



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on August 22nd 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

(As we realise that not everyone is, as yet, ready to return in person, we still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast a recording of our services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.)

We continue our studies of the Psalms, and our worship today is led by **Alec, looking at Psalm 116.**

Our theme for today is Thankfulness

Trevor plays the piano for us prior to the service, when Alec welcomes all those in the chapel, including some present for the first time for many months, alongside those who may be watching the recording in their own homes later. He reminds us that where two or three are gathered together, The Lord is with us, and his spirit is with us today.

He begins by reading 2 verses from Philippians 4, 8-9, which are displayed by the entrance to Bethesda: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things" - a wonderful verse.

Our Opening hymn today, as last week, is "Praise to the Lord" but this version has an additional refrain - a very straightforward one, Hallelujah!!

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
praise Him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
granted in what He ordaineth?
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if with His love He befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him;
let the amen sound from His people again,
gladly for aye we adore Him.
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

Catherine Winkworth, Joachim Leander
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Arranged and Performed by: Nathan and Christy Nockels (and Band),
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNqOWtMSmIY>

We join together in saying **The disciples' prayer** shown on the screen, from The Childrens Bible:

**Our Father in heaven,
We pray that your name will always be kept holy.
We pray that your kingdom will come.
We pray that what you want will be done, here on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us the food that we need for each day.
Forgive the sins we have done, just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us.
And do not cause us to be tested but save us from the Evil One.
The kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, for ever.
Amen.**

We can now listen to **Esther and Alice** singing "**When you believe**" a song from "The Prince of Egypt", written by Kenneth Edmonds and Stephen Schwartz.



Many nights we've prayed with no proof anyone could hear,
in our hearts a hopeful song we barely understood.
Now we are not afraid although we know there's much to fear:
we were moving mountains long before we knew we could...

There can be miracles when you believe;
though hope is frail it's hard to kill.

Who knows what miracles you can achieve when you believe:
somehow you will, you will when you believe.

In this time of fear when prayer so often proved in vain,
hope seemed like the summer birds too swiftly flown away.
Yet now I'm standing here with heart so full I can't explain,
seeking faith and speaking words I never thought I'd say.....

There can be miracles....

There can be miracles when you believe;
though hope is frail it's hard to kill.
Who knows what miracles you can achieve when you believe:
somehow you will, now you will, you will when you believe.

Alec shares the notices for this week, and displays some photographs on the screen of the Young Peoples project run by St Lukes, which took place here last week.

Tuesdays from 3 August at 10 - 12 am
'Take a Break' - Coffee and Chat

Thursdays from 5 August at 7.30 – 8.30 pm Fellowship meeting at Bethesda

Saturdays from 14 August 10.30 am
Movie Morning restart

From September Tiddlywinks restarts at Bethesda (Parents and Toddlers)

We share a **Moment with Joyce, who gave thanks following the illness and death of Donald before we join in singing a Hymn of remembrance** "The King of love my shepherd is" (chosen by Joyce)

The King of love my Shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow
with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction, grace bestoweth:
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever.

Arrangement by Gonzalo L. Gonzalez

Melody - St. Columba (ancient Irish melody) Lyrics by Henry Baker written in 1868

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iI1OeQfkVyI>

We join together in a **Responsive Bible reading Psalm 116** led by Rachel

1. I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy
2. **Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live**
- 3 The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow
- 4 **Then I called on the name of the Lord: "Lord, save me!"**
5. The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion
6. **The Lord protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me**
7. Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you
8. **For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling**
9. That I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.
10. **I trusted in the Lord when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted'**
11. In my alarm I said, 'Everyone is a liar'
12. **What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?**
13. I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord
14. **I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people**
- 15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants
- 16 **Truly I am your servant, Lord; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains.**
- 17 I will sacrifice a thank-offering to you and call on the name of the Lord
- 18 **I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people**
19. In the courts of the house of the Lord – in your midst, Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord

More music - we can lift our voices as we sing: "Thank you Jesus for loving me"

Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus
thank You Lord for loving me.
Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus
thank You Lord for loving me.

You went to Calvary
and there you died for me,
thank You Lord for loving me.

You went to Calvary
and there you died for me,
thank You Lord for loving me.
Thank you Jesus....

You rose up from the grave,
to me new life You gave,
thank You Lord for loving me.
You rose up from the grave,
to me new life You gave,
thank You Lord for loving me.
Thank you Jesus....

You're coming back again,
And we, with you, shall reign,
thank you Lord for loving me.
You're coming back again,
And we, with you, shall reign,
thank you Lord for loving me.
Thank you Jesus...

CCL No 5664
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsgKgKfxs2g>

Alec now shares his Message: "Not there yet"

WE ARE STILL HERE

So here is the quiz question for today - What is this?
When it is missing you don't feel anything.
When it is there you feel and are enriched.

The answer is **thankfulness**.

To kids we might say "what is the magic word?" and hope they say please and thank you.

Life without thankfulness is like a reservoir without water. We feel and are dried up. We feel as though we are lacking in energy, in strength and in life itself.

Thankfulness shows itself in love as we all read in Psalm 116:1 ff.

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live."

Our God is gracious, He is righteous, and He is full of compassion. That is who our God is! That is who our God is.

There are many so-called gods. 1 Corinthians 5:8 reads, "There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords."

Their idols are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands.

They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see.

They have ears but cannot hear, and noses but cannot smell.

They have hands but cannot feel, and feet but cannot walk, and throats but cannot make a sound.

And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

But our God is alive. He speaks, He sees, He hears, He moves in the world he made and he moves in us His people whom he himself has chosen to show His glory.

This Psalm 116 says a lot about being thankful and I am only touching on one or two of these things this morning. But one thing stands out to me.

I remember sitting with my parents in our breakfast room—well that makes it sound like we lived in a castle or something, but actually it was the room with the gas boiler in it, and eating our evening tea which is probably why we called it the breakfast room. As usual I was trying to convert my parents and after a while in something which maybe we could describe neutrally as complete frustration my father said to my mother, he is so heavenly-minded that he is of no earthly use.

So what stands out to me in this Psalm 116? It is this. This Psalm is not principally about thanks for about to be being called into heaven, it is not mainly about that the Lord is preparing a place for us in his heavenly home, it is essentially concentrating on the fact that in this moment now we are on the earth and it is hard but he is with us, helping us, strengthening us, comforting us, delivering us from evil.

Isn't that wonderful? Do not our hearts rejoice to know that where we are now, where God has placed us now, He is keeping us and helping us, leading us and guiding us? In the aftermath of a pandemic. In the struggles to get given a hospital appointment. In the uncertainties in our work. In the conflicts in our families. In the financial difficulties with which we may be now or whenever confronted we are so thankful that God is with us. He knows, he cares. We can trust him. We are so thankful.

Psalm 116:6 reads: The Lord protects the helpless; when I was in danger, he saved me.

How true this is for us in these days. In danger of losing our lives, in danger of losing our sanity, of losing our stability and sense of emotional balance, in some cases even in danger of throwing away our lives.

And then we are reminded of God's goodness to us in the land of the living and we say with verse 7, "Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you."

You see this Psalm is the cry and the response of someone whose soul the Lord has delivered from death with the aim that he walks before the Lord in the land of the living. When Paul in prison for his faith as he often was writes to the church in Philippi:

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

He knows what he means.

When he writes:

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

We are still here. We are not yet there. Well some of our fellowship are.

In John 17 Jesus is praying to the Father.

11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me.

15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

You see our walk before the Lord is one of continually calling on the Lord to save us. To walk before the Lord is both demanding and reassuring. Why? Because as one writer has said, "we are totally exposed but wholly (completely) befriended."

We are an open target. We can be easily attacked. But God is with us. As the worship song says:

"Christ is my reward and all of my devotion; now there's nothing in this world that could ever satisfy; through every trial my soul will sing "no turning back I've been set free" Christ is enough for me everything I need is in you."

Do we believe this? Do we live like this?

In verses 10-11 we read:

I trusted in the Lord when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted'; in my alarm I said, 'Everyone is a liar.'

Jeremiah the prophet wrote:

"Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! Cursed be the day on which I was born."

I don't think he was manic-depressive. I don't think he went on a hype and then dropped down. But he was real.

The Psalmist is really saying here, "I kept my faith even when I said these things which might give the impression to many that I have given up believing." For you see feeling crushed or disillusioned, and saying so in tones of wild panic, possibly using painful language and expressions, maybe speaking or writing as if playing in a minor key with discords on a significantly out-of-tune musical instrument is not only OK for a believer, not only an acceptable way of giving air to the genuine struggles of our hearts and souls, but may well be the best way not only to prove that our faith is not dead, not only to vouch for its survival, but to guarantee us life; for pain means we are alive. In the same way that pain cries out and sometimes screams for healing, the troubles of our hearts and souls faced honestly cry out to God, who hears and answers our prayers.

When other helpers fail and comforts flee, help of the helpless Lord stay with me.

And then we are thankful. And then we are grateful. For God is indeed with us. And in our suffering we may say where is God in all this, but we do not throw him out of our lives any more than he would ever leave us as we cling to him.

In verses 12-14 and 17-19 we see the response of the believer, the gratitude of the believer towards the Lord.

What is our response to God's love and faithfulness? I asked one of our lady deacons if I might share the following story and Janet said yes. 13 years ago her husband Peter was called to be with the Lord. Shortly after that she was praying and seeking inspiration as to what should be written on Peter's grave stone. She was looking in the Psalms and came across Psalm 116:15, a wonderful verse. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. Even when the Lord takes us or one of us, our wife or husband, parent or child, neighbour or friend, it is a cause for thankfulness. And one day you will meet again.

When our children were a lot younger and we went on holiday together in one vehicle we would all know where we were going. But it didn't matter where we went in a particular year we only needed to travel about an hour before one or more of our daughters asked, "Are we almost there Mama; are we almost there Papa?"

On our journey through life on the earth we are living as pilgrims but not on a forgotten planet, as wanderers but not alone on a lonely and meaningless pilgrimage. Through the forgiveness of God in our lives, with the encouragement and challenge of the Word of the Lord and with His Spirit in our hearts many of us are saying, „Are we almost there?“

Do we say like in the final verses of this Psalm,

“Truly I am your servant, Lord; I serve you; you have freed me from my chains.

I will sacrifice a thank-offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.

I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord.”

We may be almost there where many of our brothers and sisters have already gone. But we are still here.

Are we thankful servants of the living God? He will never ever leave us or forget us.

Our intensely personal faith and love which we have seen in this Psalm are not just individual expressions of faith; they belong in a local fellowship, in the presence of all his people, in the midst.

Let`s thank the Lord together as long as we are together on the earth and then evermore with him in our heavenly home.

Our Prayers today are led by Victor.

“God in Heaven, we come to you with a heart of gratitude for Your continuing presence in our lives as You sustain and support us with the power of your comfort and presence.

Our Father, we are here with a heart of worship this morning, in all kinds of moods with various situations in our minds, but You know what they are and what the needs of every one of us are today.

Thank You for all that is good in our lives and things that give us joy – like the beauty of the natural world, contact with our families and others we meet, particularly when good news reaches us. Most of all, thank You for the amazing gift of Jesus, Your Son, to live and die for us and Your Word to us in the Bible. You have granted us so much, especially the privilege of life and we are guilty many times of not serving You in the way we should because we do and say things we shouldn't and omit to do and say things we should, we lay down at your feet all our wrongdoing and omissions and ask for Your forgiveness in the name of Jesus.

We all have different concerns in our hearts today, Lord we bring to you our major

worries; about the situation in the world with the ongoing pandemic. Lord God, most countries are struggling to get on top of this and we know that You alone know the way through and earnestly do we pray for your help. We bring to you places where there is war and uprising, remembering Afghanistan at this time and the difficult situation there, and places where many are hungry and homeless and also those caught up in extreme weather events, some caused by global warming; Holy Spirit from creation's birth, you are the one who gives life to all that God has made, show your power once again on earth.

Here in the UK, as restrictions are taken away, despite many cases, we ask that all continue to be guarded and take a deliberately cautious approach, that the vaccine will continue with its great success and be taken by all to whom it is offered.

We pray for healing for those with the virus, its effects, strength and support for the many key workers, those struggling to isolate when called and others with reduced incomes and families to support. There are so many in difficult domestic circumstances at this time and we bring them all to You.

We remember before You, Lord God Almighty, places in this town and country where there are troubles amongst people of different ethnic backgrounds with unkindness and misunderstanding. There are sufferings of many kinds, we pray for nations where there is religious persecution and for Christians who are not able to worship in freedom and peace.

Now, Lord, we commit to You, the people of our local assembly and their families and ask for healing for those who are unhealthy or in pain, patience for those who are waiting and comfort for those in distress in whatever way. Lord Jesus, please guide us as a church and help us into the future, cause your word to come alive in us, give us faith for what we cannot see and passion for your purity.

As we go this week, Lord, and the rest of our lives, we pray that you grant us a kind approach towards the greatest and the least, the gentleness that sows the path of peace, turn our strivings into works of grace, Christ our Lord, let your divine characteristics show in all we do.

May the fragrance of our prayers arise to heaven, lead us on the road of sacrifice, That in unity the face of Christ will be clear for all the world to see. Amen."

Our closing song is another version of Thank you Jesus, this time by Hillsongs.

Grace that flows like a river washing over me,
Fount of heaven, love of Christ overflow in me.
Thank You Jesus, set me free,
Christ my Saviour You rescued me.

Take this life delivered, a vessel of Your love,
wholly now devoted to see Your kingdom come.

Thank You Jesus, set me free,
Christ my Saviour You rescued me.
Thank You Jesus, set me free,
Christ my Saviour You rescued me

You've given me life, you've opened my eyes
I love You Lord, I love You Lord.
You've entered my heart, you've set me apart
I love You Lord, I love You Lord.

Thank You Jesus, set me free,
Christ my Saviour, You rescued me.
Thank You Jesus, set me free,
Christ my Saviour, You rescued me.

Songwriters: Matt Crocker / Hannah Hobbs
Thank You Jesus lyrics © Hillsong Music Publishing Australia "Thank you Jesus" Hillsong
CCL No 5664
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb7ynbhgO5Q>

Alec leads us as we say 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.

Alec shares an invitation to anyone who has felt God speaking to them today and who wishes to talk to speak to himself or others in the fellowship. He also invites the congregation to share refreshments together in the hall.

As we close our time together, we can watch a young lady, Honor Hunter, playing the piano and singing another quiet reflective version of the words: "Thank you Jesus"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-U4Rv_d_Ws

A Muslim response to God: "Thank you Lord Jesus. Because I was Muslim and I didn't know the true way. But now I find the way and I find you, and you accepted me. Lord you are my Saviour."