



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on April 3rd 2022 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

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

Our service today is led by Colin, as we lead to Easter. Looking from the Old Testament perspective, and today Joy plays the piano for us.

Colin welcomes everyone to Bethesda Chapel, and begins our service together by reading words from the Song of Solomon.

He tells us that spring is coming, the flowers are starting to grow in his garden, and despite all the turmoil of the world that we hear about at the moment, we come to dwell upon Jesus our Lord, to concentrate on who he is, as we let rip with our voices!

We lift our voices in song, or read the words, to Jesus is King.

Jesus is king and I will extol him,
give Him the glory, and honour His name.
He reigns on high, enthroned in the heavens,
Word of the Father, exalted for us.

We have a hope that is steadfast and certain,
gone through the curtain and touching the throne.
We have a Priest who is there interceding,
pouring His grace on our lives day by day.

We come to Him, our Priest and Apostle,
clothed in His glory and bearing His name;
laying our lives with gladness before Him,
filled with His Spirit, we worship the King.

O Holy One, our hearts do adore You,
thrilled with Your goodness we give You our praise.
Angels in light with worship surround Him,
Jesus, our Saviour, forever the same .

Words and music Wendy Churchill CCLI SONG # 56558
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Colin leads us in prayer,

Our Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning with our praise and worship. Thank you for everything you have done for us, even in this past week. There are so many things we take for granted, yet these are all tokens of your love and faithfulness to us, even the rain and the cold, these are part of your plan of creation. Though there are many ways we have failed you, your grace and forgiveness are more than sufficient to meet all our needs. You never fail to keep your promises. We thank you that in Jesus our King we see your love and mercy fully displayed. As we approach the season of Easter help us to reflect anew on the love of Jesus to die on the cross for us and on the power of his resurrection. We thank you for revealing yourself to us through your word as we open the scriptures today we pray that we will hear your voice speaking to us in a deep and personal way. We ask that your spirit will be at work in our lives, transforming us into whatever you would want us to be, that we will reflect the goodness of Jesus in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

then shares our notices for the week - quite a number today!

(After sharing a free joke, why did Shakespeare always write in pen? Because he couldn't decide which pencil to use - 2B or not 2B! This was to check we were all awake!!)

Notices for This Week



- 'Kingdom Come' with St Luke's – today, 19.30
- Coffee Morning – Tuesday 5, 10.00 – 12.00
- Ladies' Bible Study – Tuesday 5, 10.45
- Self-help cleaning – Thursday 7, 10.00 (?)
- 'Orbit' Youth Drop-in – Thursday 7, 18.00 – 19.30
- Fellowship Meeting – Thursday 7, 19.30 – 20.30 (Prayer)
- New Life Church – Friday & Saturday – weekly from now onwards
- Movie Morning – Saturday 9, 10.30 – 12.00
- Sunday Worship – Sunday 10, 10.45 – Old Testament view of Easter 2, followed by Church Lunch
- Easter programme – leaflets available. Baptism on Easter Sunday

We prepare ourselves to sing (or read) again - 'We sing the praise', Colin informs us this is to the tune Warrington - or is that Wigan - no, Joy and Barbara confirm it is called Warrington! Joy plays it on the piano for us.

We sing the praise of him who died, of him who died upon the cross;
the sinner's hope let men deride, for this we count the world but loss.

Inscribed upon the cross we see in shining letters, 'God is love';
he bears our sins upon the tree; he brings us mercy from above.

The cross! It takes our guilt away: it holds the fainting spirit up;
it cheers with hope the gloomy day, and sweetens every bitter cup.

It makes the coward spirit brave, and nerves the feeble arm for fight;
it takes its terror from the grave, and gilds the bed of death with light:

The balm of life, the cure of woe, the measure and the pledge of love,
the sinner's refuge here below, the angels' theme in heaven above.

Words Thomas Kelly,
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Colin leads us in a time of Communion: - one in which Joy had to quickly prepare more bread and wine as we had a larger than expected congregation, for which we give thanks!

If you love the Lord, you are invited to participate in this Communion celebration this morning. Please join with us, not because you must but because you may, not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Join us, not because of any goodness of our own gives you or me a right to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but because we need the Lord's mercy and help. Join us, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more. Join us, because he loved you and gave himself for you. Celebrate with us and meet the risen Christ as we take the Bread and Wine, for we are his Body, formed by his Spirit, and have been called to rejoice in his love and forgiveness.

The apostle Paul tells us of the institution of the Lord's Supper:

"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed Took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'."

Thanksgiving

Loving God, we praise and thank you for your love shown to us in Jesus Christ. We thank you for his life and ministry, announcing the good news of your kingdom and demonstrating its power by lifting up the downtrodden, and healing the sick, and loving the loveless.

We thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross for the salvation of the world, and for raising him to life again, as a foretaste of the glory we will all share. We give you thanks for this bread and wine, symbols of our world and signs of your transforming love. Send your Holy Spirit, we pray, that we may be renewed into the likeness of Jesus Christ and formed into his Body. We pray in his name and for his sake. Amen.

The Bread is distributed, we eat as we receive it.

Colin then lifted the cup and shared these words

“In the same way he also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

Prayer

Your death, O Lord, we commemorate. Your resurrection we celebrate. Your final coming we await with eagerness. Lord, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us and brought us home. Your life and cross-work declare your great love towards us. We thank you that you have opened the gate of glory for us. May we who share Christ’s body live his risen life; we who drink his cup help to bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The wine is distributed, we are asked to wait until everyone has received the wine, so that we can all drink it together as a mark of our oneness in Christ, as Colin says:

The blood of Christ which is shed for us.

Colin gives us an introduction to his talk today, which will be about faith. He uses a box of eggs to illustrate this, getting Chris to verify that they are genuine eggs, then throwing one towards Joy sitting at the piano! This was the fake one!! He showed some pictures on the screen:



Victor leads us in prayer:

Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God, we thank you for the privilege of life; in our bodies and souls. Father God, we are grateful for your faithfulness and kindness towards us. Forgive us, Lord, for we repeatedly fall short of being faithful to you but help us to be renewed and transformed by the power of your Holy Spirit.

When we consider the horrors and carnage being experienced by the people of Ukraine and in other areas of conflict, We pray for the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them at these trying times; when they are at their weakest, that they would continue to rely on you.

Perhaps it may seem insensitive to present before you the much smaller problems that we endure, acknowledging you are a gracious and loving God, it is often through your attention to the small, insignificant things in our lives that we sense that you know us individually and care about the entirety of our lives. We bring before you now, the things that are most on our hearts at this time – the people, the situations, the little life's trouble; we know You care for us, Please help us to cope with any problems and have happiness too. May our lives be tangible testimony and a seamless witness for people around wherever we go.

We pray, also, for our community; Blackburn with Darwen – please give the leaders wisdom to make unselfish decisions for the people. We ask for an abundance of blessings for our town and to make it a place where those who need help, kindness and refuge will find it.

We pray particularly for those with financial struggles because of the cost of living crisis, we pray for the work of the Food Banks, that they would be able to support and advise those in distress.

We are grateful for all you have blessed us with – may we be generous with our money and resources to see the need to help others, May we identify the resources we are bestowed with as a gift from you and not ours to boast about and hoard.

We pray for our church family that you would abide with us and feel very close to us. We ask for help from those who feel down or lonely, especially when they are not able to get out and about or miss loved ones. Strengthen and give patience to those who are in ill health or waiting for treatment or appointments. Give wisdom to those with difficult decisions to make.

Give us the grace to read your Word more to pray more and more loving – make us all more like you every day and challenge us where we need to change.

We ask for blessing and an increase in the activities we run – from Tiddlywinks to the Tuesday groups, from Movie morning to the new Orbit Youth group. May they meet local needs but may they also be a platform to effectively witness about you and express love to those who are yet to know you.

We are thankful because of your love for us, we can approach you with confidence and you love those who do not know you yet, because you want to help and can answer all our prayers, from the smallest to the biggest request. We ask that you hear our prayers, as it rises to Heaven, may Your glory fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea, in Jesus' name we have prayed. Amen.

Colin invites us to join in our next song, which also includes an opportunity to bring our gifts, both for Gods' work here, and also for the Ukraine appeal ; **Here is love** - with an extra verse which surprised Joy as she played the piano!

Here is love vast as the ocean, loving kindness as a flood,
when the Prince of Life, our ransom shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember? Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten throughout Heaven's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion fountains opened deep and wide,
through the floodgates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers, poured incessant from above,
and Heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me by Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
and Thy grace my need is meeting as I trust in Thee, my Lord.
Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring Thy great love and pow'r on me
without measure, full and boundless, drawing out my heart to Thee.

Robert Lowry, William Rees.
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Colin prays as he receives the gifts : We thank you Heavenly Father for these offerings. We pray that the money will be used for your honour and glory, and for peace in Ukraine, and for those who have lost everything because of that war, we pray that you will bless them for your name sake. Amen

Victor returns to share our Bible Reading today: Genesis 22, 1-19

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.'

Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, 'Stay here with

the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?'

'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied.

'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'

Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.'

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram^[a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.'

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.'

Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Colin then shared his message: The Sacrifice of a Son

The account of the *Sacrifice of Isaac* in our reading this morning is one of the great stories of the Bible. It is a story without parallel in the Old Testament. Never before, and only on one special occasion since, has the God of the Bible demanded human sacrifice, even though this was a common practice in the ancient world. As we come to the most important time of the year for Christians – Holy Week and Easter – the

story of Abraham and Isaac points us to that other momentous occasion, one that occurred 2000 years ago, when a father sacrificed his only beloved son as a sign of his unswerving commitment to his covenant of love for us all.

I have three headings for you this morning to help us unpick the story of the Sacrifice or Binding of Isaac.

It is a great FAMILY-STORY

Abraham lived about 4000 years ago. He was a wealthy farmer in the region called Mesopotamia, in what is nowadays called Iran. This was a great civilization – the America of the day! He lived with his wife Sarah, surrounded by all the trappings of wealth. But, sadly, one thing was missing from his life of luxury: the pattering of tiny feet. For some reason, Abraham and Sarah could not have children. At that time, this was a disaster, for it meant that there would be no son and heir to his fortune and family-name. You see, human infertility has always been a common problem and looked upon as a great tragedy. I am told that something like one-in-five couples struggle to conceive, and even with all the help of medical interventions these days, one-in-ten still fail to have a baby.

Then one day, Abraham's life was turned upside down when God, the Almighty, as Abraham called him, spoke to him. In short, God promised Abraham a son if he was willing to pack up his things and move to Canaan, a wild inhospitable place a thousand or so miles to the south, and there abandon his life of ease and comfort for the life of hardship in a tent. Given the fact that Abraham and Sarah were already at this stage drawing their pension, we can assume that his response to such a divine offer would have been sceptical, to say the least. And yet we are told that he jumped at the offer and immediately called a removal firm, Camel and Co., to get his great trek to the Promised Land underway.

The amazing thing is that the fulfilment of this promise to bear a son did not take place for another twenty or so years, and over time Sarah clearly gave up all hope of ever becoming pregnant, because they were both now well past child-bearing age. And as a result, it would be fair to say that they gave up their full commitment to God's promise and tried to do it their own way. For example, one day, Sarah told Abraham to sleep with her maid Hagar and have a child through her. He didn't disagree and eventually fathered by this act of adultery a son called Ishmael. And yet God's promise never went away and the Almighty reminded him on various occasions that he would indeed become a great father of a great nation and Sarah would be their great mother. The point is that because of their lack of faith or trust they had to wait until they were well-beyond any natural child-bearing age, so that when a son was born to them, they would be in no doubt that this was indeed a

miracle baby. So, eventually, Isaac was born – a name meaning ‘one who laughs and rejoices’.

It is a great FAITH-STORY

One day, the Almighty spoke to Abraham again. But this time the conversation was earth-shattering. God wanted him to go and sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah. It was a test of Abraham’s faith in God. Abraham immediately obeyed. Wow! The very child he longed for; the only child that Abraham and his wife Sarah had together; God was about to take from him.

How old was Isaac at this time? When I was young and heard this story, I thought Isaac was a small boy, so he could do nothing to escape or resist. But the text says in verse 6, *‘And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son . . . and they went both of them together.’* This suggests a much older person, someone in his late teens, perhaps, or early twenties. Certainly, Abraham was now over a hundred years of age and too old to be carrying anything heavy. So, early the following morning he saddled his donkey and set out for Mount Moriah with his son Isaac and two servants.

So, once they arrived at Moriah, they built an altar and put the wood on it. Isaac was bound with ropes and placed on top of it. Then Abraham took his knife to slay Isaac. But just as he was about to plunge it into his son, we have one of those cinematic ‘just in the nick of time’ moments, when the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, *‘Abraham, Abraham, lay not your hand upon the lad... for now I know that you trust God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.’* Instead, Abraham was commanded to sacrifice a sheep or ram that was caught by its horns in a nearby thicket or bush.

So, the only conclusion we can draw from this story is that Abraham's devotion to his God was indeed as strong as it ever was. This devotion was sustained not only by his faith and love but also by his hope. For Hebrews 11, that great chapter on faith, tells us that Abraham’s faith was based on his belief *‘that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead’*. So, he passed the test with flying colours, which according to Romans 4 confirms him as the *‘father of all them that believe’*.

If God tests you, not demanding the sacrifice of your only child (God is not the God of human sacrifice) but something else, will you be willing to surrender what he demands, even if this is your best or even your very self in his service? For the Gospel calls us to offer up our lives as a living sacrifice to God. Because the word FAITH, when it is used as an acronym, means Forsaking All I Trust Him. There is of

course a sequel to this story, for God blessed Abraham in an almighty way. And so, your obedience to God in anything that he asks of you will also be blessed.

It is a great FIGURATIVE-STORY

You see, the Sacrifice of Isaac is also a great prophecy of the coming of Jesus and especially his death and resurrection, events we will be commemorating and celebrating in a couple of weeks' time. There are a number of similarities in our story between Isaac and Jesus:

Both were loved by their father. Both Isaac and Jesus were 'beloved sons' who had been long-awaited and were born in miraculous circumstances.

Both offered themselves willingly, even though they were innocent and had done nothing wrong – nothing deserving death.

Both were led by their father, and both followed obediently toward their death.

Both carried the wood for their deaths on their backs up the hill of their sacrifice.

Both were sacrificed on the same hill, the Mount Moriah – the Hill of Golgotha or Mount Calvary, as it later became known.

Both sacrifices actually involved the death of a Lamb. Jesus was called the Lamb of God, the Lamb of sacrifice, because he would bear the sin of the world.

Both were delivered from death on the third day. In fact, this is the only place in the Old Testament to indicate that the Messiah would rise again the third day. It says so through the picture of Isaac. Isaac was 'reckoned dead' by Abraham as soon as God gave him the command, but he was 'made alive' (risen) three days later.

One of the great names of God is to be found in our reading – Jehovah Jireh. This means 'The LORD will provide.' It points to the fact that the Lord has indeed provided everything necessary for our salvation, for our forgiveness. In other words, this OT story gives us a deeper understanding of what God the Father did for us through his Son Jesus. If Abraham had been at the foot of the Cross and saw the moment when Jesus died, I'm sure he would have used the words that God had said to him on Moriah: 'Now I know ... that you love me, because you did not withhold your son, your only son, whom you love, from me.'

You see, Abraham and Isaac going up the mountain was a picture of the price the Father paid for us when his Son, Jesus Christ, died on Calvary's cross. This is the central message of the Gospel of Christ, that Good-news message of God's love for us. That the supreme sacrifice of the cross was the price that God had to pay for our

sin, in order to satisfy his perfect standard of righteousness. Unless we come to know this for ourselves through faith in Christ, we can never be free from the sin that separates us from God and can never receive his eternal blessing. But when the cross-work of Jesus touches us, then we will know in a deeply personal way that God loves us and delights in us to such an incredible extent. Only through faith in Christ can we know the God of Abraham and Isaac.

My fervent prayer is that, this coming Easter, we will all come to realise and appreciate, if we haven't already done so, the deep, deep love that God has for everyone in and through his Son, Jesus Christ. *'For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.'* May this Easter truly be a blessed time for everyone of us. Amen.

Colin invites us to join in our last song, How deep the Fathers love, Joy playing the piano once more.

How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure,
that He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss - the Father turns His face away,
as wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders;
ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life - I know that it is finished.

I

I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom;
but I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer;
but this I know with all my heart - His wounds have paid my ransom.

Stuart Townend CCLI SONG # 1558110

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And finally we say 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.