



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Easter Sunday, April 17th 2022 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 seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our service today is led by Alec, as we celebrate together the Risen Christ, and is a service of Believers Baptism. Tim plays the piano for us.

Alec welcomes everyone to Bethesda Chapel, and begins our service with a traditional Easter greeting as he says: "The Lord is risen!" to which the congregation respond; "He is risen indeed!"

Alec introduces the service, which will be in two parts, the first entitled "The greatest miracle of all" and the second: "The impossible happened!" He asked for some congregational participation in the first part, which was a re-enactment of the first Easter morning, with volunteers required to be angels, disciples and women at the tomb - some had already been conscripted!

Alec begins: The greatest miracle of all

"Welcome to 'The Greatest Miracle of All!' My name is Alec and I will be narrating our story today. There on the other side is my friend Trevor who will be playing the part of Jesus, (he hides behind the pulpit). From time to time, we will be asking you to come to the front and help us tell the story. You simply have to follow the lead of our helpers here. Move when they move! Repeat what they say. Do what they do!

So let's give a great big 'Who moved the stone? For Shirley who will be leading the Women at the Tomb.

And let's give a great big, 'He is not here. He has risen!' for Helen who will be leading our Angels.

And let's give a great big, 'It's a ghost!' for Victor who will be playing Peter and leading the other Disciples.

Now let's sing together the song "When I survey the wondrous Cross" focused on the crucifixion and death of Jesus to give some sense of how the women feel as they approach the tomb and as we do, would all the **women at the tomb** go to the back and with your leader."

Then after this song, as this next section is read, **the women at the tomb** walk slowly and sadly to the front, and then stand on one side of the 'tomb' (baptistery). **Dim the lights.**

Tim played for us as Shirley and Angela took their places:

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count as loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ my God:
the very things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down:
when did such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all!

Words: Isaac Watts CCLI SONG # 3296590
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Alec continues:

“It was dark. Dark before dawn, and dark in the hearts of the women that crept to the tomb. Their friend Jesus was dead, and sadness surrounded them like a shadow. But Mary Magdalene and Joanna and another Mary, the mother of James, had a job to do. They had to cover their friend’s body with spices, according to the custom of that time. It would not be an easy job, to look again at the wounds he had suffered before his death. But they were determined to do this one last act of kindness for their friend.

Silently they went, and as dawn broke, (**lights full on**), they saw the tomb. And, (**women at the tomb**), each one gasped, surprised.

All gasp.

The stone that sealed the tomb had been rolled away!

They went inside. There was no body. And their surprise turned to confusion.

Women at the tomb Where is he? What happened? Who has taken him?

And with those questions in mind, **let’s sing another song** which talks of the empty tomb. Let’s sing “Living hope” together with Phil Wickham.”

(As the song is sung, **the angel group** goes and stands on the other side of the ‘tomb’, opposite **the women**.) - Helen and Brenda

How great the chasm that lay between us,
how high the mountain I could not climb.
In desperation, I turned to heaven
and spoke your name into the night.
Then through the darkness
your loving kindness
tore through the shadows of my soul,
the work is finished, the end is written:
Jesus Christ, my living hope.

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
to wear my sin and bear my shame.
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven,
the king of kings calls me His own:
beautiful saviour, I'm yours forever:
Jesus Christ, my living hope.

Hallelujah, praise the one who set me free!
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me!
You have broken every chain - there's salvation in your name,
Jesus Christ, my living hope.

Then came the morning that sealed the promise,
your buried body began to breathe:
out of the silence, the roaring lion
declared the grave has no claim on me.
Then came the morning that sealed the promise
your buried body began to breathe -
out of the silence, the roaring lion
declared the grave has no claim on me -
Jesus, yours is the victory, whoa!
Hallelujah, praise the one who set me free

AUTHOR Brian Johnson, Phil Wickham

CCLI SONG # 7106807

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CCL No 5664

Alec again:

“And that is when two angels appeared, white and bright and frightening. And the women looked suddenly with their faces down on the ground, confusion replaced by fear.

Angel group why are you looking for your friend here? This is a place for dead people.

But your friend Jesus is alive, for he has risen!

The angels went on. 'Back when you were with him in Galilee, he told you what would happen. Remember? He said that the Messiah would be handed over to evil men and crucified. And then rise again in three days' time.'

Narrator Of course they remembered! And as they hurried to tell the rest of Jesus' disciples their good news, it all came flooding back.

So let's go with them and sing a good news song to celebrate the risen Christ."

Let's sing together the resurrection hymn which Tim again played for us on the piano:

Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Saviour,
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave he arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Saviour,
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave he arose.....

Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Saviour;
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave he arose....

Robert Lowry CCLI SONG # 27783
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(During this song, **the angels** go back to their seats, but **the women** stay and are joined by Peter and the other disciples on one side up front.)

Alec:

"But when they got there and said what they had seen, no one believed them!

Peter and the other Disciples (Victor and Tony) thought they were making the whole thing up.

So off **Peter** went, to see for himself. (**Peter** goes looking closely from the steps to the 'tomb' (baptistery), then back to the others.) And when he went into the tomb, he found nothing but the linen cloths in which Jesus' body had been wrapped. And like the women, he went back to the others, amazed.

It got them all talking, that's what it did.

Where is Jesus now? Why didn't we expect this? What's going to happen next? They talked about it all day, in fact. And then that evening, two of the disciples who had gone back to their home in Emmaus came rushing back with the news that they had actually seen Jesus and talked with him on the road. And that's when Jesus appeared to the rest. Just like that, in the room, out of nowhere!"

(Person playing Jesus - Trevor - appears from behind the pulpit.)

"The disciples were terrified. It's a ghost! But Jesus put their minds to rest.

Person playing Jesus 'Ghosts don't have bones. (He walks down from the pulpit). Touch my hands and feet, and you will see. It's me! And, come to think of it, I'm feeling a bit peckish.'

So they made him a little meal. (We will act this out and give Jesus a bite to eat.) And through a mouthful of fish he added:

Person playing Jesus 'Ghosts don't need to eat, either!'

Narrator Finally, he talked them through all the things that Moses and the prophets and the psalms said would happen to the Messiah. He helped them to understand God's special promised one was always supposed to die and be resurrected, and that he had come to turn people's hearts back to God and forgive them of all the wrong things they had done.

Person playing Jesus 'You are my witnesses. You watched everything I did, heard everything I taught. And now you see me here, alive! So go and tell the world, starting right here in Jerusalem.

But don't go just yet, for I have one more gift to leave with you. The promise of my Father that will give you the power you need to do what I have asked.'

Narrator And then, as quickly as he had come, Jesus left.

So **let's sing one final song** to celebrate the risen Christ. It's a song called "Christ the Lord is risen today".

Whilst shown on the screen at Bethesda and sung was the original 6 verse hymn from the 1700's, some may be more familiar with the slightly amended 3 verses sung at the start of many Easter services at Leamington Road in the past - Jesus Christ is risen today. Both sets of words are printed here.

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia,
our triumphant holy day; alleluia,
who did once upon the cross; alleluia,
suffer to redeem our loss; alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing; Alleluia,
unto Christ our heavenly king; alleluia,
who endured the cross and grave; alleluia,
sinners to redeem and save: alleluia!

But the pains which he endured; Alleluia,
our salvation have procured; alleluia,
now above the sky he's King; alleluia,
where the angels ever sing: alleluia!

AUTHOR Samuel Arnold Music: EASTER HYMN (W Monk)
CCLI SONG # 4958088
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And the original 6 verses:

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia!
Praise to thee by both be given, Alleluia!
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!
Hail the Resurrection, thou, Alleluia!

King of glory, soul of bliss, Alleluia!
Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!
Thee to know, thy power to prove, Alleluia!
Thus to sing, and thus to love, Alleluia!

Charles Wesley CCLI SONG # 27965
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**This marks the end of the first part of our service today, so we move to
Part 2, The impossible happened!**

Becky begins by reading John 20, 1-18:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'

'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher').

Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' "

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Alec introduces a Memory verse: Matthew 28 v 6

He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay

which the congregation practise saying aloud.

Shirley then leads us in our prayers:

"Father God what a privilege, an honour and a delight it is to praise you, celebrate and thank you for Jesus our risen Saviour, on this holy day.

When we think of the freedom we have in this country, at this point in time, to worship you, we realise we must never take this for granted. In many countries in your world persecution of those who love you is rife. We think particularly of Ukraine where many are trapped and hidden in bombed shelters. We pray for their safety, peace and deliverance and that you will turn the hearts of Putin and his followers towards you.

Now as we continue in prayer can I ask you when I say "Lord of life" would you respond with: '**Hear our prayer**'.

Loving God, we praise you for this day of celebration, this day of praise, this day of thanksgiving, a day that changes the way we think, the way we act, the way we live, that changes everything.

Lord of life: **hear our prayer**.

And so we pray now for a change in our world, for changing all those places where there is human need. We pray for the poor, the homeless, the sick and the hungry.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**.

We pray for the victims of war, for refugees, for divided communities and countries.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**.

We pray for the sorrowful, the fearful, the troubled in heart and mind.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**.

We pray for the oppressed, the persecuted, the imprisoned and the exploited.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**.

Living God, may the truth of Easter break into each and everyone of these situations, bringing help and healing, strength and support, comfort and courage, hope and help, faith and freedom, love and life, the change that you alone can bring.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

We have much to thank you for here at Bethesda Lord. Your healing grace of minds and bodies as they turn to you. Father there are many things we don't understand but one thing we do know is that through your sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the joy of his risen power, we can learn to trust you in all circumstances. Right now we bring to you all who are on our hearts as they struggle with illness, grief and loneliness. May they know your comfort and peace.

Thank you Lord for the coming together of your body here at Bethesda. The joy of the International church who has begun to meet in our building. Bless them and prosper them Lord in their witness of you in their community of several nations. We pray too Lord for the gradual unity and love between St Luke's and ourselves as we seek to spread your word amongst young people and the community of Galligreaves. We thank you for the starting up of the Orbit group for young people, the continuing Movie morning and Tiddlywinks. May we continue Lord to serve our community in ways that only you direct.

We remember in prayer too Brian and Jackie Chilvers as they work and witness to you in Chad, and we look forward to them visiting us in the summer.

We thank you too Lord for our Pastor Alec and the deacons who work so selflessly in the furtherance of your kingdom here at Bethesda. A special thanks, dear Father, too for the presentation last night of the Gospel in the Passover by Igal Vender. May it help us to understand how precious your special people are to you, and that we, as grafted in believers, should pray for their needs and their salvation.

Last, but not least, we pray for our sister Sheila Sanderson, who goes through the waters of baptism today. May she continue to be filled with your holy spirit and your joy which is her strength as she declares her love for you in this act.

Help us, dear Lord, we pray to live each day in the light of Easter, with its joy bubbling up in our hearts, its laughter shining from our eyes, and its message always on our lips. So may others, seeing the difference it has made to us, discover the difference it can make to them. Teach us to live each day as your Easter people, to the glory of your name. Amen."

Alec introduces Sheila Sanderson, who is to be baptised, and invites her to share her story.

She says this is the short version, and emphasises that, as one of the preachers she listens to regularly said recently, "It's all about Jesus".

She was from a christian home, her father was a cabinet maker and a lay preacher and they attended Hollin Bank Mission, which some of us remember. When Sheila was 16 and about to leave school, she wasn't sure what to do, and despite her inclination to be a PE teacher, she started work at Seed and Gabbutt's bookshop in Blackburn, which again some of us remember!

When Sheila was 18, on her mother's 46th birthday, December 12th, her mother died, something that has never left Sheila. But she knew that for her mother it was "all about Jesus"

Sheila gave her life to Jesus the following year and then later for a time, after the closure of Hollin Bank Mission, she attended Leamington Road with her two great-nieces - she could have been baptised there all those years ago!. Her great-nieces later moved on, as did Sheila .

One of her favourite Bible passages is Psalm 139, You knit me in my mother's womb - she once asked her mother where she came from and was told she had been knitted with love in every stitch - something she also has never forgotten, especially as her mother was a great knitter!

Over the last years Sheila has lost 3 very close female friends, but she knows where they are and that God is in charge. Her own family are in Paris - 2 grandchildren and her son.

Sheila quoted Howard Carter, who, on opening Tutankhamon's tomb said "I see wonderful things," and despite all the things that are taking place in the world at the moment, there are still wonderful things to be seen. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, and today, it's all about him.

Alec shares his Message: "What does this all mean?"

“Maybe you are here for the first time today and you are wondering what all this is about. Why this water? Why this atmosphere of rejoicing this morning when our world is so full of suffering and death, of poverty and chaos, of unfairness and abuse. Why all this talk about Jesus? Isn't he more or less the one who is responsible for all this chaos? Why does he allow all this suffering in my life and in your life and in the lives of those around us?

So let me tell you that God our loving heavenly Father who made each one of us individually sent His only Son Jesus Christ into the world He made to rescue us from the mess we had got ourselves into by ignoring the Maker's instructions, by going our own way, by doing everything according to our own interests and not according to His wonderfully thought-out and clearly and carefully set-out plans which were made genuinely in our best interests as well.

Having spent more or less 33 years on the earth as a man Jesus Christ God's Son was falsely accused, faced trumped-up charges and was brutally murdered.

We killed the One who has never ever done anything wrong.

We killed the Author of life.

But that was not the end which is why we are rejoicing today.

Because God's plan was to rescue us, to give us new life for ever in that Jesus paid the penalty, paid the price for all the wrongs we do. He did something that we humans sometimes find it very hard to do even for someone whom we think is a good person. He gave His life for us that we might be forgiven and live.

That is what Sheila is telling us and showing us today in going down into the water and being baptised. This is a picture of Christ's death and of his resurrection, of his being brought back to life. Sheila loves the Lord. She has given her life back to Him and is following Him today and each day of her life on this earth. That is a wonderful thing to do and is also the only way to go if we want to experience life and joy to the full.

There is a God-shaped hole in our hearts. There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”

A guy called Augustine once said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” And he was right.

I don't know the details of the struggles that you are going through in your life this morning like God does. I can't imagine all the hurt in your heart and the brokenness that you are going through in this period of your life but God can. I cannot see the

unfaithfulness and abuse that you have experienced in the years gone by but God can.

Our God is real. Our God is powerful. When our God says something he does it. He doesn't mess you and me around.

He will not change everything in the world around you; your relationship challenges, your financial struggles, your job difficulties, your housing problems. But if you ask His forgiveness for the mess you are in in your life and give your life back to Him He will come into your heart and set you truly free.

He is the only hope for today and for every day.

Jesus Christ said "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

What he is really saying is: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

I appeal to you today to give your life back to Jesus. It will cost you everything you are and want to be but it will be the start of going the way God created you to go.

God spoke to Sheila like He is speaking to you now. She gave her heart to God in Jesus Christ and will now be baptised. May I encourage you to do the same?

After we come out of the baptism pool we will sing together Sheila's favourite hymn and then I will share with you a straightforward prayer of commitment in which you may share if you choose to do so if God is speaking to you this morning as I believe He is.

In the Bible God says, "When the time came, I listened to you, and when you needed help, I came to save you." That time has now come. This is the day for you to be saved. For you today is the day. "

At this point, Tim joins Alec in the Baptistry ready to receive Sheila. As she joins them, Alec asks:

"Sheila, do you, by faith, trust in and rest alone upon Jesus Christ and his death, burial and resurrection, for your righteousness and salvation?"

Sheila affirms this, and Alec continues:

"On your confession of faith, Sheila, I baptise you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen."

Sheila is immersed.

As Sheila (and Alec and Tim) leave the pool, Joy begins to play Sheila's favourite hymn, which we sing together - Sheila included - a rather damp Sheila!

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you washed in the blood,
in the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless?

Are they white as snow?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you walking daily by the Saviour's side?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Do you rest each moment in the Crucified?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?[Chorus]

Are you washed in the blood...

When the Bridegroom cometh will your robes be white?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Will your soul be ready for the mansions bright,
and be washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you washed in the blood....

Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,
and be washed in the blood of the Lamb;

there's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,

O be washed in the blood of the Lamb!

Are you washed in the blood....

AE HoffmanCCLI SONG # 21105

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Alec concludes with a Prayer of Commitment, and encourages those to whom God may have spoken today to say in their hearts:

"Lord Jesus Christ I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life. Please forgive me. I now turn away from this moment on from everything I know is wrong. Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your spirit. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit be with me forever. Thank you Lord Jesus. Amen."

Finally we stand and say 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.

