



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on August 1st 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

We still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast a recording of the service, and will continue to provide this written service sheet for those unable to attend Bethesda. We hope and pray that you will find this helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Having completed our series of "Encouragement in Hard Times", today we begin a new series looking at Psalms. Our worship today is led by Alec, who welcomes us all. He introduces our new theme, and shares the news that Trevor is playing the piano for us today, now that we are allowed to sing in church again. We are invited to lift our voices in song with a traditional hymn: **Great is thy faithfulness.**

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with Thee:
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not,
as Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Great is Thy faithfulness,
great is Thy faithfulness,
morning by morning, new mercies I see.
All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided,
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Great is Thy faithfulness....

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth;
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

Great is Thy faithfulness.....

Becky leads us in Prayer:

“What a beautiful name it is, what a beautiful name it is. The name of Jesus Christ our king.

Heavenly Father, what a privilege it is to say your name out loud, to speak with you as we would speak with our earthly father.

How natural it is to ask for favours and forgiveness, to confess to you when we are upset with ourselves, because we let you down yet again. We do this day after day. Our intentions are good but often we get sidestepped, sometimes in a selfish way, other times, trying to do what we think you would want us to do, but blundering in without talking to you first. Seeking your wisdom. In this world of uncertainty we need more than ever to talk to you about our worries and concerns. Whenever we do do this, things always seem much easier to bear. We all know that you are always there for us and want what is best for us. It's just that sometimes we have so many things in our head that we want to do, that we never slowdown long enough to talk to you about it. Forgive us Father for this and slow us all down a little. Let's take a breath and see the beauty of the things around us. Even in the middle of this unease there is still so much to be grateful for. We have had several weeks of beautiful weather when we could get out in our gardens and see friends. We could see and hear the birds and lovely flowers and trees. We have been able to see friends and relatives again. Loved ones in private homes for the elderly are being allowed visitors again, our church has opened fully now, we can sing and talk to one another. Activities are slowly being introduced again. Weddings and funerals becoming like they used to be. Memory Café and our house groups and Bible classes hopefully starting up again. Now the school holidays are here we thank you Heavenly Father, that families are allowed to mix again. We do ask though for patience and tolerance with each other. Some of us are a little more confident than others, dependent upon each persons general health. Some people have underlying health problems where they cannot afford to take the risk that someone else can. They may care for someone who is very vulnerable to any kind of infection so have to keep themselves safe as they can. Again Lord we can ask you to guide us, to give us the wisdom to know what to do in each different set of circumstances.

Beautiful Father, we thank you for your protection over us all and our families and ask you to comfort the grieving and sick, lonely and elderly. We pray that all those who do not know your love, will find their way to you.

We pray this morning for the world in general Heavenly Father. We pray for all the countries where there is unrest. Countries where there is a shortage of food and water, sanitation is barely existent and hospital treatment also. We are so grateful for the aid workers and for the charities who assist these countries. We pray your blessings on the Chilvers and the work they do. We pray for our hospices and air ambulance and all the NHS staff. We pray for better acknowledgement of all the risks they have taken over the last 12 months. Risks to their own health and their families. We ask for wisdom and better understanding for our government. We worry for the

safety of our young people as there is so much violence in our World today. We pray about the situation with guns and knives. Hardly a day passes but someone is getting stabbed or shot at. Lord we ask you to intervene in all this danger, for stricter, tighter rules and licenses for these weapons. Lord you created this beautiful world for us all to live in peace together, but sadly it is a pretty scary place right now. Please Father God change peoples hearts, let them come to know you and your love for us all. You died on the cross for us Heavenly Father to give us eternal life, how sad is these terrible things going on in our world right now must make you. Father we pray so hard for these things to change, for all this racism and hooliganism and greed to stop. For us all to live in peace with one another. Please Lord turn the hearts of these people around. We know you can. We try to help the homeless and the neglected, the lonely and the abused, but we are completely out of our depth with all these acts of sheer cruelty. So we pray to you Father God to intervene.

As I draw my prayers to a close dear Lord, I ask your blessing on our church here at Bethesda, on Alec our pastor and on our deacons and church leaders. They all work so hard for us as well as having jobs and families to look after. We pray you will give them wisdom and good health. We ask you place your healing hand on all who are unwell or caring for family members who are unwell at this time in our congregation. We don't need to name them, you know each and every situation, the end from the beginning. Please let them draw comfort from the knowledge of your love for them. And we thank you Lord, for those people we know who are recovering. And we thank you for hearing our prayers this morning. Amen."

Alec invites us to join in song again, this time as we watch it on the screen at Bethesda, with another **Hymn, Blessed assurance**. This recording has a key change and tempo change for a repeat of the final chorus, but if you are singing at home, you can sing it as many times as you wish, and at whatever speed you like!!

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.
 This is my story, this is my song,
 praising my Saviour all the day long.
 This is my story, this is my song,
 praising my Saviour all the day long.

Perfect communion, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight.
Angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
 This is my story, this is my song....

Perfect submission, all is at rest.
I in my Saviour am happy and bless'd,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love.
This is my story, this is my song....

Fanny Crosby
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Alec shares the notices for this week, starting with Tuesday, when we welcome people to come to Bethesda, between 10am and 12noon, when we will be serving tea and coffee, and encouraging people to chat and enjoy fellowship together. Thursday evening sees the launch of our regular weekly meetings, to be held in the sanctuary at 7.30pm, which will be alternate prayer or Bible study sessions. Finally, the congregation is reminded that as this is the first Sunday of the month, we will be sharing in communion together, prepared by Colin and Joy, who will be distributing the bread and wine - a cross between what we have done in the past and what we have had to adapt over the last months, but continuing to be Covid secure. Those at home may choose to have bread and wine (or juice) to symbolically share together. As we prepare our hearts for this, we lift our voices in song again, watching another video at Bethesda:

Song, Servant King

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve
and give Your life that we might live.
This is our God, The Servant King,
He calls us now to follow Him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to The Servant King.

There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not My will but Yours,' He said.
This is our God, The Servant King...

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered
This is our God, The Servant King...

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving.
This is our God, The Servant King...

Graham Kendrick
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We come together and meet around the Communion Table, as Alec firstly gives thanks in prayer.

He then shares the familiar words said by Jesus to his friends on the night he was betrayed, and Colin and Joy, wearing masks and gloves, distribute the bread, in remembrance of Christ. We eat the bread as we receive it.

Alec then reminds us once more of the words said by Christ as he lifted the wine, and Joy distributes the wine, as Trevor plays "Thank you Jesus" on the piano. When all have been served, we drink together, and Alec draws this time together to a close in prayer, saying "Come soon, Lord Jesus."

Alec then invites Tony C to come forward to share today's reading, Psalm 73, reading from the Good News Bible.

The Justice of God

God is indeed good to Israel, to those who have pure hearts.
But I had nearly lost confidence; my faith was almost gone because I was jealous of the proud when I saw that things go well for the wicked.
They do not suffer pain; they are strong and healthy.
They do not suffer as other people do; they do not have the troubles that others have.
And so they wear pride like a necklace and violence like a robe;
their hearts pour out evil, and their minds are busy with wicked schemes.
They laugh at other people and speak of evil things; they are proud and make plans to oppress others.
They speak evil of God in heaven and give arrogant orders to everyone on earth, so that even God's people turn to them and eagerly believe whatever they say.
They say, "God will not know; the Most High will not find out."
That is what the wicked are like. They have plenty and are always getting more.
Is it for nothing, then, that I have kept myself pure and have not committed sin?
O God, you have made me suffer all day long; every morning you have punished me.
If I had said such things, I would not be acting as one of your people.
I tried to think this problem through, but it was too difficult for me until I went into your Temple.
Then I understood what will happen to the wicked.
You will put them in slippery places and make them fall to destruction!
They are instantly destroyed; they go down to a horrible end.

They are like a dream that goes away in the morning;
when you rouse yourself, O Lord, they disappear.
When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt,
I was as stupid as an animal; I did not understand you.
Yet I always stay close to you, and you hold me by the hand.
You guide me with your instruction and at the end you will receive me with honour.
What else do I have in heaven but you? Since I have you, what else could I want on earth?
My mind and my body may grow weak, but God is my strength; he is all I ever need.
Those who abandon you will certainly perish; you will destroy those who are unfaithful to you.
But as for me, how wonderful to be near God, to find protection with the Sovereign Lord and to proclaim all that he has done!

We can sing again, once more accompanying a video on the screen:
There is an additional verse, which we do not generally sing, but perhaps we should!

Song, Come, now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God,
Come.

One day every tongue will confess You are God,
one day every knee will bow;
still the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose You now.

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God,
Come.

(Willingly we choose to surrender our lives,
willingly our knees will bow,
with all our heart soul mind and strength
we gladly choose You now.)

Brian Doerksen
CCLI Song Number 2430948
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Alec now shares his message for today:

DOUBT AND ASSURANCE

There are so many synonyms for doubt. Just think of agnosticism, disbelief, distrust, perplexity, scepticism, uncertainty, wavering, and lack of confidence and so on.

Rene Descartes, French mathematician and philosopher, generally regarded as the founder of modern Western philosophy was looking for something he could not doubt, and he concluded that he could not doubt that he doubted. He put all beliefs, ideas, thoughts, and matter in doubt.

Doubt is something all-embracing, something which can eat up our hearts and minds, which sometimes threatens our very being, our very existence, our wish to live. It will almost definitely be unsettling. But it may also challenge everything we have ever thought or felt.

We are singing today, really singing. Isn't that wonderful! But even more wonderful than that are the words, the truths that we are singing about our God.

Doubting who God is does not change His nature, His being, His character, not even one tiny bit.

Doubting what God has done and is doing in our lives will not make God less majestic, less powerful, less loving, less caring, less gracious or less merciful, for He always was and is and will be all these things.

But we are where we are now. We start living from this moment on.

We have sung come just as you are. Brian Doerksen just said to us, "I needed to remind myself that I could come even though I had unresolved questions and life was difficult." God accepts us as we are. He longs for us to turn back to Him and worship Him, for He is God.

So why do we doubt? Maybe you are not sure about that?! Why do we doubt?

Maybe because we have a different agenda to God? Maybe because we want to play God in our own life or in part of it even in just one small corner of it? Maybe even in our church? Maybe because we want to keep the control over what we are doing and what will happen to us? Maybe because we know that the image we are presenting of ourselves to others and to God is perhaps different from the inner realities of our lives?

Maybe because our concept of God, our world view or both is false.

Maybe because our perception of God and the world, our perception of ourselves is distorted, is flawed, is incorrect, and is faulty?

Maybe because there is something we have done wrong in our lives and which is not yet sorted?

Maybe because we have deliberately closed our eyes to the light of God`s truth?

Maybe because our vision has been blurred by the mess we have made in our lives, the decisions we took that looked so brave and so strong and so important maybe even so right but led inwards and backwards and away from our Maker and Sustainer and His plans for our lives?

Maybe we have tried everything except that which we need to do? To give our hearts, our souls, our minds and our whole lives back to Him who made us and came to earth to die to be able to forgive us our sins and to give us new life in Jesus through his resurrection from the dead.

But maybe, and I hope we have, maybe we have given him our lives back. Maybe a long time ago, maybe more recently but we still have doubts. So where are we? Is it OK to doubt?

The Psalmist knew a lot about doubt. Oh yes he had a clear basic understanding of reality, of truth, of genuine truth. He says in Psalm 73:1 “God is indeed good to Israel, to those who have pure hearts.” He knew that God loves His people; he knew that all those who have pure hearts belong to the Lord as His people.

But he started to look around, to look elsewhere and somehow he started to take his eyes off God and to doubt what he had known in his life up to now, what he had experienced of the living God in his life up to that present time. Is that you and me too? Are we looking at other things, other “gods that are no gods”, being distracted from the one true and living God?

Have we started to wonder whether the Gospel we believe is untrue, inaccurate, inexact, and imprecise?

Have we begun maybe even in the middle of the pandemic to think that the Christian message, the bible message is wrong in some ways, invalid, unfounded, concocted and fabricated?

Do we doubt now whether God really cares for the world He has made?

Have we been looking at God`s church on earth and started to think that the church itself is deceptive, fraudulent, unreal and probably counterfeit?

Have we begun to wonder whether what is written in the Bible even in the Old Testament is fictitious, that the stories are largely made-up and augmented in the bible texts with invented myths, trumped-up ideas, and untruthful, spurious and misleading thoughts?

I heard a sermon the other day where the speaker said he was invited to a family celebration to which the minister was also invited where they sat him next to the minister in order to avoid themselves being asked difficult questions by him. The

minister said to the speaker you say you read a lot in the Bible. Do you believe what you read; you know the stuff about Jesus walking on the water, that he all of a sudden provided five thousand men plus women and children with bread and fish and that he also carried out many different kinds of miracles and healings and so on?

Yes said the speaker I believe what is written in the Bible.

Well the minister said I don't believe a word of those things; they are myths; you know we have to have something to say to the churchgoers.

Even some ministers may have their doubts about God's Word, just like we all each one of us may have our doubts about God's willingness to use us in His service, or about God's ability to meet all our earthly needs.

In Psalm 73:2-3 we read: "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." The writer looks around and sees the arrogant, the wealthy and the wicked.

Is that what we do? Do we then start to have our doubts?

Vv. 4-5: "They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills."

So do we say to ourselves we have been wasting our time concerning ourselves with righteousness and godliness, praying and studying the Word of the Lord. Wasting our energy and being plagued 24/7, being punished every morning.

Do we feel and think and say that we cannot understand what is going on in the world. Evil seems to be winning. Deceit and lies seem to have the upper-hand. Those who ignore God seem to have all the best cards. This oppresses us like a sunrise without a single ray of light, like a fata morgana, like a mirage of a hot desert lake to a thirsty and dried-out soul.

And then it happens. Maybe today, maybe even right now. Our eyes are opened. Our ears are opened. Our minds and hearts are opened. God speaks and we listen when we go into the sanctuary of God, when we go into the presence of God. We realise that the wicked, those who are far from God, will perish; that God will destroy all those who are unfaithful to him and our doubts are gone.

Not because of our superior intellect or education.

Not because of our social class or respectability.

But because God opens our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to see Him as He is.

It is a difficult question; it is a difficult question to answer. But here it is. Do we love God without needing to understand every little detail of what He is doing?

Can we, do we just trust Him for who He is?

Sometimes we like feel embarrassed when we think that we may have let God down. When we have misunderstood who He is, what He is aiming at and what His purposes are.

21-28 “When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt, I was as stupid as an animal; I did not understand you. Yet I always stay close to you, and you hold me by the hand.

You guide me with your instruction and at the end you will receive me with honour.

What else do I have in heaven but you? Since I have you, what else could I want on earth?

My mind and my body may grow weak, but God is my strength; he is all I ever need.

As for me, how wonderful to be near God, to find protection with the Sovereign Lord and to proclaim all that he has done!”

But maybe it helps to summarise what I believe God is saying to us today in the following points:

“You are not alone. God cares. God loves you.”

So trust him, God knows, God cares.

We bring our time together to a close with a final hymn, again written by Fanny Crosby, who also wrote Blessed Assurance, and Trevor again plays the piano as we sing:

Hymn, Praise Him, praise him

Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!

Sing, O earth, his wonderful love proclaim!

Hail him, hail him! Highest archangels in glory!

Strength and honour give to his holy name!

Like a shepherd, Jesus will guard his children.

In his arms he carries them all day long.

Praise him! Praise him! tell of his excellent greatness.

Praise him! Praise him! ever in joyful song.

Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!
For our sins, he suffered, and bled, and died.
He our rock, our hope of eternal salvation,
hail him, hail him! Jesus, the crucified.
Sound his praises, Jesus who bore our sorrows,
love unbounded, wonderful, deep, and strong.
 Praise him! Praise him! tell of his excellent greatness.
 Praise him! Praise him! ever in joyful song.

Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!
Heav'nly portals loud with hosannas ring!
Jesus, Saviour, reigneth forever and ever!
Crown him, crown him! prophet, and priest, and king!
Christ is coming, over the world victorious.
Pow'r and glory unto the Lord belong.
 Praise him! Praise him! tell of his excellent greatness.
 Praise him! Praise him! ever in joyful song.

Fanny Crosby
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Finally, Alec invites us to share in saying the Grace 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.