



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on September 27th 2023 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 Harvest Festival Service today is being led by Alec, with our **Guest speaker David Livermore from the NWBA - North Western Baptist Association**. Our Monetary Offerings today will be given to NWBA, and all Food gifts to the Food Bank, Blackburn.

Alec welcomed everyone, giving a special welcome to David, our speaker today, and giving thanks that we were able to meet to worship together freely, unlike others in various parts of the world, before we joined in song, accompanied by the Music group:

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not, as Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"

**Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!**

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"...

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"...

Authors: Thomas Obediah Chisholm, William Marion Runyan CCLI SONG # 18723 Copurights © Words and music: 1923. Renewed 1951 Hope Publishing Company CCL no 5664

Notices for the week were given by Tony:

Ladies afternoon meets on Tuesday at 2.15pm, Tiddlywinks on Wednesday at 9.30 and he leadership team on Wednesday evening, in addition to New Life International Church meeting as usual on Friday and Saturday.

Alec then led a Brief interview with David Livermore, where we learnt that David had left school at 17, worked in Bedford and then in various business activities until being called to ministry He trained at Spurgeon's college, before moving to minister in the Rossendale valley 19 years ago! He now works for NWBA for 2 days a week, and Kay St Baptist Church 1 day per week, as well as sharing other opportunities to tell people about Jesus. (See the Youtube service for the full interview!)

David had chosen the Song "These are the days of Elijah", which we watched on the screen.

These are the days of Elijah declaring the word of the Lord,
and these are the days of Your servant Moses, righteousness being restored.
And though these are days of great trial, of famine and darkness and sword,
still, we are the voice in the desert crying "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"
**Behold, He comes riding on the clouds, shining like the sun at the trumpet call.
Lift your voice, its the year of jubilee, and out of Zion's hill, salvation comes.**

And these are the days of Ezekiel, the dry bones becoming as flesh;
and these are the days of Your servant David, rebuilding a temple of praise.
Oh, these are the days of the harvest, for the fields are as white in Your world,
and we are the labourers in Your vineyard declaring the word of the Lord!
Behold, He comes, riding on the clouds....

There is no God like Jehovah: repeated any number of times....

Behold he comes....

Author: Robin Mark CCLI SONG # 1537904 Copyrights@1996 Song Solutions Daybreak (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org)
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKNKmcuWGTg>

Our first Bible reading today: John 4: 31-38 was read by Janet.

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, 'Rabbi, eat something.'
But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about.'
Then his disciples said to each other, 'Could someone have brought him food?'
'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, "It's still four months until harvest"?' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying "One sows and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.'

Jane led our Prayers:

Heavenly Father, we come to You today with thankfulness in our hearts for all the blessings You provide for us day by day: good food, warm clothes, comfortable homes and many luxuries. Forgive us, Lord, that we so often take these things for granted, forgetting that half the world lives in poverty and, even in our own country, many go without the basic necessities of life. We are all too aware of the number of people without permanent homes, young and older people living on the streets, families in bed-sit accommodation, the growing need for foodbanks right across our country, the elderly having to choose between eating and heating. Lord, we pray for all who are deprived of even a basic standard of living but we thank You for all who reach out to them, especially those who go out in the name of Jesus to bring both practical and spiritual comfort. Show us, Father, how You want us to help those who are not as fortunate as ourselves.

We pray too for those in authority who have the ability to change the way things are, our own Government and leaders across the world, that there may be a new realisation within them that they are there to serve their people, not to promote themselves and their ideologies that are at variance with Your perfect and loving will. May all leaders be equipped with humility, integrity and a desire to support and care for the most vulnerable. We pray especially for those nations struggling because of war and those that have been struck by natural disasters; there are so many, Lord. We pray for all who have suffered loss and for those who selflessly go to minister to and give aid to those in need. Again, we pray for a change of heart in those

who have the power to bring peace in place of aggression, and please give determination and wisdom to all leaders in combatting the climate crisis.

Lord, You are a faithful God. You have shown us the love you have for Your world and for each individual in it, by sending Jesus, Your only Son, to die for us on the cross, so that we may know forgiveness and new life in relationship with You. We know that You are able to restore and rebuild – you have done that in each of our lives; please restore again this land to bring honour to your name and redeem the Earth to be what it should be to reflect your glory.

We lift before You now, all those we know who are in need of Your comfort and care, those in hospital or care homes, or recovering from operations; those having to work long and unsociable hours; those with family concerns and with other worries. We thank You for our church family and the support we can give to one another. We also thank you for the North West Baptist Association and its staff, who work so hard to strengthen the churches of this area. We thank you for bringing David to speak to us today and pray you will bless his time with us and give us all ears to hear what you are saying through him. In Jesus' name. Amen

We sang again, this time music being played by Trevor, Kate, Paul W and Judith. As this was a less familiar song, we played it through before the congregation joined in:

Lift high the name of Jesus, of Jesus our King.
Make known the power of His grace, the beauty of His peace.
Remember how His mercy reached and we cried out to Him.
He lifted us to solid ground, to freedom from our sin.

**Oh sing my soul, ad tell all He's done,
Till the earth and heavens are filled with His glory!**

Lift high the name of Jesus, of Jesus our Lord.
His power in us is greater than, is greater than this world.
To share the reason for our hope, o serve with love and grace,
that all who see Him shine through us might bring the Father praise.

Oh sing my soul....

Lift high the name of Jesus, of Jesus our Light.
No other name on earth can save, can raise a soul to life.
He opens up our eyes to see the harvest He has grown.
We labour in His fields of grace as He leads sinners home.

Oh sing my soul...

Authors: Ed Cash, Fionán De Barra, Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty CCLI SONG # 7001390
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The second Bible reading for today, Psalm 85, was read by Becky:

You, Lord, showed favour to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.
Restore us again, God our Saviour, and put away your displeasure towards us.
Will you be angry with us for ever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants - but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.

Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Alec then asked David to share his message: (David has shared his notes, which I have tried to expand accordingly!) He showed various slides on the screen with us.

The NWBA has a theme this year– The treasure within ... and we should be sharing God's treasure. The treasure comes from our relationship with God.. who fills us and enables us to be his people, We're encouraging people to share that treasure that's within. We come to a harvest service.

Our first reading was John 4: 31-38. He began by saying that his mother loved Bible jokes, such as 'who was the largest lady in the bible - the woman of Samaria, (some area) how do we know Moses was bald? Because sometimes he was seen with Aaron (hair on) and sometimes not, (which also works for 'how do we know Moses wore a wig!') So he is reminded of his mother when he reads this passage.

As he read this passage, one phrase stood out - 'The fields are white unto harvest ...' David remembers a Traditional harvest - he grew up in a village community in Bedfordshire, having a grand father who spent most of his life working on the land, and harvest was very much a time for celebration. One of the family recollections concerned his grandmother, who had to drive their small truck laden with homegrown produce to Bedford market to sell, As she approached the top of Ampthill Hill the truck stalled and rolled back down the hill!! At the bottom she abandoned the truck and walked the 5 miles back to the farm, where she told her husband what had happened! He walked the 5 miles back to the truck finding it and its contents untouched and proceeded to drive it the rest of the journey to the market. David likes this story because when you read Pilgrims progress, the hill is there, as the Hill Difficulty (noting that Ampthill is nothing like the hills in this area!!) But in the book it leads to the celestial city. On the top of the hill is a large house that John Bunyan saw, seeing a vision of God at work in an individuals life, bringing them to repentance.

David grew upping taught to be thankful for all God has given, and all we have and that there is enough for all - but is this still true? David doesn't think so...

He showed a fascinating slide, which he put in then took out, like hokey cokey, of Earth overshoot day: which marks the day when mans demand for ecological resources exceeds what the earth can generate in that year, in 2022 that date was reached on August 2nd. We can't continue indefinitely. The dates when if the whole world lived as certain places consuming resources and providing resources make for uncomfortable reading, Qatar for instance would reach world overshoot day on Feb 10th (his brother and sister were both born on that day, 6 years apart)

- Qatar Feb 10th
- Luxembourg Feb 14th
- Germany May 4th

- UK May 19th
- Jamaica Dec 20th
- Uganda is not there!, because they do not get their share of ecological resources.

Jane prayed for the Climate crisis and David believes we need to call on God, we need a miracle, even doing all we can, although good, is not going to be enough now.

The BMS has an appeal this year, for Uganda where wildfires, famine, climate change and years of civil war has had a devastating impact.

- gift of £12 could enable a farmer like Barbara to sell their crops through Cek Cam and earn up to 30 per cent more for their family.
- With £38, you could buy a specialised crop like onions for a household to plant, kick-starting an abundant harvest.
- £86 could cover a week's wages for a worker to meet the spiritual needs of people in Gulu, as well as helping their physical needs.]

David continued: I have been drawn once again to an unexpected encounter

- John in his gospel has a number of these
- He also seems to be able to record conversations that have different meanings to the participants

And as the encounter progresses, we see a practical example of the fields being white and ready to harvest

- As people in Sychar will come to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah
- As Lord
- As the one who has the words of eternal life
- The gift of the Holy Spirit
- Salvation
- Reconciliation with God

The confusion starts ...

Jesus meets the woman of Samaria, and shockingly he talks to her, not the done thing in this culture.

- 'Give me a drink'
- She's A woman
- And she's A Samaritan

Jesus asks for water

- But he is the one with living water
- Drink this and never be thirsty again
- A spring of water welling up to eternal life
- No wonder the woman says give me this water to drink.
- I won't have to come to this well every day

Go, call your husband

- Jesus already knows this woman
- He states facts ... does he condemn her, I don't think so
- But she is clearly uncomfortable

And then they move on to places of worship

- A change of subject which moves the conversation on
- The mountain of the Samaritans, Mount Gerizim near Shechem
- Jerusalem of the Jews ... which may or may not have been visible in the distance
- Jesus says: There will come a time when all will worship God in Spirit and truth

Burge writes:

'This is worship not tied to holy places but impacted by a holy Person, who through his cross will inaugurate the era in which the Holy Spirit will change everything'

David told a story of when he attended a Catholic Mass, when during his sabbatical he decided to visit places of worship that made him feel uncomfortable. His mother would have been shocked at him attending Mass, and he himself was shocked upon hearing the priest say "if you haven't got the Holy Spirit, you haven't got it" and continued by saying if you had not been filled with the Holy Spirit you had missed out and were not living in the right way with God. David had not anticipated hearing this, more of a gospel message than he had heard in many other places.

Jesus talks about the living water, the Holy Spirit.

- Why do we get so attached to buildings?
- The church, the people of King Jesus. There should be a freedom in our following of Jesus.
-

And here in the unlikely setting of Samaria

- Jesus declares that he is the Messiah
- Who the woman has identified as the one who will tell them everything

She leaves after the disciples return

- Have some food
- The items of harvest, water, now food
- Essential for living
- Both taken and given a heavenly meaning by Jesus

Jesus says that what is the most important thing is not food

- But to do the will of the Father
- To accomplish his work
- To make Jesus known; for all to know a living relationship with God
- Doors open, the way clear ...

Look here in Sychar, Samaria, one of the unlikeliest places

- It's happening
- The woman goes to people in the town
- 'Come and see', 'Could this be the Messiah?
- She has encountered Jesus and now she takes the message of Jesus to others
- And they respond
- I've always liked the people's response
- Now we believe not because of what the woman has said but because we have seen for ourselves.

In Sychar, Samaria

- The fields are white ...
- In Uganda; days of plenty appeal
- The fields are white
- In Blackburn
- The fields are white and ready for Harvest.

We are called to take the good news to the people we encounter

- How?
- By being ourselves, the people we are because of Jesus
- To speak naturally of what Jesus has done
- To make an invitation
- 'Could this be' 'Come and see'

David had years of business experience and had felt that he should not announce that he was a Christian, but would respond to others . When asked what he had done at the weekend he would say he'd been to church, and if it was good would say it was good! People started to ask what he believed and he had great opportunities to talk about Jesus because people gave him that invitation. Since being in Ministry in the Rossendale Valley, he worked as a chaplain in an addiction centre, where he has seen incredible things happen when the fields are white. A muslim man came to hostel,, he had read philosophy and English literature at university, and both he and his solicitor took delight on baiting the chaplain! Davids response was often 'I don't know" , its ohm to say that, but did say he knew Jesus. The muslim man needed a ,liver transplant, and was asked in hospital if he would like the chaplain to pray with him before surgery. However he didn't want the Iman, he wanted the christian chaplain, saying when christians pray, things happen. He then wondered why he had said that, and following his surgery, recovery and return to the hostel, he said to,David I've got a real bone to pick with you - having come to realise he really rated Jesus, and wanted to build his life round and with Jesus.

God doesn't expect us to be anyone we are not, but expects us to be able to say I know Jesus, come and see for yourself.

We have a Point of grace: Psalm 85 - love and faithfulness meet, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

On the way to a church the other Sunday evening David thought:

- What if this was the last time I visited this church what would I want to say?
- I'd want to tell you about Jesus - lets stop messing about and concentrate on him, we're all on a journey of discovery as we become more like Jesus.
- The service changed and became more Jesus focused

So, I have a question:

- If tomorrow were your last day on earth what would you do?
- For the fields are white ...
- And ready!

It's time to share the treasure within ...

After a time of silence, Alec introduced our Closing (offertory hymn), again played by the Music group:

Come, you thankful people, come, raise the song of harvest home!
fruit and crops are gathered in now, before the storms begin:
God our maker will provide for our needs to be supplied;
come, with all his people, come, raise the song of harvest home!

All the world is God's own field, harvests for his praise to yield;
wheat and weeds together sown here for joy or sorrow grown:
first the blade and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear-
Lord of harvest, grant that we wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come and shall bring his harvest home;
He himself on that great day, worthless things shall take away,
give his angels charge at last in the fire the weeds to cast,
but the fruitful ears to store in his care for evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come- bring your final harvest home!
gather all your people in free from sorrow, free from sin,
there together purified, ever thankful at your side-
come, with all your angels, come, bring that glorious harvest home!

Author: Henry Alford (1810 - 1871) CCLI SONG #1039093 Copyrights @1982 The Jubilate Group Ltd CCL No 5664

Alec invited all to remain standing as he prayed:

And finally we joined together saying: 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.