



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on January 16th 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.

Today's service is led by Alec, as we continue the Mini-series, entitled 'Spiritual Fitness', which we began last week. Today's theme is Commitment to Teamwork. Trevor plays the piano for us as we prepare to worship together- playing Who is on the Lord's side? I have a gospel to proclaim, Colours of day, Soldiers of Christ arise

Alec welcomes everyone, whether here or watching the recording later. For those watching, we are a Baptist church situated about a 10 minute walk from the town centre of Blackburn, about an hours drive from both Manchester and Liverpool in the north west of England. He reads some verses - 1 Peter 2 (which will also be the subject of our prayer meeting on Thursday evening, here at 7.30pm) ; we are a royal priesthood, a chosen people, belonging to God, and able to declare God's praises as we are called out of darkness into his wonderful light.

We sing those praises now:

We join together for 3 songs shown join the screen at Bethesda.

The words are printed here for those reading this at home.

We begin with a song sung by City Alight, a church in Adelaide, Australia. 'Yet not I, but through Christ in me.'

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer;
there is no more for heaven now to give;
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom,
my steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus,
for my life is wholly bound to His;
Oh how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine,
yet not I, but through Christ in me.

The night is dark but I am not forsaken,
for by my side, the Saviour He will stay;
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing,
for in my need, His power is displayed.

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me,
through the deepest valley He will lead;
oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome,
yet not I, but through Christ in me.

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven,
the future sure, the price it has been paid,
for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon,
and He was raised to overthrow the grave.

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated,
Jesus now and ever is my plea;
oh the chains are released, I can sing: I am free,
yet not I, but through Christ in me.

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
for He has said that He will bring me home,
and day by day I know He will renew me
until I stand with joy before the throne.

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus,
all the glory evermore to Him;
when the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
yet not I, but through Christ in me.

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus,
all the glory evermore to Him,
when the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
yet not I, but through Christ in me.
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
yet not I, but through Christ in me;
yet not I, but through Christ in me;
yet not I, but through Christ in me.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwc2d1Xt8gM>

AUTHORS: Jonny Robinson, Michael Farren, Rich Thompson CCLI SONG # 7121852
CATALOGUE: CityAlight Music / Farren Love And War Publishing / Integrity's Alleluia! Music
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This led into: Living Hope, which begins:

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQs2W8JEpIM>

AUTHOR Brian Johnson, Phil Wickham CCLI SONG # 7106807

CATALOGUE: Bethel Music Publishing / Phil Wickham Music / Simply Global Songs / Sing My Songs

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The final song in this section : King of Kings - sung by Hillsongs

In the darkness we were waiting without hope, without light,
'til from Heaven you came running, there was mercy in your eyes.
To fulfil the law and prophets to a virgin came the word;
from a throne of endless glory to a cradle in the dirt.

Praise the Father, praise the Son, praise the Spirit, three in one;
God of glory, Majesty, praise forever to the King of Kings

To reveal the kingdom coming and to reconcile the lost,
to redeem the whole creation you did not despise the cross,

for even in your suffering you saw to the other side,
knowing this was our salvation, Jesus, for our sake you died.

Praise the Father, praise the Son....

And the morning that you rose all of Heaven held its breath
'til that stone was moved for good for the Lamb had conquered death.

And the dead rose from their tombs and the angels stood in awe,
for the souls of all who'd come to the Father are restored
and the church of Christ was born. then the Spirit lit the flame;
now this gospel truth of old shall not kneel, shall not faint
by his blood and in his name in his freedom I am free
for the love of Jesus Christ who has resurrected me.

Praise the Father, praise the Son.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQl4izxPeNU&list=PLutwgnRUTTvQwYXiHfMws85U5ldrgWmCw&index=6>

AUTHORS Brooke Ligertwood, Jason Ingram, Scott Ligertwood CCLI SONG # 7127647

CATALOGUE Fellow Ships Music / Hillsong Music Publishing Australia / So Essential Tunes

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Brenda now leads us in our prayers of intercession:

Our Loving Heavenly Father, we have come together to worship You again and we ask for Your continued presence with us this morning. We thank You that You sent Your Son to earth to live as our example, to die for us on the cross and then conquer death by His resurrection. We bring our thanks and our intercessions before You, knowing that we ask You for so much. but also knowing that there are many things that we need to say sorry for, and we do so now and ask that You will please forgive us for our wrongdoing.

Lord God, we remember the needs of the world. We pray for countries with little health provision and where millions are hungry and need help, more and more so now, as the pandemic continues. We pray for the launch this week of the 2022 World Watch list naming many countries where there is the worst persecution for Christians and we ask that MPs will be stirred to stand up for the rights of Christians to worship in freedom everywhere.

We thank You for our own country, but we know that our government has problems at this time and we ask that You will have Your hand on this difficult situation so that the outcome will be best for all. Thank you for our steadfast Queen. We bring her and her family before You at a challenging time for them, and ask that she will keep safe and well to celebrate her 70th Jubilee this year.

Again, we thank You for all front line workers in hospitals and many other places, in whatever way they serve, and ask for their safety and well being. We pray for an easing of this pandemic so that other difficulties can be met and there can be an improvement in care for everyone. Lord we ask that by sharing knowledge, resources, and vaccines the world's people can all move to better things. Thank you for the amazing developments in medical care and treatment, but may it be used in the right way to give help to the most in need.

Lord, there are so many problems. Some have lost income and businesses and have families to support. We thank You that some help has been given and we pray for the continuation of

this and that all may have food and shelter. We again especially remember the suffering in Afghanistan and the dreadful situation there and ask that there be a good response to the UN appeal for that nation. Heavenly Father, we think also of this town and the area around and pray that the Christian churches may be able to share the good news of Your love amongst the many who do not know of it.

We pray, Father God, for families and children at this time, asking that the young ones may be able to continue in their education with little disruption and that they may be well supported. Please protect and guide all teachers and those working in schools as they try to keep things running as normally as possible. Life can be difficult at times, so please surround all with Your love.

Many of us have personal worries, illnesses and difficulties Lord, and some problems are on hold. We are concerned about our families, young and older. We ask for Your presence and healing for many we know who are ill or struggling at this time. In a quiet moment now, we name some before You. Our thoughts are also with those not here today, who would like to be, and we ask that you will be beside them.

We thank You for our Pastor and for his wife, who is with us in heart and joins him in praying for us. We also thank You for the Deacons alongside our Pastor, working in the background. It is a difficult task to fulfil and we ask You will be present beside each one. We thank You for our Sunday services and for those who spend much time preparing the different aspects of it. Help us not to take this for granted. We also ask that You will guide our thoughts and words at our church meeting on Tuesday evening.

Lord, we pray for Christian leaders throughout the world, asking for their strong leadership and wisdom, and also we bring before You the work of the BMS - remembering our Link Missionaries, Brian and Jackie Chilvers - and other charity and mission workers as they seek do their best for You in challenging times. Many people throughout the world have turned away from You, but please help all Christians to continue to tell of the promises of Jesus Christ whenever and wherever we can. As we move on, hopefully to a less restricted time, may You lead our church fellowship here in new ways to reach out to the community around and the new homes that are looking almost ready.

Please be with us all this week and guide and sustain us. Now we offer these prayers and the many in our hearts to You, Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son. Amen

Alec shares the notices for this week:

After the service we will be serving refreshments; there is an open air mission taking place tomorrow in the town centre; on Tuesday we have the coffee morning from 10-12noon, with the Ladies meeting in the afternoon at 2.15 (the Ladies Bible study will be restarting the following week). Tiddlywinks will meet on Wednesday morning, and our fellowship meeting (looking at 1 Peter 2) will take place on Thursday evening at 7.30pm. Movie morning will continue on Saturday, and our worship next Sunday will be led by Tim, who will also bring the message.

At this point Alec shared some photos taken yesterday, when, together with Jason and Rachel from St Lukes, more welcome packs were given out to those moving into the new homes in the area. They were well received, and more will be distributed in the future as even more houses are occupied!

At this point, Colin was due to read our Bible passage for today: 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12-27:, but rather than Colin, we had the pleasure of Joy reading for us .

"Unity and Diversity in the Body

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Trevor plays the piano for us as, at Bethesda, we lift our voices and sing: (and incidentally the music was composed by Samuel Wesley, the son of Charles)

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the word:
from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth;
her charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth:
one holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food;
and to one hope she presses with every grace endued.

Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation of peace for evermore:
till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blessed;
and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest!

Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three-in-One;
and mystic, sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee.

AUTHORS: Samuel John Stone, Samuel Sebastian Wesley CCLI SONG # 55377
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Alec now shares his message for today, continuing our theme of Spiritual Fitness

COMMITMENT TO TEAMWORK

I think it was in 2017 that I received a telephone call from ZDF the second German national television company. It developed into a research interview and went on for about 20 minutes.

It was the last question that caused the problem. My answer threw the interviewer completely. It made everything that she had worked on up to that point in the interview valueless and unusable. My answers to her questions on the world political situation, on the German economy, on issues of social and personal concern and so on had stimulated her interest and her mind. But it led to nothing. Because the last question was how and when did you become a German citizen and because at that point in 2017 I had had to say, "Sorry, but I am not a German national".

It was just one question. It was the critical question. It was the question I could not answer to her satisfaction so she said thank you and goodbye.

This is not a research survey question this morning. But it has the same significance. If we get stuck on this one

Have you given your life back to God in Jesus Christ?

Is He Lord of your life? Do you belong to the people of God?

OK that is already three questions but it is the same question three times.

Have you given your life back to God in Jesus Christ?

Is He Lord of your life? Do you belong to the people of God?

When we fill out forms of application or whatever, we often have the option to answer “Prefer not to say.” I think we have that option this morning too. I am not coercing, controlling, overtly inappropriately persuading or bullying you. But this is a really important question which affects us and others every day of our life on this earth and afterwards.

Some of the older members of the congregation may be familiar with this picture? (The screen at Bethesda shows a photo, recognised by Tony) - Detective Columbo pictured here played as always by Peter Falk has completed his questioning of a potential suspect and then turns back and says, “Just one more thing”.

Jesus is not a detective but a loving friend. But He asks us critical and soul-searching questions. He knows our hearts through and through, inside out. Before we say something He knows what we are thinking. He is saying finally to you and to me do we know that we need Him to forgive us our wrongs, all the mess we have ever made in our life through ignoring Him and through taking all the life decisions ourselves. Have we come to Him for forgiveness?

Are we committed to following the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we His disciples? Jesus said, “Follow me”, thirteen times in the Gospels. He used these two simple words to call Peter, Andrew, James and John as His disciples.

What is Jesus basically saying here? He is saying, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Maybe this sounds about as clear to you as a loud-speaker announcement on a foggy day, on a cold dark wintry morning waiting on an isolated station platform, so let me explain what Jesus means by being committed to Him. It is a commitment to Jesus as a person, to Jesus as our Lord and then to His message. We are not seeing Jesus as a more than average religious leader and aiming with all our strength to follow a humanistic ethical code for all men. The so-called “Sermon of the Mount” is not for the world but for His disciples. In Matthew 5:1-2 we read: “Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.” Jesus shows His humanity in sitting down after the climb, His Lordship in speaking to those who are His disciples. Jesus speaks clearly and audibly. He will not leave us in any doubt as to who He is and what He expects. He will never leave us isolated and alone in an emotionally and/or physically

challenging situation. He is always there for us. He is only a prayer away; a cry from your heart always reaches Him. He is always there for the broken-hearted. He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. Yes we may be hurt, maybe very hurt; but He is near, He is real. Let us leave our hurt behind us and go on with Him.

Maybe you ask yourselves the question is it we who choose Jesus or Jesus who chooses us?

“You did not choose me, (says Jesus), but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”(John 15:16)

What a difference that makes! The God of all creation, the Sustainer of the universe has chosen us! Does this not increase, heighten our motivation and our awareness of our responsibility to serve Him?

If we are chosen like an athlete who is nominated to take part in the World Championships or in the Olympic Games how strong will our sense of responsibility be to do our best for our country. If on the other hand we visit the Olympic Games as a tourist we don't actually take an active part in anything. We can pick and choose which events we go to and look at. We can even sit at home and watch them “live” on our screens. Has anybody ever won an Olympic Gold medal by sitting in front of a monitor or a television screen?

No. Not once. Athletes train hard for years usually. They may give up everything to win the race. They experience disappointments, pain and suffering, disillusionment and personal attacks, political problems and more recently and very intensively the challenges of social media.

I once received a sticker from the British Consulate in Düsseldorf, Germany. On it were written the words “I am not a tourist,” with the suggestion to place it in a prominent place. The background is that German citizens, knowing that Britons gladly visit the Rhine valley, the Lorelei rock, Heidelberg, the Black Forest and the Neuschwanstein castle in Bavaria often greet Britons with the words, “Are you enjoying your holiday here” forgetting that some Britons live and work in Germany on a regular and daily basis. Tourism is fine; holidays when we can take them are great. But I am not basically a tourist and I don't think you are either. We are soldiers of the King, athletes running after the prize.

It is striking that after saying to his disciples that we did not choose Him but He chose us, He immediately, straightaway, directly, without entering on to another topic of conversation or teaching says:

“This is my command: Love each other.” (John 15:17)

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)

Perhaps we can grasp this more fully when we understand that He did not say things like

“Loving one another might be one way of seeing if you can get on together as a church.” Or

“Loving one another is my suggestion for the start of the church. But if you see it doesn't work you can try another way.” Or

“I think loving one another is probably unrealistic for a church, after all we are just human beings, so let's say this is an option which you can follow if you like.”

No, many times no. He says quite clearly and consciously: “This is my command: Love each other.” “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Alongside the inner power of the Holy Spirit, God wants us to experience the encouraging support of the love of other disciples of Jesus. It is in the strength of our relationships together in Christ that we can win the battles against the powers of darkness and help one another to fulfil the task that God has given us. It is only by loving one another that we will be able to be fruitful in His service and effective in our prayers. As Matthew quotes, “Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19)

Joy very helpfully read for us from 1 Corinthians 12.

Are we a member of the team? Are we part of the body?

Do we share the same goals, the same thinking, and the same beliefs? Are we moving in the same direction? Paul says, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it: if one part is honoured every part rejoices with it.”

We have just sung, "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord." The church wrote Paul is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone. Paul does not say it was their doctrine, their institution or their religious activity which became the foundation of the church. Jesus called His disciples into a living, loving community. In the early church they worshipped together, prayed together, worked together, witnessed together and as needs arose shared their possessions together. The reality of their love for one another was a clear demonstration of the joy of their new individual and personal life in Jesus their Saviour. It had a massive probably immeasurable impact on the world around them. In their commitment to one another they became the visible demonstration of the body of Christ on earth. This is always for the people of God as a whole not just for individuals who somewhere believe. It is when we dwell together in unity that the Lord commands His blessing. The church will never, ever be able to carry out a ministry of reconciliation when there are members within the body of Christ who are not willing and prepared themselves to practice reconciliation. How we can we talk about God reconciling us to Himself through the death of Christ on the Cross, giving us forgiveness for our wrongs, if we are not reconciled to one another. Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. MY personal opinion is that there is nothing that so effectively, so systematically and so quickly and thoroughly destroys a church as unforgiveness. That's is my opinion.

If He is your Lord and my Lord we are in the same team. But it is more than that we are brothers and sisters. Let me rephrase that. It isn't as if because we are in Christ we are LIKE brothers and sisters but because we are all adopted children of God, sons and daughters of the King, we ARE brothers and sisters.

Hallelujah!

If we want unity in the biblical sense it will cost us our lives in our giving ourselves to the Lord and to each other. To do that we need gentleness and humility, the fruit of the Spirit at work in us. But there is no other way. Amen

We bring our time of worship a close as we sing again (once more accompanied by Trevor playing the piano), and although the words may not be familiar to all, the tune we sing at Bethesda is one we know, generally when we sing "Take my life and let it be".

The words we sing today were written by Charles Wesley.

Jesus, Lord, we look to thee, let us in thy name agree:
show thyself the Prince of peace; bid all strife for ever cease.

Make us of one heart and mind, courteous, pitiful, and kind,
lowly, meek in thought and word, altogether like our Lord.

Let us for each other care, each the other's burden bear;
to thy church the pattern give, show how true believers live.

Free from anger and from pride, let us thus in God abide;
all the depths of love express, all the heights of holiness.

Closer knit to thee, our head, nourish us, O Christ, and feed!
Let us daily grace receive, more and more in Jesus live.

Fill us with the Father's love, never from our souls remove,
dwell in us and we shall be thine through all eternity.

Author: Charles Wesley
Public domain, CCL No 5664

Alec leads us as we 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.**