and greater than any earthly friend. Thank You for loving us and watching over us, even in this past week. Our hope is in You, our Lord God. Please take away, this morning, the many road blocks that stop us from coming into your presence with eagerness and with joy, and fill in the pot holes that slow us down and make the way bumpy. In Jesus name we pray with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Joy shares the notices for the week with us, reminding us of the need for social distancing at the end of the service, and asking those present to wait until they were outside before sharing in conversation with others. Whilst the funeral service for Margaret Gorton had been held at Bethesda the previous Friday, for which Elaine and Keith Fitzhenry thanked the fellowship, we would again be hosting a funeral this coming Thursday when those invited (in light of the current restrictions) would be giving thanks for the life of Keith Margerison. Our prayers continue for both families.

Joy also said that the newly established Parent/Toddler group had continued to meet, and had already reached the maximum number of parents and children we could safely accommodate. Again, we ask for prayer to support this new area of activity.

Finally, our Pastor Alec is flying back from Germany today, and should be back in the Manse later on to begin his period of self-isolation. He will therefore not be able to be present with us next Sunday, but should be leading our service here the following week.

Paul now reads our Bible passage for the day, Luke 6, 27-42

Love for enemies

‘But to you who are listening I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

‘If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Judging others

‘Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.’

He also told them this parable: ‘Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

We can now watch, listen to or read another song, this time from Getty Music entitled "His mercy is more". This has a lilt to the verse, with a stronger beat in the chorus.

Praise the Lord!
His mercy is more.
Stronger than darkness, new every morn,
our sins, they are many, his mercy is more.

What love could remember no wrongs we have done,
omniscient, all-knowing, he counts not their sum.
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore
our sins, they are many, his mercy is more.
Praise the Lord!
His mercy is more....

What patience would wait as we constantly roam?
What Father, so tender, is calling us home?
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor,
our sins, they are many, his mercy is more.
Praise the Lord!
His mercy is more.....

What riches of kindness he lavished on us;
his blood was the payment, his life was the cost.
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford,
our sins, they are many, his mercy is more.
Praise the Lord!
His mercy is more.
Stronger than darkness, new every morn
our sins, they are many, His mercy is more.

Songwriters: Matt Boswell / Matt Papa
Copyright@ Getty Music, CCL no 5664, used by kind permission.
CCL No 5664

Shirley leads us in our Intercessory prayers:

“Sovereign God, we thank you for the realities of Easter which we continue to celebrate today; realities that make a difference to life, the victory of good over evil, love over hate, life over death, the turning of weakness into strength, fear into courage, doubt into faith and new beginnings when it seems like the end; new hope where there had seemed despair, new confidence where there had been confusion. Teach us to live each day as your Easter people.

In recent days, Lord, we think of our Queen, mourning the loss of her husband of many years, Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. In our fellowship we remember Elaine Fitzhenry who laid her mum to rest last week, and Gwen Margerison who is mourning the passing of dear Keith and preparing for his funeral this week. Also we think of the many many families who have lost loved ones due to the Covid virus. God of all comfort, may each one know your peace and presence at this time.

We think too of those needing a special touch from you, those in hospital and those needing hospital appointments, waiting for the results of scans and examinations, those needing to make wise and important decisions for themselves and loved ones. Help them to trust you Lord, knowing that your word says if any of you lacks wisdom you should ask God who gives generously to all without fault and it will be given to you.

Now further afield: Dear Father we pray for those many Covid sufferers and their families we see on our television screens in India. Please help them with aid from other countries including the UK and may we, and others, be generous with the supply of vaccine that we have been so blessed with.

We continue to pray for Myanmar that violence will cease and a solution may be found for the conflict, and that your precious people will find safety and refuge under the shelter of your wings.

We pray to for the safety of Brian and Jackie Chilvers, our BMS partners, who have only just been settling in to their work in Chad and now find themselves in the middle of a political crisis where the country's President has been killed in battle. We pray too for a peaceful solution, and safety and well-being for the patients and staff in Guinebor 11 hospital, also whether or not the Chilvers know whether they are to return to the UK at this time.

This month being the month of Ramadan, we pray for all Muslims especially those in our town, that they will be seekers after truth and that the truth will set them free.

And now we pray for Alec's safe return to us. We thank you Father for all that Alec and the deacons do for the fellowship to glorify your name, and we pray that their hearts will be stirred to lead us in whatever is needed to reach out with the love of Jesus to the Galligreaves and Wensley Fold community. Thank you especially for the start of the Wednesday mums and little ones group.

And finally; Sovereign God, we thank you that Easter is not just about events long ago, but about life now, not just about others but about us, not just about one thing but everything. Teach us to live each day as your Easter people. Help us, we pray, to live each day in the light of Easter, with its joy bubbling up in our hearts, it's

laughter shining through our eyes and it's message always on our lips, so may others seeing the difference it has made to us, discover the difference it can make to them. Teach us to live each day as your Easter people to the glory of your name. Amen"

Time for another song, again from Getty Music: this begins with the music from The Mission, played on the violin, leading into Kristyn Getty singing :

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
give me faith for what I cannot see,
give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
may Your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin,
in each thought and deed and attitude.
Kindness to the greatest and the least,
gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
giving life to all that God has made,
Show Your power once again on earth,
cause Your church to hunger for your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise;
lead us on the road of sacrifice,
that in unity the face of Christ
may be clear for all the world to see.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDYjn-YdnD4>

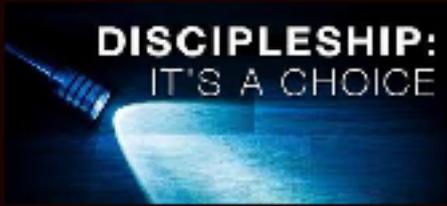
Keith Getty & Stuart Townend Copyright © 2005 Thankyou Music (Adm. by CapitolCMGPublishing.com excl. UK & Europe, adm. by Integrity Music, part of the David C Cook family, songs@integritymusic.com)

Used by kind permission, CCL no 5664

We are very grateful that Tim is now prepared to read the sermon Colin has prepared for us:

Radical Discipleship

Radical Discipleship



discipleship is
living and
sharing the
love of Jesus.



If you are looking for a nice, comfortable religion that doesn't place too many demands on your life, makes you feel better when you're down, and will reserve luxury apartments for you in heaven when you die, then you probably shouldn't try to be one of Jesus' disciples. For he has the crazy notion that his followers should serve others rather than themselves. He expects them to be selfless and to show integrity when no one is looking. And he expects them to love all kinds of people. So really you shouldn't follow him unless you're ready to experience some discomfort. Or, what he meant when he told his disciples to take up their cross and follow him.

This section of the New Testament shows more than any other part what being a true disciple of Jesus Christ really means, not least that it can never be achieved under our own steam. It has to be a work of God, or it is nothing. Because as we'll see, so much of what it means to be a Christian runs contrary to normal human behaviour and everyday expectations. But sadly, we allow our views and values all too often to be shaped by the world around us, what we see on the TV, in the Soaps, for example, and not by the pattern set for us by God in Christ.

For the sake of time, because this is a BIG, BIG passage, I have two headings for us to look at this morning under the title of Radical Discipleship/Christianity: Radical Loving and Radical Living.

Radical Loving

A collage of images related to "Radical Loving". At the top is a purple banner with the text "Radical Loving" in white. Below it are four smaller images: a colorful graphic with text, a brick wall graphic with text, a white card with text, and a photo of a man.

Verse 27 commences with the earth-shattering command 'Love your enemies.' In general people say 'Love your friends and hate your enemies.'

Why? Presumably because it is the only natural thing to do. It's only right, they would say, to look after your friends and despise your enemies, those people who desire the worst for you.

The Greek word for 'love' used here is AGAPAN, which is taken from the word agape. This word is not about liking someone. Nor does it involve simply refraining from doing bad things to people. Agape is something far more than this; it is a positive and decisive response to people; it involves a caring, compassionate concern for another person. So, agapan means loving the unlovely and the loveless; the person who in natural terms you would despise and run a mile from.

In Jesus' day, you had all these personal issues as well as a number of major social problems. There were racial tensions, especially around the historic feuds between the Jews and the Samaritans. There was the ingrained hatred of the Romans who were the occupying military force in the country. Any positive attitude towards them was classed as treachery, certainly by the Zealots, whose sole-purpose was to disrupt the Roman operations and kill as many soldiers as they could. But such hostility eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem and most of the infrastructure during the life-time of Jesus' generation.

But let's pause for a moment. Who are our enemies? I'm not asking who you hate? I'm asking who hates you, or despises you? Often they are the people close to us who have been hurt by us in some way, either directly or indirectly. It could be a family member or relative, who accuses you of favouritism. It could be a neighbour, who is angry at you because your grandchildren make too much noise in the garden. It could be an employee at your place of work who is jealous that you've been promoted at their expense. Equally, it might be because you have exposed someone's evil action at your local club and he or she is now out to get you. Or, it could be an enemy of God who takes it out on you, because you do not share their religious faith. This last one would certainly be true in many non-Christian countries around the world. So, who are your enemies?

How do I love my enemy? you may ask with all seriousness. One thing we should not do is sink to their level of response and behaviour, but rise above it and actively seek their good. That is the way Jesus is training his disciples to think. This isn't a matter of just thinking nice thoughts. We need Jesus to do a heart change within us, to put the kind of heart within us toward our enemies that was in God who sent Jesus to redeem and forgive a world full of sinful people. That is why we read Psalm 103, for in this psalm we discover how immeasurable and unconditional the loving-kindness of our Saviour God toward us in Jesus Christ has been. And therefore our behaviour towards others must be guided by this divine extravagance. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matthew 18 tells us clearly that God's love and forgiveness toward us in Christ is beyond measure when compared with the love and forgiveness that we need to show towards others. And yet so often we are mean and stingy in our response; quite the opposite of how God has been towards us and how we expect him to continue being towards us when we let him down on a daily basis.

So how do we do it? I don't think we wait for emotions of love. Rather we start with actions of love, and the right emotions may follow later. We start doing what Jesus taught right here:

Do good. When we find a way to do something good for one of our worst enemies, we should do it. Not to shame them, but because we are trying to find it in our own evil hearts to love them for Jesus' sake.

Bless. When we think of the person who is saying untrue and nasty things about us, we should find ways to work blessing into our thoughts. Speak a blessing out loud. When we are with friends, instead of complaining about our unjust treatment, we should go out of our way to speak well of our enemies. Why? To shame them? No, though undoubtedly it will. But to find it in our own hearts to love them.

Pray. Intercede on their behalf before the Throne of Grace. When we're praying, we probably pray for our friends and family. Why don't we start to pray for our enemies? Start to ask God to help them. We should ask God to heal the hurts in their lives that may be motivating their evil actions. Ask God to bless them and show mercy to them. Why? To shame them? No, in order to find it in our hearts to love them.

And if we do good when we find opportunities, and bless when we think of them, and pray earnestly before the Lord, we'll find that God will begin to put love in our hearts toward our enemies.

Loving our enemies also means that we will refuse to retaliate (Luke 6:29): **'If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic' (6:29)** 'Turning the other cheek' has made it into the English language as an expression meaning to go out of your way to avoid a nasty confrontation. Even though provoked, instead of lashing out, you turn the other cheek and seek to redeem the hatred and hostility.

Jesus' point is that we are to avoid hitting back, the natural human reaction. How can we love when we hit back with something that will wound our opponent? Though Jesus' instruction to turn the other cheek is intended in the arena with a sworn enemy, the principle applies to every area of our lives. Don't retaliate. Don't hit back. Don't move from a position of prayerful love for your enemy to a prayerless hostility. Love doesn't retaliate. Love seeks the enemy's good.

Good grief! I can hear you say. You don't think you can do that. I don't think you can, either. But with the Spirit of Jesus working through us, he can teach us to love our enemies, even at their ugliest. When he was on the cross, Jesus prayed to his Father for those who were responsible for his crucifixion: 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.' Turning the other cheek is indeed what he did as the soldiers spat on him and flogged him, and jammed a thorny crown into his scalp and mocked him as king. Was he tempted to retaliate? Oh, yes! But he didn't. Why? He loved them. That is the radical lesson of verse 29.

But let's consider what his words *don't* mean. They don't mean that we as a society should let criminals run free to do violence on any citizen. It doesn't mean we shouldn't call the police when robbed. It doesn't mean that we should stand idly by when someone is assaulted.

Jesus words aren't about crime or pacifism in war. They are about loving enemies in a radical way. If we seek to make a new law that overrides the civil law in the Old Testament scriptures against violent crime, we miss the point. The same goes for people taking your clothes off. If you were to take this verse literally, nudity would be the result. Is that what Jesus intended by this? Of course not. This is dramatic picture language to make a point: radical love for your enemy. But we aren't to misunderstand and suspend the law. That would be foolish.

Radical Living



We love to judge. It has been noted that a universal rule of the road is: everyone who drives slower than you is an idiot, and everyone who drives faster is a maniac. To the speeding driver, everyone's an idiot. To the slow driver, everyone's a maniac. But one rule applies to all: *My speed is just right* – a sensible speed.

Jesus says there's two realities you can buy into: either judgement and condemnation; or giving and forgiving. Jesus tells us the

currency that God deals in '*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful*' (Luke 6:36)

He is in the forgiveness game. What game are we in?

Well ever since Adam, we've been in the blame game. As soon as sin entered in, man hid and sought to cover himself by his own efforts. The Lord came to expose him and, ultimately, to clothe him in acceptable coverings. Yet in his excruciating exposure the man rejects the way of repentance and receiving. Instead he goes on the attack. He blames the woman, the woman blames the serpent and (as the old joke goes) the serpent doesn't have a leg to stand on. This has been the way of mankind ever since. We look for sawdust in other people when we should be discovering and dealing with the plank in ourselves. Hypocrisy has always been the great sin of religious pride and self-righteousness. We judge others when we ourselves are guilty. We point the finger when three fingers are pointing back at us. The Woman caught in the Act of Adultery (John 8). Jesus' verdict was : '*He who is sinless should throw the first stone!*'

We could ask the same question of ourselves as individuals. Do people avoid us or come to us? Do they find in us someone who judges or someone who extends grace and forgiveness?

It seems very significant to me that Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. Here were the worst sinners of the community and they ran to Jesus. When they were together with Him it was described as a party. Why were they so comfortable with the only person on earth who was ever completely holy? Holiness does not drive people away, but self-righteousness and judging and condemnation do. Jesus was merciful and He is our model for showing mercy. We, too, if we claim to be a holy people should be willing to embrace others, regardless of their background, in the Spirit of Christ, eager to show mercy or sympathy and not to judge, in the realisation that we, too, are filled with faults. If we realize that we will be treated by the Lord in the way we treat others, then we might be less willing to be judgemental.

In conclusion, Jesus never said that being a disciple would be easy; after all, his command was to take up the cross and follow him. We are to be ambassadors of his kingdom of love and forgiveness in a world that seems to thrive on hostility and rejection, prejudice and retaliation. We are called to embrace the gospel of peace and reconciliation in all areas of our lives. I can't do better than to read the final section of Romans 12, which is almost like a commentary on Jesus' teaching here.

It is entitled in our Bibles as '**Love in Action**' and it states:

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

May these words be true of our lives as Christians as we seek to live for Christ in our own corner of the world, always looking to him as the goal and finisher of our faith. Amen

As we bring our service to a close, we watch, listen or read a song we have not played for a while, perhaps not the easiest to sing because of its slightly unusual syncopated rhythm, but reminding us of the words in Isaiah chapter 40: "We will wait upon the Lord"

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.

Our God, You reign forever;
our hope, our Strong Deliverer -
You are the everlasting God,
the everlasting God,
you do not faint, you won't grow weary.
You're the defender of the weak,
you comfort those in need,
you lift us up on wings like eagles.

CCLI Song *4556538, Brenton Brown/Ken Riley

Copyright©2005 Thankyou music,(admin by Integrity Music)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cuhOd_7nGY&list=PLT81VdMv8Wk9moNf-ZNZjA2CdvjMQ4m-1&index=25

Joy thanks everyone for coming, and asks that we reflect on all we've heard today, and reminds us that we can join in the Zoom coffee and chat after this service! She brings our time together to an end as we share 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.