



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on April 2nd 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.

Our **Palm Sunday Communion** service today is being led by Alec, with Kate playing the piano, Judith the flute, Nigel operating the PA system and Paul C recording the service.

Alec gave all a Welcome, wherever they may be and invited everyone to look at the Stations of the Cross posters in the church, encouraging prayer for the world wide church. **He then introduced our Opening hymn "**

**All glory, laud, and honour to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.**

You are the King of Israel, great David's royal Son,
now in the Lord's name coming, the King and Blessed One.

All glory, laud, and honour....

The company of angels is praising you on high;
and we with all creation together make reply.

All glory, laud, and honour....

The people of the Hebrews with palms before you went;
our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present.

All glory, laud, and honour....

To you before your passion they sang their hymns of praise;
to you, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

All glory, laud, and honour....

As you received their praises, accept the prayers we bring,
for you delight in goodness, O good and gracious King

All glory, laud, and honour....

Authors: John Mason Neale, Melchior Teschner, Theodulph Of Orleans CCLI SONG # 29509 Copyright: Public Domain CCL No 5664

(We had a slight hitch with this hymn, the words and music didn't quite match up!!!)

Tony came to the pulpit to share our Notices, reminding us that our bring and share lunch this month will be in 2 weeks time, (when we will also have a very brief Special Church Members Meeting to confirm the authorisation of roof repair work as agreed at the November 2022 Church Members Meeting) This week, Holy Week, we will be holding a Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 3pm, a Good Friday service at 10.45 followed by a Joint Walk of Witness, and our Easter Sunday Morning Service at 10.45am.

We were invited to join in our second Hymn:

Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die.
O Christ, your triumphs now begin o'er captive death and conquered sin.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! The angel armies of the sky
look down with sad and wond'ring eyes to see th'approaching sacrifice.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! Your last and fiercest strife is nigh.
The Father on his sapphire throne awaits his own anointed Son.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow your meek head to mortal pain, then take, O God, your pow'r and reign

Author: Henry Hart Milman CCLI song # 2725907 Public domain CCL No 5664

Alec moved to the table to lead our Communion service: (you may wish to share bread and wine or juice as you read these words) saying it's particularly poignant and appropriate that we come together in this way during this week, sharing together as a fellowship. He read from Luke 22,

'When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God.' After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'

Alec then led a prayer of thanksgiving: Our Loving Heavenly Father, we stand all amazed at the love that you offer and give to us. We stand amazed in your presence, the man Jesus of Nazareth, the creator God, the son of the only living God, who made the earth, made the world and everything in it, and made us and sustains us. You came into the world to give your life, completely unjustly, never having done wrong, paying the penalty for our wrongs, for our sins, for our transgressions. When we in the coming days stand in front of the posters that are hanging now, or sit in small groups as we meditate on them, on what is written there and what is pictured there, we will be constantly reminded of what it cost you, not just to come into the world and live such a humble and perfect life amongst us, as it says in John's gospel, you lived in a tent almost amongst us, you tabernacled amongst us, but what it must have meant to you, knowing why you were coming and what was going to happen, and that you in your free will, in your free choice, gave your life for us, who killed you. It is completely impossible for us to grasp the deepness, the width, the height your love for us. But we come humbly, nevertheless, to say 'Thank you Lord. Thank you for dying for us. Thank you for giving us your life' and we praise the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost from our whole hearts and all our minds and through our souls, here as a fellowship together this morning, Because you live we can face tomorrow. Because you live, we can go on. We will never die and its just thanks to you. When we say more words it won't help to deepen our appreciation. We cannot express in words all that we feel, all that we think of your love for us. We come now in your presence, asking that you will be very near to us, may each one of us know your presence in our hearts by your spirit and in this place through our fellowship in the spirit. In your name. Amen.

Alec invited Tony and Janet to come forward and distribute the bread and wine, which were served together. We shared the bread as we received it, as a sign of our individual relationship and connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

After all had received and eaten the bread, **Alec invited us to drink together.** We then spent a short time in silence before Alec returned to the pulpit to announce our third song, **"Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest"**, complete with percussion input from the congregation. As it is only short, we sang it through twice!

Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!
Lord, we lift up your name, with our hearts full of praise,
Be exalted, O Lord, my God, Hosanna in the highest!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!
Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!
Lord, we lift up your name, with our hearts full of praise,
Be exalted, O Lord our God, Hosanna in the highest!

Carl Tuttle CCLI SONG # 21545 Copyright ©1985 Shadow Spring Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org)
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Becky (or very formally Rebecca!) came to read: Gospel of John 12: 12-19

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' Blessed is the king of Israel!

Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written:

'Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;
see, your king is coming,
seated on a donkey's colt.'

At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'

Alec shared his Message: (with two PowerPoint screens to sum up the main points:

God's presence, God's knowledge, God's timing, God's power

He is here, He knows, His timing is perfect, He is all-powerful)

"Now we are sitting here this morning at BBC and we have just been listening to the reading that Becky has given us and we may be disciples of Jesus. I sure hope we are or at least will be by the time when we leave this building later on. Then I hope we heard what Becky read in verse 16, to which you may refer if you have a bible in your hands; for it says in that verse, "At first His disciples did not understand all this."

So we are going to pray that our hearts and minds will be opened to what God is saying to us this morning. Let us pray.

Loving heavenly Father, we praise you that we have the freedom here in this land to read and to hear your Word. Please open our hearts and minds to what you are saying and give us the faith and the will to obey what you are instructing us to do; for the sake of your Name, to your honour and glory and for the extension of your kingdom here in Blackburn with Darwen. Amen

The true story of Jesus Christ's entry into Jerusalem is recorded in all four gospels of the New Testament. You can find it in Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–11, Luke 19:28–44, and John 12:12–19. Because it is recorded in all four gospels we would reasonably expect this episode to be quite significant; and it is. We are looking at it this morning principally on the basis of the account read to us from the Gospel of John. But right at the beginning let me refer to Luke because there Jesus is on His Way to Jerusalem and is approaching Bethphage and Bethany and we see that He has like sorted it that when he reaches the next village there will be transport waiting for Him. Nowadays this is really easy with a Smartphone and a few Apps so you can like book and pay for and store the QR codes or tickets on your phone and everything, and your taxi or your car or your bus or your train or your plane is there waiting for you when you need it. But Jesus didn't use a smartphone. He didn't have one. He didn't need to. Because He and His Father know everything, plan everything and carry out everything according to what they want to happen, in the order in which they want it to happen, in the way in which they want it to happen and, and this is really significant AT THE RIGHT TIME. You see if God wants to send an angel to protect you He is going to make real sure that the right angel goes to the right place and does the right thing at the right time so that you are protected and not lost. Let's just read Luke 19: 29-35.

It was the perfect travel plan carried out by the disciples of Jesus who followed in every detail what the Lord told them to do. But wait a minute.

Is that what I do? Is that what you do? Is that what we all do as a church? Do we follow and carry out in every detail what the Lord tells us to do? Or do we play around with it a bit and make His instructions "easier to follow" which of course really means we are not following Jesus at all.

It was God's perfect travel plan carried out by the disciples of Jesus who followed in every detail what the Lord told them to do and because Jesus knew exactly where everything they would need would be and what the people around the disciples would say and how the disciples would need to respond to that He told them.

You see we need to understand maybe for the first time this morning that there is nothing that Jesus does not know; that there is nothing that He cannot do and that there is nothing better that He wants to do than to care for those He has made and wants to remould, to remake and to transform into His image.

The three things that we need to grasp like picking up fresh apples in our hand and to apply like after reading through the Maker's handbook are the presence of God, the knowledge and timing of God and the power of God; the presence of God, the knowledge and timing of God and the power of God.

It is another very simple message today. But if we don't know the WIFI code we are not going to get access to the database; if we don't know the password we are not going to access any personal information and if we have disconnected the battery charger from the network we are going to have no power to understand or do anything at all. You see the access code is the Name of Jesus. The password is the Word of the Living God which He has given to us to read and remember. You see the power source is the Holy Spirit of God.

So we need to practice the presence of God. We need not just to be aware in our heads that He is here but to know it in our hearts; to rejoice in the reality of God living and working amongst us here in this place through His Spirit who lives in the heart of every child of God, in the heart of everyone who is living in forgiveness and love.

But you see we may have false expectations. The Jewish nation was waiting for a king who would fulfil what they wanted him to fulfil; who would carry out what they wanted in their way, on their timescale. Hosanna they cried. Our nation will be great they say. They knew their Old Testament and quote Psalm 118:25-26. Do you know what it says there? It says: "Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." "Blessed is the King of Israel."

Yes we want success. God bless our plans. God we have this wonderful idea. We want to do this and I am sure you would be really pleased if it works for us. The Jewish mindset focused on liberation, justice, prosperity, and the setting up of a world that made sense, where the jigsaw pieces of the puzzle all came together and formed up for them in a way that made sense of their existence, exactly as they wanted it. What they were waiting for in the dawn of this new age was a kingdom, and what they required was a king. They had had kings in the past. Some were good, some not so good, but none were good enough to reign and to rule forever. And so, as time passed, and as families grew, and as they attended the various celebrations, the big picture in their mind was that someday this event would happen, and the king would come. For them: but to fulfil their goals, their plans and to develop their self-satisfaction and egos and chances of self-fulfilment.

Is that what we expect of God? Is that what we expect from Him? That He will do everything that we want in our way and according to our time plan?

And Jesus says, just a minute, I am not like that. I am here for you to die on a cross and to set you free from the power of sin and death; to make it possible for sinners to repent and be forgiven. My kingdom does not belong to this world, neither is it of the world. My presence will go with you wherever you go and I will give you rest but that doesn't mean that you can choose the route and the goal yourselves.

So the King of Kings doesn't hire a helicopter to get to Jerusalem. Well that would have been much easier wouldn't it? That would have had a really amazing impact wouldn't it? A journey from Jericho to Jerusalem is a journey through a barren desert and with a lot of ups and downs, totalling 14 miles with an ascent of 3,300 feet or 1,000 metres. Today it takes 55 minutes in a car, but 8 hours 21 minutes on foot. But Jesus takes the last part of this journey seated on a young donkey. That would have been on international satellite news today wouldn't it? The Creator of the universe, the one who made the earth and everything in it, arriving in Jerusalem seated on a donkey. Wouldn't viewers be sitting on the edge of their seats watching that? For after all that is what the prophet Zechariah had said:

"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

So they would all have been familiar with what the Word of God said because they would have been reading it every day and night like we do wouldn't they? Or would they? Or do we read the Word of God like that?

Did you hear those words, "Do not be afraid?" Does that remind you of anything? Like for example the following words in Luke 2?

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

You see one thing about God is that He has always been there, always is and will be there; and that His knowledge is unlimited; and that His timing is perfect in everything He does; so that sending His Only Son into the world is an amazing, awesome thing to do.

And when the shepherds realise what God is doing, when an angel of the Lord appears to them, when the glory of the Lord shines around them they are terrified: But God knows this and just at the right time sends an angel to tell them not to fear and to explain what is going on.

I am almost sure there is no-one here who does not believe in angels, for we read about them so often in what God says to us in the Bible for angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will be saved.

But the point God wants to make here is that when He is doing something we do not need to be afraid. What God does is good news. We do not need to fear.

So what is God doing in your life and my life right now? Are we hearing from Him through His Word?

Sometimes it might seem to some people, as it occasionally does to me, that what God is doing is so awesome, so amazing, so unbelievably loving and kind, that it is almost as if we cannot cope with it, imagine it, grasp it or understand it.

The email our church received from India recently inviting me to be the key speaker at a large Pastors' Conference in December, to lead and share in revival meetings and to share in all kinds of ministry is for our church a wonderful touch of the Lord's love. That God speaks to a church leader in India on the basis of watching our weekly messages and says ask that man to come is nothing short of being truly remarkable. But of course immensely immeasurably greater than anything like this is the love of God sending His Son to the earth that He Himself created to die on a Cross to set us free from the wrongs that we have done and then to raise Him from death to new life that we might live for ever.

We do not need to be afraid of life or of death; for nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

It is this resurrection life that fascinated the crowds in Jesus' day that flocked to hear what He was saying, who came together from all over the place to see what He was doing. You see the context of Jesus riding in to Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowds coming together is the death and resurrection of a man called Lazarus, Lazarus, who had been dead. His sisters had sent for Jesus, saying, "Our brother is sick. If you would come, that would be terrific." Jesus came, but he didn't come before Lazarus had died. Jesus said, "It's not a problem. I'm the resurrection and the life, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." And he said to her, "Do you believe this?" And she said, "Yes, I do believe this." Martha believed in a resurrection at the last day, but she had no thought of her brother being raised to life on that day. And that was exactly what was taking place. And Lazarus comes out, miraculously, and Jesus says, "Take off the grave clothes, and let him go." And off he goes.

Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid of death. I am the resurrection and the life says Jesus.

In John 12: 9-11 we read: "Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him."

The crowds came to see Jesus and Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. But at first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

Jesus is real. Jesus is here. Jesus knows everything, there is nothing that He does not know or understand. He knows what He is doing and why. He knows He is on His way to die and He obeys the Will of His Father in heaven and very shortly He will die; for us, that our sins may be forgiven.

His presence, His being here, His limitless knowledge and the perfect timing with which He carries out everything He does should be a massive encouragement to us in our everyday lives as members of His church here in Blackburn as we wait together on the Lord to see what He is doing and going to do. He is preparing His people. He is transforming us day by day into the image of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. He is renewing this fellowship of His people according to His Will, in His Way and in His time.

Just look at what is happening in verses 17-19 of John 12.

“Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!””

Let us ask ourselves the question today and every day are we continuing to spread the Word about new life in Jesus? Are we all doing that? When God speaks and people listen lives are changed.

And there is one final element in this story that we will close with this morning.

What role did the religious leaders have in all this? They had been trying to trap Jesus for weeks in their attempts to kill him but they were constantly being faced with the reality of the power of God healing the sick, delivering people from demons, carrying out all kinds of miracles and teaching in stories that were understandable by those who really wanted to pay attention and listen.

When God intervenes directly with perfect timing and great power in our lives, when He is present and active in our lives; when knowing everything about us, all our needs and cares as He does we see Him working there is only really one response that we may make-to worship Him, to praise Him, to adore Him for who He is and what He is doing. When we come together let us worship Him!

But let us not forget that it is so often the religious leaders, those who have a form of religion but do not know the reality and power of the living God in their lives, who will attack us as God`s servants and ministers, aiming to discredit us, to discourage us and if possible to destroy us. In these times we need to remember words like these from the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthian church 4:9:

“This priceless treasure we hold, so to speak, in a common earthenware jar—to show that the splendid power of it belongs to God and not to us. We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out! Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. Yes, we who are living are always being exposed to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be plainly seen in our mortal lives. We are always facing death, but this means that you know more and more of life. Our faith is like that mentioned in the scripture: ‘I believed and therefore I spoke’. Amen”

Our Prayers were then led by Shirley:

“Dear Lord, as we remember that on this day, so many years ago, the hopes of those who waved palms, and laid down the cloaks for Jesus to walk over anticipating a Saviour who would give them victory, but not fully understanding that he was the King of Kings, we now pray for hope for our troubled world. Hope, deliverance and peace for those precious people struggling in war-torn countries like Ukraine, Afghanistan and Africa. Hope, wisdom and protection for the young women in Iran who are defying the authorities who wish them to cover their heads, but giving thanks and hope that the vital BBC education project for those children who are banned from school will succeed. Hope and provision for those still suffering in Turkey and Syria from the result of earthquakes, and those in America who have been hit by a cyclone. Not forgetting South Malawi where is cyclone has swept away whole villages and many have been killed. Lord of all comfort, comfort those who mourn. Now to the UK. Hope and provision for the homeless on the streets. Those needing food banks to survive. Hope where there is sickness in families and fear, as we are aware of the struggle the NHS is having to provide for those in desperate need. But we remember dear father, that you delight in those who fear you, who put their hope in

your unfailing love, and that you know the plans you have for us, plans to prosper us, and not to harm us, plans to give us a hope and a future.

We thank you dear Lord, for sending Jesus to die for us to take away our sin, and leaving your Holy Spirit to indwell in each one of us who believe and receive him.

In the quietness of our hearts, we thank you now for the hope that you have given us and remember those in our families and church family who need a special touch from you today. As we approach at Eastertide we think of our Good Friday service and Walk of Witness with St Luke's. Join our hearts as we walk and fellowship together afterwards and may we rejoice in remembrance of your resurrection on Easter Sunday.

In the days ahead and giving thanks for Alec, the deacons and all who serve at BBC, may we go forward to serve your kingdom in this place, in Galligreaves and Blackburn.

Lord Jesus Christ, you entered Jerusalem in quiet humility taking the form of the servant, even to the point of death on a cross, emptying yourself so that we might be filled.

Come again now and establish your kingdom.

Come afresh to our troubled world with all its needs, its tensions, its problems, and it's evil.

Come again now and establish your kingdom.

Bring healing when there is division, love where there is hatred, hope where there is despair, joy where there is sorrow, confidence where there is fear, strength where there is weakness, healing where there is sickness, life where there is death.

Come again now and establish your kingdom.

Lord Jesus Christ, reach out to your church and world, despite the weakness of our faith, and the rejection of so many. May your will be done on Earth, even as it is in heaven.

Come again now and establish your kingdom, for in your name we pray. Amen"

We stood or remained seated as we sang our closing Offertory hymn:

Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives.

Fling wide the gates and welcome Him into your lives!

Make way! (Make way!) Make way! (Make way!)

For the King of kings (For the King of kings)

Make way! (Make way!) Make way! (Make way!)

And let His kingdom in.

He comes the broken hearts to heal, the prisoners to free:
the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance, the blind shall see!

Make way! (Make way!)....

And those who mourn with heavy hearts, who weep and sigh;
with laughter, joy and royal crown He'll beautify.

Make way! (Make way!)....

We call you now to worship Him as Lord of all;
to have no gods before Him - their thrones must fall!

Make way! (Make way!)....

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Alec asked us to remain standing as he prayed:

Thank you Father in heaven, our God, Lord of Lords and King of Kings, thank you that you remain with us, thank you that you go with us from this place. But we thank you first of all for all the gifts you give us for this earthly life and we ask you to bless those gifts that we have given back as a token to you, for the extension of your kingdom in this place and to your glory, in your honour and name we pray. Amen.

We said together:

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.

Alec reminded everyone that there would be a 5 minute time of prayer at the back for those who wished, and likewise tea and coffee would be served in the hall. The leadership team would be available if anyone would like prayer from any one of them, and also they would appreciate prayer from others!

There will be a short (hopefully very short) Special Church Members Meeting in two weeks time immediately following the service on April 16th, to confirm the decision taken by the membership at the meeting in November re Request to withdraw funds, for approved building work, where Baptist Union approval is required.