



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on August 8th 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

The lifting of lockdown restrictions means we can now meet at Bethesda Chapel once again. We still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet for those unable to attend Bethesda. 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 to study the Psalms, and our worship today is led by **Colin, who, after Joy plays the piano beforehand, welcomes us all, wherever we are.**

Sunday was a damp, dank, dreary day - Colin tried to think of how to describe the congregation without using the same adjectives!! He welcomed those especially who had not been at Bethesda for some months, and noted that Ellie was also with us, back from her travels in both Scotland and Germany!!

Colin talked a little about the Olympic Games, which served to remind us that the Apostle Paul also talks about Olympic type sports and activities - such as those mentioned in our opening hymn:

Song, Fight the good fight

Fight the good fight with all thy might.
Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right.
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
thy joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God's good grace;
lift up thine eyes, and seek Christ's face.
Life with its way before us lies;
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

Cast care aside; lean on thy guide.
God's boundless mercy will provide.
Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not nor fear: God's arms are near.
God changeth not, and thou art dear.
Only believe, and thou shalt see
that Christ is all in all to thee.

Colin led in Prayer:

“Our Heavenly Father, you are our Rock, you are the firm foundation for everything we build, and the only shelter from the storms of life. You rescued us, you redeemed us, and brought us into a living relationship with yourself that is beyond our hopes and dreams. As we think of your unfailing, eternal love, we look forward to the day when we will worship you in eternity.

As we come together this morning, we ask that you would fill our souls afresh with the Spirit of grace that we may run the race of life with a fresh vision and a renewed determination to win the prize that is set before us. May our hope be strengthened in the knowledge and assurance that we are yours and nothing, absolutely nothing, can ever separate us from your fatherly love for us in Christ. Remind us that you are our fortress, you are our tower of strength and you are our Shepherd. Everything we need is found in you. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.”

Notices were then shared by Colin, who firstly gave our sympathy to Joyce, who was present Bethesda, on the death of Donald this week.

Refreshments will be served after the service, with those staying seated at tables.

All are welcome to come down for coffee on Tuesday morning, anytime between 10am and 12 noon.

All are also invited to our midweek meeting on Thursday evenings, when we will be holding alternate Prayer meetings and Bible studies here in the sanctuary. We have held the launch meeting, and will continue to meet and hopefully grow closer together as a fellowship.

Colin then introduced his theme for today; **Hope**.

He shared some pictures on the screen, answering the question: **What is hope?**



We were then able to watch a short video - this is the link if you are able, and wish, to view it at home.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6qGxZzUBgc&list=RDyOWhEY9awc4&index=3>

We sang the next song some 4 weeks ago, and have sung it in the past - its an action song by Doug Horley, and we were invited to watch, sing or try the actions again today! Its one of Duggie Dug Dug's quieter more reflective songs, rather than his very bouncy ones!

Song, May the God of Hope.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, as you trust in him.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, as you trust in him.

So that you might overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
so that you might overflow with hope, with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Father God I love you, Father God I trust you,
Father God I need you every day .
Fill me with your hope Lord, fill me with your joy Lord,
fill me with your peace, let your love flow.

(Doug Horley)

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CCL No 5664

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

Janet was then invited to share our Bible reading, Psalm 16, 1-11

Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.
I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing."
I say of the holy people who are in the land,
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."
Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods
or take up their names on my lips.
Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance.
I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I keep my eyes always on the Lord.
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Our Intercessory prayers today were led by Shirley:

"Loving God, we join together in your house to worship you.

We come once more, reminded of all you are and all you have done: of the love with which you surround us, the grace you have shown us through Jesus Christ and the purpose you have for our lives.

We come to offer you our praise, to declare again your mighty acts, to marvel at your greatness, and to commit ourselves to your service. We come to give thanks, to rejoice in all you have given us, to respond to your goodness, and to offer our love in return.

We come to make our confession, to admit our faults and failings, to recognise our weakness, and to ask your forgiveness.

We come to pray for ourselves, to seek your guidance, to discover your will, and to find the strength we need to live as your people.

We come to pray for others, our loved ones with all their joys and sorrows, our world with all its suffering, and your church as it seeks to express your compassion in action.

Lord in your mercy here our prayers for our suffering world.

We remember Afghanistan at this time and pray for the safety of all who seek your peace in this troubled land. We pray too, particularly for Greece, Turkey and surrounding areas where the forest fires seem to be inextinguishable. Lord of heaven and earth, you who are a God of miracles, as Elijah prayed for rain, give us the faith to believe for a miracle.

We continue to pray for the Chilvers, our BMS partners in Chad, that they may continue to enjoy, and be fulfilled, in the work at the hospital.

We are troubled, dear Lord, by the news from Bangladesh regarding the rapid rise in Covid infections and lack of vaccinations. May the UK and other "wealthy by comparison" countries seek to find a way to provide for all who have a need for vaccinations.

We pray for our government as they continue day by day, to lead us into a less restricted lifestyle. Give them wisdom to do this and may we all unselfishly play our part in its working out.

Now nearer to home: we pray first for our loved ones at home, especially for those who as yet do not realise how much you love them and have not recognised you as Lord and Saviour. Soften their hearts and open their eyes to your love and saving grace.

We pray now for our church family here at Bethesda chapel as we seek to move forward in church life. We thank you for our Pastor Alec and the deacons that they too may seek your guidance and wisdom for all that is ahead. We pray, especially today, for Joyce Booth as she mourns loss of her husband Donald, and remember too those who have recently lost loved ones, and those who find life difficult at this time through illness, anxiety, or loneliness. You, Father, who comforts us in all our troubles, help us to comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from you.

Our closing prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you gave of yourself without counting the cost, offering even your own life for the life of the world. So now we pray for all those who seek to love you in return, however hesitant, partial, or in perfect their love might be. **Inspire them through your love.**

We pray for those new in their faith, still learning more of you, still uncertain perhaps of their commitment, still discovering more of your love. **Keep their love always growing.**

We pray for those established in their faith, facing the daily risk of growing stale, settled into a comfortable complacent routine. **Make their love ever fresh.**

We pray for those whose faith has crumbled, no longer holding the trust they once held, no longer feeling you close by their sides, no longer seeking to follow Christ. **Renew their love.**

We pray for those who have never had faith, those consistently unmoved by the message of the Gospel, those who resist its challenge despite themselves, and those who wilfully go against your will. **Kindle a love for you in their hearts.**

We pray for those whose faith is costly, those who sacrifice time, money, energy, security, health and even life itself, in the service of others. **Reward their love.**

And we pray for those who need something to put their faith in, the poor, the hungry and the homeless, the sick, the suffering, the bereaved, all those broken by the tragedies and crises of life. **May they experience the fullness of your love.**

Lord Jesus Christ, your love is for all, whoever they may be. May it reach out then into every heart in every place, and we may we be part of that, learning to love you as you love us. Amen."

Our next song is a newer song but based on older familiar words: **Cornerstone**, by **Hillsong**

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest friend
but wholly trust in Jesus name.

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest friend
but wholly trust in Jesus name.

Christ alone, cornerstone,
weak made strong in the Saviour's love;
through the storm He is Lord, Lord of all.

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace;
in every high and stormy gale
my anchor holds within the veil.

Christ alone, cornerstone....

When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
dressed in His righteousness alone,
faultless stand before the throne.

Christ alone, cornerstone....

Songwriters: Edward Mote / Reuben Timothy Morgan / Jonas Carl Gustaf Myrin / Eric Liljero
Cornerstone lyrics © Hillsong Music Publishing Australia
CCL No 5664
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvLxZEU02ul>

Colin then shared his Sermon: Hope

“What is hope? The dictionary defines hope as a feeling of expectation, a desire for a certain thing to happen. But the Bible takes it a stage further for it defines hope as a feeling of expectation, yes, but then a certainty that God will do what he has said. I hope you can see the difference. One is a mere wish, the other is a certainty or guarantee. The first verse of Hebrews 11 states that ‘faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.’

So, the thing that separates the basic definition of hope and the biblical definition is what we may call ‘The X Factor’ – or ‘The Christ-Factor’. Our hope should be based on the fact of who Christ is and nothing else. If Jesus Christ is not the object of our hope then we don’t have true biblical hope because the certainty has been

removed. Without that, our hope simply reverts back to a wish and nothing more than that.

And yet our entire walk as Christians is based on hope. A hope that goes beyond this life and extends throughout eternity. Everything we do as Christian believers flows from this. Why do we pray? Hope. Why do we witness for Christ? Hope. Why do we endure hardships and trials? Hope. Why did so many who have gone before us give, serve, and even lose their lives for the message of the gospel? One word, hope.

If we lose hope then we will soon discover that our joy, our enthusiasm, our peace, our focus, our motivation, everything attached to our walk with the Saviour will be removed with it. Even our love for the Lord will be seriously affected. That is why we cannot lose hope. It is also why one of the weapons of Satan is to attack our hope. Think of all the words that are the opposite of hope. Fear, despair, doubt, uncertainty. None of these words inspire and none of these words bring the joy and peace that hope in God brings. That's why we must fight for it at all costs.

But we have help from our triune God. We can know today that our Heavenly Father is the God of hope, Christ is the hope of glory and the Holy Spirit is the one who fills us with hope. So the Lord does not want us to lose hope. We can keep our trust in the one who is faithful because he will not let us down.

Christian Hope

I have three headings this morning to help us to reflect further, with the help of our reading from Psalm 16, and other passages from the Bible, on the importance of hope for the Christian.

The Christian Hope is a Glorious Hope

Paul tells the Colossian Christians: *'God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory'* (Colossians 1.27). And to the believers in Rome, he says: *'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit'* (Romans 15.13). As Christians today, we have a glorious prospect in Christ and we can in and through the Spirit of the Risen Christ know with absolute assurance in our day-to-day walk with him the fulness of that prospect. The Spirit is given to us as a guarantee of the perfect future that we have in Christ. It's no mere wish-list, but a certainty that can fill us with confidence to face whatever tomorrow brings; and I know that some of us are going through difficult times because of ill-health and other hardships.

In our Bible reading today, from Psalm 16, King David celebrates the God of glory and his infinite goodness. You should note the repeated use of the personal pronoun

'My.' My God, my LORD, my lips, my delight, my portion, my cup, my lot, my eyes, my heart my tongue, my body. The goodness of God has affected every part of David's being. David is living a fantastic hope, a dream, you might say, because things are far better than he ever expected.

Psalm 16 is therefore a great song of hope and trust – of trust in the Lord. To trust in the Lord is to surrender completely our will to His Will. To trust him is to put him as the main principle and priority of our lives. The writer of Psalm says, *'I have set the Lord always before me.'* David was able to live life to its fullest because of his confident faith in God. He was gripped by the living hope of something beyond this life, something beyond the grave, or as he puts it, 'eternal pleasures'. Indeed, his hope was an eternal hope. In this great Psalm, one of the Messianic Psalms, David looks forward in the Spirit of prophecy in verses 8-11 to the coming of Christ and his resurrection and exaltation at God's right hand. The Apostle Peter quotes from this passage in his great sermon at Pentecost, when he hails the power of Jesus' name, and when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles.

But although David confesses, *'The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places,'* which is his way of saying, I am very happy with what the LORD has given to me; he did face hardships. Some of those he undoubtedly brought on himself but nevertheless life can become difficult even for the most dedicated of believers. And yet what comfort and strength has poured forth from this Psalm and others into the hearts of so many believers down the centuries. The love and devotion that spills out from this beautiful Psalm 16 will surely warm the heart of all weary wanderers or pilgrims, as David joyfully displays his compelling confidence in His Lord, and writes of his utter trust in the God of his salvation.

Such praise is founded on the sure knowledge that the Lord is not only our protection, through all the changing scenes of this life, but that death, which is man's greatest enemy, will be finally conquered. David concluded his song of praise with these wonderful words of complete assurance in the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting, 'For You will show me the path of life... granting me the joy of Your presence and the pleasures of living with You forever.' Blessed be the name of the Lord...Blessed be his Glorious Name!

The Christian Hope is a Living Hope

Moving on to the Apostle Peter, who decided to take up his pen 30 years or so after the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, in order to write something encouraging to the beleaguered Christians of Asia Minor, who were experiencing severe persecution. He begins his first letter with this amazing statement: *'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us*

new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you (1Peter 1.3-4). The power with which Peter aims to equip these suffering saints is the power of hope. If they, or we, are going to love like Jesus loved, even in times of great stress and worry, then they must be filled with 'living hope.'

What is this 'living hope.' What does that mean? The opposite of a 'living hope' must surely be a 'dead hope,' and that calls to mind a similar phrase in James 2, namely, 'dead faith.' 'Faith without works is dead' (2:26), James says. That is, faith is barren, fruitless, unproductive (2:20). So 'living faith' and, by analogy, 'living hope' would be fertile, fruitful, productive hope. Living hope is hope that has power and produces changes in our lives. This is what 'living' means in Hebrews (4.12) where it says, 'The word of God is living and powerful.' So Christian hope is a strong confidence in God which has power to produce changes in how we live, as revealed in his Word. You see, our hope arises from being born anew, and this new birth comes through the power that brought about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We are born anew through the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus was raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of the father, and is coming again, then we can rest in the sure knowledge that through his cross-work he will bring us into the realm of eternal bliss. All of God's promises of eternal pleasure are secured by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as David notes in the final section of his Psalm (16:8-11). And thus, we can confess: *'You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word'* (Psalm 119.114).

The truth and power of the resurrection of Christ reaches your heart and my heart and begets hope: it confirms to us that because Jesus bore our sins on the cross, God is for us and not against us; and it declares that this Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us is alive and present and caring for us at every moment of our lives. Thank you, Jesus!

The Christian Hope is a Blessed Hope

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home – what joy shall fill my heart! Paul tells Titus: *'For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ'* (Titus 2.11-13).

The blessed hope that is set before us in this passage should fill our hearts with expectation of the abundance of those eternal pleasures, which David refers to in his Psalm, and which are ours in our Saviour God, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a truth

that must fill us with joy this morning - a truth that each one of us can treasure in our hearts and rejoice with singing, as we look for our blessed hope and journey in expectation to our heavenly home. Our blessed hope is summed up in such a brilliant way by John in his first letter: *'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.'* Our 'blessed hope' is that one day we will see our beloved Saviour, because we will be 'like him'. What an incredible prospect! We will be like our Saviour, transformed forever into his perfect likeness. What have we done to deserve this? Absolutely nothing! It is down solely to the unmerited favour of our God; to his abounding love, grace and mercy towards in Christ.

Yet this fullness of joy that we have in our Saviour God is not simply contained in a future hope, but is also firmly established in this present time. We can live in the fulness of that hope even today, for the Spirit of Christ that fills us is the foretaste and assurance of our future heavenly bliss. The blessings of God are at the core of so many of our Father's precious promises. Our blessed hope fills us with ambition and anticipation about the coming of the Lord. But with that ambition comes the desire for purity through imitating our Saviour. You always tend to imitate the people you admire the most and desire most strongly to be around them and be like them. Kids tend to dress and walk and talk like their heroes. And so do we adults, though we are less blatant about it. A person who hopes intensely in Jesus Christ, who longs to see him and be with him, will inevitably start to think and feel and act like Jesus. A strong hope to see Jesus and be with him is a strong power to live daily in his love, to live lives that honour him and bring glory to his name.

Yes, sorrow may be our lot in this life, for we have been told that in this world we will suffer trials and difficulties, but we must be of good cheer, for we have His indwelling Holy Spirit... and as we focus our hearts and minds on the loveliness of our risen Saviour, we receive His fulness of joy, love, and His peace - not only in the world to come, but every day of our earthly life. So, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15.13).

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee, how great Thou art!"

Our final Song was written by Stuart Townend, and is now well known and loved:

In Christ alone

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones He came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on Him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain;
then bursting forth in glorious day
up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am His and He is mine -
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from His hand:
till He returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

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As our time together draws to a close, we share 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.

