



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on August 6th 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 service today is being led by Alec, who welcomes everyone, and invites all to join in our Opening hymn:(all our music this week is played by Trevor, Kate and Paul W)

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!

Authors: Godfrey Thring, Matthew Bridges CCLI Song # 23938 Copyright © Jubilate Hymns Ltd, CCL No 5664

Alec shared our Opening reading Psalm 138

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; before the 'gods' I will sing your praise.
I will bow down towards your holy temple and will praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness, for you have so exalted your solemn decree that it surpasses your fame.
When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me.
May all the kings of the earth praise you, Lord, when they hear what you have decreed.
May they sing of the ways of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord is great.
Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;
though lofty, he sees them from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life.
You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.
The Lord will vindicate me; your love, Lord, endures for ever -
do not abandon the works of your hands.

We then watched an Open Doors video of this psalm, sung by the Melody singers, Iraq.

The Notices were shared by Tony: the church leaders meeting will be on Wednesday this week; nomination forms for the diaconate are available- he would like some company please! There are sign up sheets available for those who may be able to help to establish a drop-in, at the end of the service the 5 minute prayer time will take place at the rear of the church, followed by a church lunch.

Alec then introduced a time of Praise and worship, beginning with

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;
visit us with Thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe, Thy loving spirit into every troubled breast,
let us all in Thee inherit, let us find that perfect rest.
Take away the love of sinning, Alpha and Omega be,
end of faith, as its beginning sets our hearts at liberty.

Come almighty to deliver, let us all Thy life receive,
suddenly return and never, never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be,
let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee.
Changed from glory into glory, 'til in Heaven we take our place,
'til we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love and praise.

Authors: Charles Wesley, William P. Rowlands CCLI SONG # 1461324 Copyrights@ Words and Music Public domain CCL No 5664

All to Jesus, I surrender, all to Thee I freely give.
I will ever love and trust You; in Your presence daily live.
**I surrender all, I surrender all;
all to Thee, my blessed Saviour,
I surrender all.**

All to Jesus, I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee.
Fill me with Your love and power, let Your blessing fall on me.
I surrender all, I surrender all...

All to Jesus I surrender, now I feel the sacred flame;
O the joy of full salvation, glory, glory, to Your name.
I surrender all, I surrender all.

Authors: Judson Wheeler Van DeVenter, Winfield Scott Weeden CCLI SONG # 23189 Copyrights@ Words and Music: Public Domain CCL No 5664.

Lord, the light of your love is shining, in the midst of the darkness, shining -
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us, set us free by the truth you now bring us,
shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory.

Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.

**Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy,
send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.**

Lord, I come to your awesome presence, from the shadows into your radiance,
by the blood I may enter your brightness,
search me, try me, consume all my darkness,
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory....

As we gaze on your kingly brightness so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory, mirrored here may our lives tell your story,
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory....

Author: Graham Kendrick CCLI SONG # 30426 Copyright © 1987 Make Way Music, www.grahamkendrick.co.uk CCL No 5664

Our Prayers are led by Becky

“Dear Heavenly Father

I just want to tell you this morning how very precious you are to me To tell you how having you in my life is the best feeling in the world. You make me feel safe and happy and content. There are so many lonely, lost souls out there, on their own, and it must seem quite a scary world to them. Whenever I feel frightened or unsure if what I am doing is right, I can ask you my Father, I can ask you anything, without any fear of embarrassment or judgement. What a wonderful feeling that is. You are not only my Heavenly Father, you are also my mentor, my teacher, my leader, my advisor, my friend. How wonderful is that to know that you are with me every single minute of the day. Even before I know the answer or solution myself, you know my Father what my response will be. Sometimes I don't listen, not out of disrespect, but because I think I know without your guidance, what to do. I may just have got it right this particular time, but it is wonderful to feel your approval, that this is what you want me to do. Then I feel brave and strong and confident to try whatever lies ahead. We, certainly, I need to know, I have your blessing and that you are with If it is your desire Heavenly Father, help us to fill our church with loads of people who want to come to know you, and learn to love you as we do. Let them see you carrying me, if I stumble. I thank you for all that. I want to love like you do Father. I want to be non judgemental to all I meet. I want to behave as you did, when you lived here on earth among us. I want to see the best in people, to show respect and kindness just as you did, You even died for us. If it is your desire Heavenly Father, help us to fill our church with loads of people who want to come to know you, and learn to love you as we do. Let them see in us, something of you Lord. Help us to be your hands and feet and eyes and ears. Help us to be bold and strong when we speak about you. Fill our minds with the right things to say. Encouraging words, wise words, the correct words. Sometimes you get no more than a couple of minutes to say or do the correct thing on that occasion. Help us to get it right. Help us to be an encouragement and blessing to that single person, for however brief that chance meeting was. Let us be your disciples. We can do it Lord with your help.

Please give this determination and courage to our pastor Alec and our leadership team. They work so tirelessly for our good. Help them when they are making decisions or discussing our future. Many in our congregation have different views on music and services. It is just a personal choice. Help each and everyone of us to be more tolerant towards each other. Help us to try to pull together more. A

service on a Sunday is really very short, very short indeed. After the service we are just the same people with the same love for each other and the same love for you Heavenly Father. We just may express our feelings differently, but we all love you, and you know that we do. There is no right or wrong way to worship you Father and sing your praises. Even your own disciples had different thoughts and opinions.

Father help us to care for one another. It is easy to love our families, but not always so easy to love the people we meet day after day. Teach us to be tolerant and less judgemental when someone says something we may not agree with. Help us to see the good in a person. I am sure that everyone has something worthwhile to offer. Teach us not to criticise so easily or be offended. If we think about it, it may be just as difficult for the other person to express themselves to us. They could feel awkward too.

For quite a while now friends have been praying for me. John my husband, myself and members of my family. It feels so wonderful to know that these people are thinking about us and actually praying, talking with you Lord about us. This is real. I won't know when they are praying, but I just know that I feel uplifted and closer to you at these times Heavenly father. How pleasing is it to you then, if we can lift people up to you, even more so if they are new to us. Jesus didn't know any of the people he met at first. He didn't know his disciples. He didn't know the people he healed. When he did hear things that were not as he would have liked them to be, he still didn't judge or condemn them. No, he just tried to heal them either physically or mentally.

What a friend we have in Jesus if we ask him into our lives. He will come willingly. Thank you Heavenly Father for coming into my life.

Now we pray for the people we know are poorly at this moment in time. They could be poorly or grieving or frightened or lonely. They could be waiting for an operation or for one of their family who is waiting. They could be depressed because they have money worries and can't make ends meet. They could be estranged from family members and don't know how to resolve the problems. Sometimes the smallest things become ginormous when you don't know how to handle a situation. Please Lord let them meet someone this week, this very day even, who could just be sent by you to help them solve their problem. I would like to pray personally for young Gregor, Brian and Marion Fisher's grandson. Brian and Marion are so very stoic and trusting and very prayerful for others. Prayer for Brian's brother Gerald too, in fact Mary and the whole family. Can we remember Jean Neilson in our prayers too, she is so prayerful for others. This is by no means favouritism, it's just that they are on my heart. You know anyway dear Lord without us saying just who needs your gentle touch. If you just lay your hand upon them they will instantly feel better.

As I bring my prayers to a close Heavenly Father, I thank you for all the good things in my week. For the people who I pray for getting better. For the times I have laughed and smiled. For the number of times I have been touched by a kind word unexpectedly. Thank you for reminding me when I felt a bit down that I am a lot better off than a lot of people. Thank you that we have a place to come and worship on a Sunday. We can sing your praises and praise your name. Thank you for our pastor Alec and our leadership team for each other and for the new people joining us.

I pray all these things in the precious name of Jesus Amen"

Today's Bible reading John 14:15-21 was read by Jean W

'If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my

commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.'

Alec shared his Message "Following Jesus"

Last week you will recall we talked from the parable of the sower about living fruitful lives as followers of Jesus. In terms of its message, there is no greater good news to be found anywhere than in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Who else in the history of the world has been able to answer the deepest cries of the human heart? From all directions we hear the cry for meaning in the often or always seemingly meaningless chaos of our existence; the cry for love in a world that is or already has rapidly fallen apart; the cry for forgiveness in an age when peace of mind is rarely found; the cry for freedom when human misery and oppression surround us on every side and the cry for hope in the face of the gloom that is gathering and spreading itself throughout the world.

The clear and only real, lasting answer to these cries of our hearts is God in Jesus Christ. It is not just that Jesus alone relates to all our deepest needs but that in living amongst us he has the power to change the hearts of those he himself created.

With such a relevant message and with such great power why is it that the church in our borough seems to be so comparatively ineffective? In Blackburn there are many church members, visitors to worship gatherings, hymn-singers, sermon-tasters, bible readers, community activists, charismatics and non-charismatics, and people engaged in all kinds of church activities; and this may be considered to be really good!

But the basis of life in Jesus for all of us in Blackburn is being willing humbly to learn the meaning of true discipleship becoming and living as disciples of the Lord. The group of disciples that Jesus called and trained sometimes failed him, hurt him, disappointed him and wronged him. But for almost three years he lived with them, shared with them, cared for them, taught them, corrected them, trusted them, forgave them and loved them to the end; and later empowered by the Holy Spirit this group of trained disciples turned the world upside down. By the inward power of the Holy Spirit, Christ's love can transform and build our life as a fellowship enabling us to live as disciples of Jesus and to lead others to do the same; not blocking but allowing God to turn the world around us upside down again.

The basic idea of discipleship was widely accepted by the time Jesus began his ministry. But it soon became clear that the Lord Jesus had created a radical and unique pattern of discipleship. We see:

- that he takes the initiative in calling people to follow him
- that he calls people first of all to himself as a person and not just to his teaching
- that he expects from his disciples total obedience
- that he teaches them that they would serve and that they would suffer
- that he gathers around himself a thoroughly mixed crowd of very ordinary people

The fact of God's initiative and Christ's calling lies behind all those who are his disciples.

In John 15:16-17 we read: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other."

When we realise that we are disciples who have been personally chosen by the Lord Jesus, this should transform our whole attitude towards him and encourage and motivate us for the work he has given to us.

It is not we who have initially made the decision to follow the Lord, although of course we have decided to do that if we are his followers; we need to understand that we are chosen, called and

commissioned by Christ. When we grasp that we will have a real sense of our responsibility to present our lives to him as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

As the apostles said, "As men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ." 2 Cor. 2:17

"We know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you." 1 Thess. 1:4

"You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." 1 Cor. 6:19ff

Jesus' disciples had a deep awareness, a strong sense of God's calling, of Christ's initiative and of the work of the Holy Spirit sovereignly ruling their lives.

They needed all this to be:

-courageous in their witness

-to hold fast in the suffering they experienced

-and to lead lives worthy of the calling they had been given

But let's come back for a moment to John 15:16-17 where we read: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other."

Our calling is from God, it is to be fruitful and it is to love one another. Jesus says: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

How does he love us? When Jesus calls us as individuals to be his disciples he shares his life with us. By being born as a servant and living amongst us he completely identifies with us; for we do not have in Jesus someone who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, except that he did not sin. Jesus shines in the darkness in being available to everyone who responds to his call; he makes himself vulnerable by opening his heart to us. Like a great magnet he attracts people through his loving compassion which is so real and so open that we all know that we can trust him. His visibly transparent openness and integrity will constantly and repeatedly draw others into the quality of a loving relationship that they have not known or experienced before. He gave and gives his life for us. And Jesus says: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Are we then disciples of Jesus? I am not saying are we churchgoers, born-again Christians, charismatics or non-charismatics, or anything on that level nor am I saying anything against any of those things. I am asking the question, do we love one another as Jesus loves us?

For Jesus says, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

When Buddha was dying, his disciples asked him how they could best remember him. He told them not to bother. He said it was his teaching not his person that was what counted. With Jesus it is completely different. Everything centres on the person of Jesus so that discipleship means knowing him, loving him, believing in him and being committed to him and following his commands.

When Jesus died, his disciples were shattered. His life of perfect love had been destroyed on a cross. His death was the sublime, the ultimate summit of his sacrificial love. Afterwards on the way to Emmaus the disciples didn't talk about his teaching but about his person; it was their **relationship to Jesus** that mattered. Nowhere in the Bible is it stated or even hinted at that between the death and the resurrection of Jesus his teaching was a source of strength to his followers or that they had the impression of having received a valuable legacy in the word of Jesus. It was their personal allegiance to Jesus that mattered. As he was suddenly no longer with them they were deeply depressed and terrified.

Our relationship to Jesus is such that without him we are lost. Lost in sin and lost in darkness. Lost today and lost forever. As disciples his presence is crucial and critical. Do we practice the presence of Jesus in our lives? Do we know in our hearts and minds that God lives within us through his Spirit and in his Son, Jesus in us the hope of glory, the Spirit in us as our Comforter?

In his resurrection appearances Jesus appeared repeatedly to his disciples, individually and together, reassuring them of his living presence with them and of his love and forgiveness. He is here with us, with you today. He confirms his love for you and his forgiveness of you. In the same way we should love and forgive one another. We are his witnesses; we are to tell everyone about him; through sharing our lives together we will demonstrate the reality of the risen and living Jesus as the body of Christ on earth.

Jesus calls us to absolute obedience, but only because he has first laid down his life for us, placed his Spirit into our hearts and given us to one another in love.

Amen.

Our Closing (offertory) hymn: "All the way my Saviour leads me"

All the way my Saviour leads me- what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy, who through life has been my guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort, here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well;
for I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Saviour leads me- cheers each winding path I tread,
gives me grace for ev'ry trial, feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter and my soul athirst may be,
gushing from the rock before me, lo! A spring of joy I see;
gushing from the rock before me, lo! A spring of joy I see.

All the way my Saviour leads me- Oh, the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised in my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed immortal, wings its flight to realms of day,
this my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way;
this my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way.

Author: Fanny Jane Crosby CCLI SONG # 2741682 Public domain CCL No 5664

Alec led a Closing prayer: "Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending us your only son, your only beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for our sake to die on a cross to give us the opportunity through your forgiveness, to come to give us new life in your through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We thank you that you are with us today and that you will go with us. We thank you for all the gifts that you give us and we give today, as through our regular gifts digitally, all these gifts to you asking that you will bless them and use them for the extension of your kingdom in this place and elsewhere. We pray too that you will be with us in our lunch together, and in the time that we have together now. Bless us we pray:"

and then we all joined together saying:

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.