



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on December 26th 2021, Boxing Day, at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.**

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

**Tim is leading our service today, and as he plays the piano before the service begins, all the candles on our Advent wreath are already burning. After playing To God be the Glory, Tim moves to the microphone:**

"Welcome to BBC - hope you had a good Christmas. We've been celebrating and being amazed once again at the coming of Jesus into our world. But I'd like us to start our service today with some words from the beginning and the end of the book of Revelation, which both remind us that Jesus is coming back again one day.

"I am the Alpha and Omega" says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come". (Rev 1:8)

He who testifies to these things says: "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen, Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:20)"

**Those at Bethesda watch and listen to a song shown on the screen, one we have sung but perhaps not recently:**

Welcome, King of kings, how great is Your name.  
You come in majesty forever to reign.

You rule the nations, they shake at the sound of Your name.  
to You is given all power, and You shall reign.

Welcome, King of kings, how great is Your name.....

Let all creation bow down at the sound of Your name.  
Let every tongue now confess, the Lord God reigns.

Welcome, King of kings, how great is Your name.....

### **Tim shares an Opening Prayer**

Thank you Lord Jesus that you came for the first time all those years ago and since then we have been celebrating Christmas. Thank you that you took that big journey from heaven down to earth to be with us, and ultimately to die for us. Thank you, Lord, for that reminder that we need to welcome you into our lives and also look forward to the time when you are going to come to reign amongst us, that you are coming back again. Lord please help us as we share in the service today, to be reminded us of these things and to prepare our hearts for your soon return. Amen.

### **Tim continues: Getting Ready for a Visit**

He begins by asking if anyone had watched the Queen's speech yesterday - a number had!! She had talked about her family.

"Imagine if this morning we had received a hand delivered notice from the palace telling us that His Royal Highness - Prince Charles, our future king, had decided to join us towards the end of this service. Looking around you, what do you think we need to do to get ready as we wait for Prince Charles? I think that the first thing we would all agree upon is that we need to clean up the place. If we look around, there is rubbish everywhere. I also think that the area around me needs a bit of a dust. I need some people willing to come and help clear up. (Paul C and Colin volunteer as Tim hands out dusters and black sacks to collect rubbish). Let's see how quickly we can clear up the rubbish and dust. Well done. Thank you... fit for a future King!

The second thing we need to do is put a special seat at the centre of the church for him to sit on (Put special chair in place) and we need to put a microphone in place so that we would all be able to hear what he has to say to us. I am sure that you can think of all sorts of other things we could do to get ready to welcome Prince Charles, our future King.

Getting ready to meet a special visitor takes thought. Advent, the run up to Christmas, is a time when we think about getting ready for the most important meeting we will all have. This meeting isn't with the Queen's Son - Prince Charles, but with God's Son, Jesus. We've thought about his first coming at Christmas, but the Bible tells us that one day Jesus is going to return to earth. Listen to what St Paul says to the Christians in Thessalonica: "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God..." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

That is going to be an exciting day! For those of us who know and follow Jesus, it will be a day of great joy and celebration as we finally see our Lord face to face. During our service today, we are going to be thinking about how we can get ready for the day we meet King Jesus.

**But before we do that, let's have our reading from the Bible for today, which comes from Luke chapter 3, verses 2-18"**

During the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.  
Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill made low.  
The crooked roads shall become straight,  
the rough ways smooth.  
And all people will see God's salvation.'"

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

### **Tim begins his Talk: Part 1:**

John the Baptist, as we've just heard in our reading, was God's messenger, and he was sent to get people ready for Jesus' coming. Jesus was the ultimate special visitor!

The people were to prepare, not by cleaning up their buildings, by dusting and picking up rubbish, like we have just done here in the chapel, but by cleaning up their hearts.

Unfortunately, the people had been living lives their own way for many, many years. Their hearts were full up with the rubbish of sin. (Hold up black bin sack of rubbish and attach SIN word onto black sack). They cheated people out of money, they were

selfish and greedy, they didn't love one another or God. God was no longer at the centre of their lives.

John's message to these people was a message of repentance. They were to turn away from their sins and turn back to God. In other words, they were to get rid of the rubbish of sin from their lives (Put rubbish away) and allow God to be at the centre of their lives, (Put GOD word onto the chair laid out earlier). There are two parts to repentance. One part is turning away from our sins and the other is turning back to God.

The good news is that many people listened to what John said. They repented. As a symbol of their wanting to live differently, they were baptised in the River Jordan. They were now ready to hear Jesus' life-giving message that he had come to deal with the effects of sin once and for all so that they could have a restored relationship with God. John the Baptist prepared the people well, ready for Jesus' first coming to earth.

**Let's have our second song**, which reminds that we need to prepare ourselves for Jesus' coming back again - lift up our heads to look for him and bow before him, yielding our lives to his control. Again, this is shown on the screen at Bethesda.

Lift up your head to the coming King,  
bow before and adore Him, sing  
to His Majesty let your praises be  
pure and holy, giving glory to the King of Kings

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## **Tim continues with his Talk Part 2**

We heard how God sent John the Baptist to prepare people for Jesus' first arrival, making them ready to welcome him and follow him. So how do we prepare for Jesus when he returns to earth, so that we are ready to meet him?

I think John the Baptist's message is as relevant for us today as it was to those people he spoke to 2000 years ago. The first thing we are to do is to turn away from our sins, in other words get rid of the rubbish of sin from our lives. (Get rid of bin bag). Turning away from sin isn't about just about feeling bad for doing something wrong - it's about choosing, with God's help, not to do that wrong thing again and about putting things right where we can.

As we're heading towards a new year, we are going to ask the Holy Spirit to show us what sins we need to confess today and turn away from, so that we can be forgiven...

Let's be quiet as we listen to what God wants to say to each one of us. Imagine for a moment the light and purity of the Holy Spirit shining in your heart, in my heart....  
What rubbish - what sin is there that he will show up?...

Is the Holy Spirit showing you something about the way that you use your tongue? Maybe you sometimes say unkind things about other people, or gossip, or use bad language, or lie, maybe you say harsh things to others that you regret later?

Is the Holy Spirit showing you that you can be selfish, or lazy, or greedy, or proud, or jealous of what other people have... , or something else altogether...?

**Let us pray together:**

Lord Jesus, we want to be ready for when you return. Please forgive us for the wrong things we have done, and for the good things we have not done. We turn away from doing those wrong things again and ask for your help to put things right. Thank you that you died so we can be forgiven. Help us to turn to you and follow you. Amen.

Thank you, Lord, that when we confess our sins to you, you forgive us and give us a fresh start. Help us, Lord, to walk closely with you until the day that we meet you face to face. Amen.

**We are invited to sing again, as Tim moves to the piano to play:**

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy One, is here;  
come bow before him now with reverence and fear.

In him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:  
how awesome is the sight our radiant king of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place:  
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace -  
no work too hard for him, in faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

Songwriters: David Evans

Be Still lyrics © Thank You Music Ltd.

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**Tim continues his Talk: Part 3**

Turning away from sin was one part of John the Baptist's message. What was the second part? The second part was turning back to God. In verses 16 and 17 of our passage, John pointed people very clearly to Jesus, the man who was God. Some people wanted to make John the centre of attention - but John said, "No - it's Jesus you should be focused on". There is a temptation for all of us to put ourselves at the centre of things, but turning to God means allowing him to be at the centre of your life, not you yourself! Each one of us here is deeply loved by our Heavenly Father, and he has invited us to walk with him each day of our lives, which is a tremendous privilege.

Allowing him to be at the centre of our lives means that we listen to what he says and then do it. It is like we allow him to be in the driving seat, not us. You see God knows us through and through (after all, he made us) and he asks us to do the things that he knows will be right for us. So, for example, one of the things that God has told us to do is to forgive other people when they mess up or do wrong to us, which isn't always that easy, is it? Let's watch this short video to illustrate the point.(this is shown on the screen, here is the link if you wish and are able to access it)(<https://youtu.be/biJHXCahAnQ>)

Quite challenging isn't it - are we sometimes like that? If we are going to call Jesus, 'Lord' then we need to listen to him and obey what he says. If there is someone that you need to forgive, can I encourage you to obey Jesus and forgive them? Unforgiveness is one of the biggest blockers in our relationship with God.

So, the message of John the Baptist to people preparing for Jesus' first arrival was a message of repentance. People had to turn away from their sins and turn back to God in Jesus. And it's the same for us as we prepare for the day that Jesus returns. We also need to turn away from our sins - to ask for forgiveness and let the Holy Spirit show us what he wants to change in our lives. And we need to turn to God, allowing him to be at the centre of our lives, controlling them, being truly Lord over us.

**Tim invites us to lift our voices, as he accompanies us on the piano:**

King of kings, majesty, God of Heaven living in me,  
gentle Saviour, closest friend, strong deliverer, beginning and end,  
all within me falls at your throne.

Your majesty, I can but bow. I lay my all before you now.

In royal robes I don't deserve I live to serve your majesty.

Earth and Heaven worship you, love eternal, faithful and true,  
who bought the nations, ransomed souls, brought this sinner near to your throne;  
all within me cries out in praise.

Your majesty, I can but bow...

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**Tim invites us to join in a Responsive prayer**

When I say, "Lord Jesus, one day you will return", please say, "Make us ready, Lord".

**Lord Jesus, one day you will return. Make us ready, Lord.**

Jesus said: "Therefore keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour until I return." (Matthew 25:13). Lord Jesus, help us keep our eyes upon you and not distracted by all that is going on in the world around us. **Lord Jesus, one day you will return. Make us ready, Lord.**

Jesus said, "not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven". (Matthew 7:21)  
Lord Jesus, we need your help to follow you faithfully each day. Please fill us afresh

with your Holy Spirit so that we can hear you speaking to us, and then obeying what you say. We want to be a people who do the will of our Heavenly Father. **Lord Jesus, one day You will return. Make us ready, Lord.**

Jesus said: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 3:2) Lord Jesus, help us to share the message of your love with other people, giving them a chance to repent. Give us courage and boldness to declare all that you have done for us, and that you are reigning as Lord over all. **Lord Jesus, one day you will return. Make us ready, Lord.**

**Tim shares the one Notice for this week, reminding us of the fellowship meeting on Thursday evening at 7.30pm,**

**Our final song is Great is the Darkness, Tim playing it on the piano**

Great is the darkness that covers the earth, oppression, injustice and pain.  
Nations are slipping in hopeless despair, though many have come in Your name  
Watching while sanity dies, touched by the madness and lies.

Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit we pray.

Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit on us today .

May now Your church rise with power and love this glorious gospel proclaim.

In every nation salvation will come to those who believe in Your name.

Help us bring light to this world that we might speed Your return.

Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit we pray.

Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit on us today .

Great celebrations on that final day when out of the heavens You come .

Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end, and rulers will bow at Your throne.

Our great commission complete then face to face we shall meet.

Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit we pray.

Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit on us today .

AUTHORS Gerald Coates, Noel Richards CCLI SONG #1022897

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**As we bring our time together to a close, Tim says:**

"Go from here knowing that Jesus, our Lord and Saviour will return one day. Be ready to welcome him! Let's share the words of the grace with one another.

**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."**