



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on February 18th 2024 at 10:45, meeting 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 being led by Alec, **who welcomed everyone**, saying what a special day it is as Jesus has said that when 2 or 3 are gathered together in his name, he is with us, and reminding us that last year we dedicated Daisy, the daughter of Tim and Paula, who celebrates her first birthday today. He prayed briefly for the family, then read: **Ephesians 3:20-21)**

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

**Alec then invited us to watch/listen to and reflect on "Our God is able" a Hillsong lyric video shown on the screen.**

God is able, He will never fail 'cause he is Almighty God;  
greater than all we seek, greater than all we ask, He has done great things.

**Lifted up, he defeated the grave, raised to life, our God is able:  
in His name, we overcome for the Lord our God is able.**

God is with us, God is on our side, He will make a way;  
far above all we know, far above all we hope, He has done great things.

**Lifted up, He defeated the grave.....**

God is with us, He will go before, He will never leave us, He will never leave us.  
God is for us, He has open arms, He will never fail us, He will never fail us.

**Lifted up, He defeated the grave....**

Authors: Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan CCLI SONG # 5894275 Copyrights© 2010 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (Admin. by Hillsong Music Publishing UK) CCL No 5664

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bV8fXI5MWk>

**We lifted our voices in song for our opening hymn, played by Trevor, Kate, Paul W and Judith:**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;  
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, the great and the small;  
T all life Thou livest, the True Life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish, but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory; pure Father of light;  
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render: O help us to see  
'tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

Author:Walter Chalmers Smith Music:Anon. Welsh hymn melody CCLI SONG # 124466 Words and Music Public Domain. CCL No 5664

**Tony then shared our Notices**, informing the fellowship that in addition to our usual weekly activities, the deacons will be spending time in prayer and fasting on the Wednesdays in Lent, joining in a time of prayer at Bethesda from 7.30-8.30pm, Next Sunday Tim Presswood, the Baptist Union President this year, will be leading our worship, and the following Sunday we have our Special Church and Congregational meeting to consider Future Ministry.

**We were led in Prayers by Jean W:**

“Let’s turn our hearts and minds to God in prayer:

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this beautiful day and all the people that are gathered here together. We know that where two or three are gathered in your name, you are in the midst of them. We pray that you would be with us today. Bless our church, oh God we pray, and bless our families too.

Help us, Father, to live our lives in Your presence that every thought we think is guided by Your Holy Spirit. We ask that You bless each person here today, and, please bless us with the knowledge and comfort of your love for those who cannot not be with us today for whatever reason.

Lord you knew the hardship of waiting in the desert please be with all those who are away from their home countries as they seek to make a new life and wait for news from home. You knew the temptation to turn stones into bread, be with all those who know the dreadful pain of hunger as they struggle to survive in a world that at the moment seems so cruel. You knew the temptation to throw yourself off the highest point, be with all those who know illness and despair as they struggle to live the best lives they can with their health issues. And Lord You knew the temptation to seize power for yourself - be with all those who hold and exercise power may they seek to make decisions that will bring justice and peace.

We think of the dreadful conflict in Israel and Gaza where the people of Gaza have moved several times over the last few months in an effort to stay safe. We pray Lord that those in power will see the desperate need of these people and allow the aid that is waiting to be delivered to them to be released in order to help alleviate a small part of their suffering. We also pray that the leaders around the world will be able to persuade the Israeli Prime Minister to agree to a cease fire to allow everyone on both sides to take a deep breath and try to make sense of what has happened to them and how they can go on. Please place your loving hand over this situation and help the men and women to feel your peace and that the children too can go to sleep without the fear of bombs falling close by and also that they can sleep without the hunger pangs that must be so hard for them to understand. It must break your heart Lord!

There is still the fighting in Ukraine Lord. Please be with all the churches that are doing their best to remain open and to serve the people. May all their efforts be rewarded Lord and that the people they serve will get to know Your love and learn to praise and thank you despite the awful things going on around them.

We ask for your wisdom and justice over the Prime Minister and the Government, and for our local Councils too. That they work with integrity and fairness for all.

Heavenly Father you know our church here at Bethesda. We have big decisions to make re our future. Forgive us when we dismiss too quickly what has gone before; in our eagerness for what is next. Help us to remember everything you have already done for our church and help us to learn from mistakes we may have made and to learn from them. Please be with the group of people who are trying to put together a list of options that we can bring before the Church after the service on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. May they try to hear what you are saying to them as to the way you want us to go. Also may everyone who comes to church be aware that even if not church members that they have a valuable contribution to make and their thoughts and ideas are welcome. Lord open our ears and hearts and minds so we can hear all the possibilities that you have in store for us, and may we continue to be prayerful around this over the coming weeks and months.

Please be with our friends who are struggling with health problems, may the Drs treating them listen to their symptoms and help provide the right treatment for them so they can recover. We also ask those who are waiting for hospital appointments to have patience.

Lord we ask so much of you but we know that with you all things are possible, and we are so thankful to you for all we have.

We ask all these things in the name of Your precious son Jesus. Amen.”

**Alec introduced 3 Praise songs, firstly:**

The splendour of the King, clothed in majesty;  
let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.  
He wraps himself in light and darkness tries to hide,  
and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.

**How great is our God,  
sing with me: how great is our God,  
and all will see how great, how great is our God.**

And age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;  
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.  
The Godhead, Three in One, Father, Spirit, Son,  
the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb,

**How great is our God....**

Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.  
Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.

**How great is our God....**

Authors: Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves and Ed Cash, CCLI Song 4348399; Copyright © 2004 worshiptogether.com songs/Six Steps Music/ adm. by Kingsway Music CCL no 5664

**Secondly, shown on the screen, Psalm 150 (Praise the Lord)**

You made the starry hosts, You traced the mountain peaks  
You paint the evening sky with wonders.

The earth, it is Your throne, from desert to the sea,  
all nature testifies Your splendour:

**Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, sing His greatness all creation.  
Praise the Lord, raise your voice  
You heights and all you depths from furthest east to west,  
let everything that has breath praise the Lord.**

You reached into the dust in love, Your Spirit breathed,  
You formed us in Your very likeness  
to know Your wondrous works, to tell Your mighty deeds,  
to join the everlasting chorus.

**Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, sing His greatness all creation....**

Let symphonies resound, let drums and choirs ring out,  
all heaven hear the sound of worship.  
Let every nation bring its' honours to the King,  
a roar of harmonies eternal:

### **FINAL CHORUS**

**Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, sing His greatness all creation.  
Praise the Lord, raise your voice  
You heights and all you depths from furthest east to west;  
You distant burning stars, all creatures near and far;  
from sky to sea to shore sing out forevermore:  
let everything that has breath praise the Lord**

Authors: Matt Boswell and Matt Papa CCLI # 7161130 Copyright © 2020 Getty Music Publishing (BMI), Messenger Hymns (BMI, Getty Music Hymns and Songs (ASCAP), and Love Your Enemies Publishing (ASCAP) (all admin at musicservices.org) CCL No 5664

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4TEcG-cdyo>

### **and finally:**

Be still and know that I am God;  
be still and know that I am God;  
be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord that healeth thee;  
I am the Lord that healeth thee;  
I am the Lord that healeth thee.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust;  
in thee, O Lord, I put my trust;  
in thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

Authors: Lee Herrington, Tom Fettke CCLI SONG # 583265 Copyrights@ Words: 1992 , Music 1986 Curb Word Music,  
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### **Alec then invited Brenda to read Daniel chapter 3 :**

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide,(90 ft high and 9ft wide) and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the

satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: as soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'

Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshipped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'May the king live for ever! Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.'

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?'

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude towards them changed. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?'

They replied, 'Certainly, Your Majesty.'

He said, 'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.'

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!'

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisors crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed

their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.'

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

## **Alec shared his Message: IN GOD WE TRUST**

In the beginning God

Humanity as a whole looked good and was good because God Himself had created it and saw and knew and said that it was good. He actually said it was very good.

But then one of the angels decided differently and rebelled against Almighty God. It was pride that motivated and controlled the fallen disobedient angel.

As a consequence death became a reality and Satan, the evil one, had begun his work of deception and of destruction.

But God sorted it again and again. Gave everyone that was willing to follow him over and over again a way out of the mess they were in.

In the beginning God. Yet again. First time the creation of life: this time the creation of new life through the Cross and the resurrection.

Jesus came and died. Was buried and then raised from the dead. Ascended into heaven and sits right now there at the right hand of God. He is preparing a place for all who humbly turn away from the mess they are making of their lives and believe in Him the true God.

The key word here is humbly. Not proudly. Humility not pride.

The prophet Micah wrote, (6:8) ESVUK.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you all but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

So let us here not deceive ourselves or destroy ourselves by doing anything else other than having the only living God at the centre of our hearts and minds and lives and fellowship.

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

Rev. 22:13 NIV "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

He will make perfect that which He has begun. He will not leave those like ourselves who have given their hearts and lives to him half-finished. He will not leave us before they have reached the goal. We continue being confident of this, that he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until Jesus comes again. Come soon Lord Jesus!

Generations come and generations go. Generations came and generations went. But pride and the unwillingness to worship the living God was in the natural heart of every human being as Brenda has read so dramatically and effectively has read to us. I am not going to repeat what she said.

Nebuchadnezzar made a 90 feet high and 9 feet wide image and all you had to do was bow down in front of this image; and everybody did, except Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So where are we? We are with them aren't we. Daniel 3

## IN GOD WE TRUST

When we have a journey to make,

When we are faced with a challenge,

When we are looking to the Lord as we always are as a fellowship and individual believers to guide us and lead us,

When we need ongoing protection from the evil one as we move forward, which we most certainly do,

What do we do?

WE NEED TO BELIEVE. WE NEED FAITH. WE NEED TO GIVE, TO FAST AND TO PRAY.

According to Hebrews 11:1, faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see. The author of Hebrews defines faith as believing that God exists; we believe that don't we? That he rewards those who seek him; we believe that too don't we, and that we can hope in him because his promises will always be true.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy (Matthew 17:14-21) (NKJV: v.21 missing in NIV)

14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him.

Notice that this man does three things: he comes near to Jesus, he kneels before Jesus and then he asks Jesus for help.

15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." 17 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

The disciples of Jesus didn't exactly get a good write-up here did they, at least not yet. The man said he brought his son who had seizures and was suffering greatly to the disciples-but they could not heal him. They appeared powerless to do that. But the good point here is that the disciples wanted to know why they were powerless, and they chose the right person to ask. They didn't make a public issue of it.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

It's not a dream, it is a reality.

21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Mark 9:14-29

Mark 9: 28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"

If you want to know how God thinks ask him and let him reveal it to you.

If you want to know who God is, seek Him in faith, in the Word and in prayer and fasting.

If you want to know what God is doing ask him to reveal himself to you.

28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?";

29 So He said to them, (well it's a bit like, you are asking me so I will tell you), "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." (NKJV)

Do we really want to know more of Jesus in our lives? Emmaus road experience, Luke 24:13-16, 28-32. Jesus acts as if he was going further. This is a question for us; do we want Jesus to stay with us or do we let him go further away? It's a challenging question, a very challenging question. But I think we all give the same answer as they did. Do we say that to Jesus? Please stay with us. Please accept us, please forgive us. We come to you in repentance and faith. Please give us your forgiveness and lead us on in your grace. Accept us in your love. We want to grow. In this fellowship, in your body, in this church which is your church. Stay with us. Strengthen us, build us up, for the sake of your kingdom, for the sake of your Name, for the sake of your honour. We won't let Him go. We want to go His way.

In Matthew 6 Jesus is speaking to His disciples.

When you give, pray, fast do it this way and not that way.

We are a giving church, a praying church and a fasting church.

It is not the practice of outward acts with an outward form of giving, prayer and of fasting that move the heart of God. Indeed Matthew 6 makes it very clear that forms may be a pretence, a show, acts of pride and hypocrisy unacceptable to the true and living God. It is our dependence on God, the attitude of our hearts, our trust in God that counts: and that is not of ourselves, it is the grace and the gift of God.

Why fast? It is a God-appointed way to humble ourselves. It is one way.

He who humbles himself will be exalted, (James 4:10). Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, (1 Peter 5:5b-6).

Leviticus 16:29-31 the institution of the Day of Atonement for the people of God. There are these words in it, "afflict their souls". You might think they had enough affliction, enough suffering anyway. But the word affliction is in this sense really the word 'humble'. However long and in whatever way and form we fast our intention is to say to God, "what do you want?" Cleanse me from sin, lead me on, direct my steps. It humbles our souls.

Ezra was leading a group of exiles back to Jerusalem from Babylonia. This was a 4-month journey. How would they get back safely? Ezra 8:21-23

Ahab 1 Kings 21:20-22, 27-28 the judgement of God on Ahab the most wicked king (25-26a) yet even he then sought the Lord, and the Lord heard him BECAUSE HE HAD HUMBLLED HIMSELF BEFORE GOD.

If God answered Ahab's fasting and humbling himself before God in that way, what about us?

Jonah 3 READ The city of Nineveh heard the message of one prophet of God once. All of them believed God and put on sackcloth and God spared the entire city.

Nineveh was spared judgement for 100 years. If God's response to Nineveh was that what should happen in Blackburn if the whole city hears the judgement of God and the good news of Jesus Christ through many prophets at least once?

God hasn't changed. The judgement of God hasn't changed. The good news of Jesus Christ hasn't changed. So what would it do if the people of God here in Blackburn humble themselves and call out to Him?



What changes history? What is the key? What is the turning point? When God's people fast.

I think it is very deep: because it is about the lives and the eternal destiny of all the people in this borough.

It would probably be impossible to exaggerate the potential for fasting to change the course of the history of Blackburn and all its churches. Because of God, not because of the preachers, and not because of the peoples. Because we are really talking about our taking God seriously and following him with all our hearts. Together.

2 Chronicles 7:14

How much does this land and this borough need the healing of the living God?

There is only one God; there is only one King.  
There is only one body; that is why we sing.  
Bind us together Lord with cords that cannot be broken.

These are the cords of death.

In His death on the Cross, in the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of the mess that we have made of our lives, God in Jesus Christ created the way for us not only to come back to Him. That is amazing. Let's not forget that. That is the main point. But He also provided the way for us to come back to one another; and that is very special. And also to ourselves and to our environment.

But it is about coming back to Him and as God's people coming back to one another.  
At every point of new beginnings we should seek God, look for God, yearn for God, plead with God, look full in His wonderful face. We need to hear from God. How much we need that. We need to listen to God. Starting with me, but all of us. I am no different.

**Alec then announced our Closing (offertory) hymn:**

When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word,  
what a glory he sheds on our way!

While we do his good will, he abides with us still,  
and with all who will trust and obey.

**Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.**

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,  
but our toil he doth richly repay;  
not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,  
but is blest if we trust and obey.

**Trust and obey...**

But we never can prove the delights of his love  
until all on the altar we lay;  
for the favour he shows, for the joy he bestows,  
are for them who will trust and obey.

**Trust and obey...**

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet,  
or we'll walk by his side in the way;  
what he says we will do, where he sends we will go;  
never fear, only trust and obey.

## **Trust and obey...**

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### **Alec closed in prayer:**

"Loving Heavenly Father, Our God, you are able. Nothing is impossible for you. You even got into our hearts, revealed yourself to us and showed us your love that we turn to you in repentance and faith, and that you live in our hearts through your spirit.

Our loving heavenly father we praise you for all that you give us, you gave us yourself, you have given us yourself and we ask you as a church to bless the gifts that we bring to you digitally and physically and use them for the extension of your kingdom and we say your kingdom come, your will alone be done. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us that we might have this freedom, this forgiveness and this joy in knowing you. We close together with the words of the grace:"

**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.**