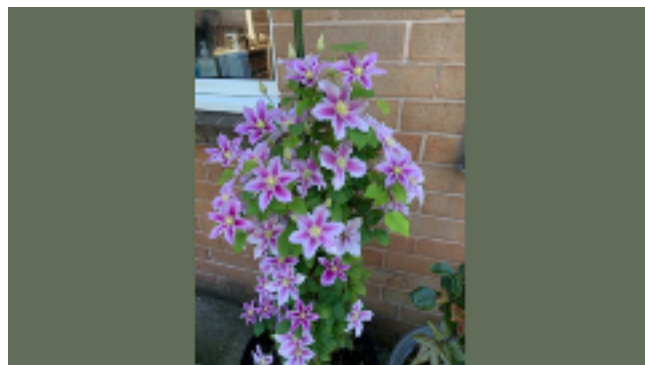




Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on July 25th 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

The lifting of lockdown restrictions has resulted in the decision to meet in person at Bethesda Chapel once again. We still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet for those unable to attend Bethesda. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, even if scattered.

We continue our series of "Encouragement in Hard Times" and our worship today is led by **Colin, who welcomes us all, wherever we are.**



Today is a memorable day, as the further easing of restrictions means we are no longer required to wear face coverings or remain socially distant, although we are asked to consider the wellbeing and safety of all in our decision making. Perhaps most important for some, we are now permitted to sing once more in church! To that end, Colin has chosen a hymn of praise with which to begin our service today, Praise my soul, the King of heaven. The recording we see on the screen at Bethesda was made last year by EMU Music from the Keswick Convention.

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me his praise shall sing.
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him for his faithfulness!

Fatherlike he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Widely yet his mercy flows!

Angels, help us to adore him;
Ye behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

HF Lyte.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lFBrVDU0aU>

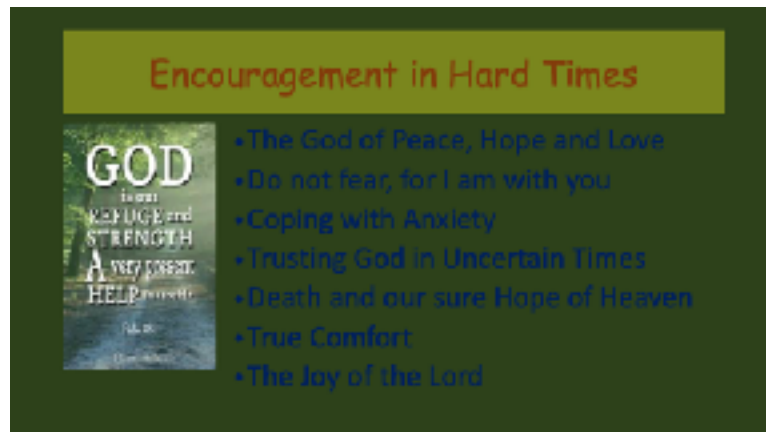
Colin then leads in prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, you are worthy of all our praise and thanksgiving, for everything you are and everything you have done for us, even in this past week. Your love endures forever; it never fails. Though there are many ways we have failed, we have not exceeded the supply of your forgiveness and grace. You are the God who never fails to keep his promises. We thank you that in Jesus' life, death and resurrection we see your love and mercy fully displayed. You are the God who lifts up those who are weighed down. You are the God who provides for your children. Our desire is to praise you as long as we live. Inhabit our praises as we gather together. We thank you for revealing yourself to us through your word. As we open your Scriptures today we pray that we would hear your voice. We ask that your Holy Spirit would be at work, opening our ears to hear, our minds to think, and our hearts to receive your word. May we be transformed into your likeness, in the fulness of your joy, that we may delight in you our Saviour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

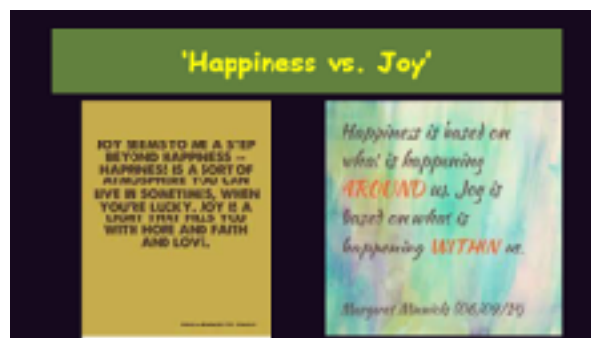
There are only 2 notices to be shared today - we will **not** be meeting on zoom at 1pm today, but we will hold our Zoom prayer meeting on Thursday night at 7.30pm. This is expected to be the last Zoom prayer meeting, however, as the following week we will

be starting to meet again in person at Bethesda on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm, for prayer one week and Bible study the following week, and we hope that many will be able to join in this time of fellowship.

Colin now shares a powerpoint presentation on our theme today,(and at Bethesda showed a short animated video called The pursuit of happiness, demonstrating that happiness is not a destination.)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kB1aoErPRWs>



"Joy seems to me a step beyond happiness, for happiness is a sort of atmosphere you can live in sometimes, when you're lucky. Joy is a light that fills you with hope and faith and love."

"Happiness is based on what is happening around us. Joy is based on what is happening within us."

We can now lift our voices in song again, with 2, probably well known, choruses, "I've got that joy joy joy joy down in my heart", (which some of us learnt at Christian Endeavour over half a century ago!) and "Come on and celebrate".

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy
down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart.

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy
Down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart to stay.
 And I'm so happy, so very happy
 I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.
 And I'm so happy, so very happy
 I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus.
down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart.
I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus
down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart to stay.
 And I'm so happy, so very happy....

I've got the peace that passes understanding
down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart.
I've got the peace that passes understanding
down in my heart (where?)
Down in my heart to stay.
 And I'm so happy, so very happy.....

I've got the wonderful love of my blessed Redeemer
way down in the depths of my heart (where?)
Down in the depths of my heart (where?)
Down in the depths of my heart.
I've got the wonderful love of my blessed Redeemer
way down in the depths of my heart (where?)
Down in the depths of my heart to stay.
 And I'm so happy, so very happy...

CCL No 5664
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imK7pAMf61E>

Come on and celebrate His gift of love,
we will celebrate
the Son of God who loved us
and gave us life.
We'll shout Your praise, O King,
you give us joy nothing else can bring,
we'll give to You our offering
in celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate, celebrate
celebrate and sing;
celebrate and sing to the King.
Come on and celebrate, celebrate
celebrate and sing;
celebrate and sing to the King.

Patricia Morgan, Dave Bankhead
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kog4QkDT4Ho>

Joy now shares our Bible passage for today: Psalm 16, verse 1-11.

"Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.
I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing."
I say of the holy people who are in the land,
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."
Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods
or take up their names on my lips.
Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance.
I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I keep my eyes always on the Lord.
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

Our prayers of intercession are now led by Victor.

"Heavenly Father, we come to you today, to appreciate your faithfulness and goodness. We are grateful for your promises to us - to give us hope and a future. Thank you for the assurance of the Holy Spirit telling us that you have come to us in Jesus Christ with gifts of forgiveness and life.

Blot out and forgive our failings and weaknesses, for our pessimism, doubts, wrong thoughts and deeds, help us to be grateful for how far you have brought us and be full with joy in anticipation in the hope of a better future.

We pray for this amazing world and are sorry for sometimes taking being alive for granted and also how we have treated it, O God, you take a remarkable interest in the powerless - please give your strength to those who are vulnerable. Let those in war-torn countries know that you have not forsaken them, even if their existence carries no weight in the face of their oppressors. Give courage to every Christian around the world especially those that do not have the privilege to worship you openly but discreetly.

We intercede Lord for the government and leaders of this country; give them wisdom, humility, integrity, and compassion when they make the decisions that will affect so many lives.

The lives of so many have been affected by the pandemic. It is still a cause for anxiousness, it might be due to the illness itself, but it could be the isolation of those living on their own, the fear of going out again and mixing with others, it could be the worry about jobs and possible redundancies and all the frightening consequences comes with re-opening.

Heavenly Father we bring to you our concerns for our church family; help those who will be under medical care this week & those facing isolation or surgery. Grant them peace and protection & faith. Grant skill to the hands of those carers and healers, as well as patience as older minds and bodies sometimes take longer to process information and react. You know the names of those who need your extra care and love you know their needs. Please give them your Grace to cope with the daily worries and problems that they face. We thank you for the dedication and time of our Pastor and deacons. We pray for churches worldwide and the Churches here in Blackburn, asking for your help to grow in faith. Grant us also, the grace Lord, to respect the beliefs of others even if we do not share them, to celebrate what we have in common and to accept our differences. Guide us as we live each day determined to spread the Good News of your son Jesus Christ. Faithful God, we pray for ourselves; as we go from our worship today to start the week ahead, we ask that in all we do, may we walk more intimately with you at our side, safe in the knowledge that your Fatherly love and care are endless.

Father, we pray that you accept this sacrifice of prayer of Christ's name, Amen."

Colin brings his sermon: The Joy of the Lord.

Christianity is a joyful religion. That's why the Apostle Paul declares to the Philippian Christians: *'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice!'* Jesus was a joyful person. In John 15, Jesus told the disciples that everything He taught them was so that His joy would be in them and their joy would be full. This is no mere happiness that is based on happy circumstances, but a deep sense of inner delight and contentment that is derived from a state of blessing and being blessed.

So, as the followers of Jesus, do we feel this morning that spirit of joy in our lives? Do we know and experience that sense of exuberance that transcends the drudgery and decay that surrounds us in our bodies and in our world?

Let us examine our topic this morning, 'The Joy of the Lord', through three headings.



The Joy of the Lord is *My Strength*

In Nehemiah 8:10 we read *'Now go home and have a feast. Share your food and wine with those who don't have enough. Today is holy to our Lord, so don't be sad. The joy that the Lord gives you will make you strong'* (GNB). In other words: *'The joy of the LORD is your strength.'*

You are strong today because the joy of the Lord is your strength. You see, Nehemiah was a reluctant leader who God used to restore Israel and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. The people had been forced into exile because of their sin. Nehemiah gathered the people together, and the priest read the scriptures. The Children of God had gone a long time without hearing God's word. When they heard the word, they responded in sorrow, weeping, and mourning. Then Nehemiah stood before the people and gave them a strange command. He told them to stop weeping. He said, go, eat, and celebrate. Don't be sorrowful, but be joyful for the joy of the Lord is your strength. They were to celebrate because God had brought about forgiveness and restoration.

This is also true for us as Christians. We have received God's mercy and forgiveness. We know in our own experience the meaning of John 3.16. God is joyful over our repentance and returning to Him. Think about the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.

As a child of God, he takes delight in us. I have three children, and they are the joy of my life. I am proud of what they have achieved, sometimes in trying circumstances and I love bragging about them to others. Just as a human father is joyful and takes pride in his children, so God is joyful and takes great pride in his children – in you and me! God's joy over us gives us strength and courage to face tomorrow. His joy lives in us and gives us a delight that is beyond understanding. You see, our joy is not dependent on our material circumstances. This joy comes from an inner peace knowing all is well with us and God. Joy is the confidence that God is working for our good. Joy lifts our heart from sorrow to celebration, thanksgiving, and worship. The joy of the Lord is our strength today.

The Joy of the Lord is *My Salvation*

Do you remember when you became a Christian? You were filled with joy at coming to know Jesus as your Saviour and Friend in a deeply personal way. That same joy is not only available to you today but is God's will for your life. It is his will that we delight in his Son; that he is precious to us; that we are thrilled to bits that we are his and he is ours. Every day His desire is that we would know His joy in our hearts in such a way that it becomes obvious to people around us – especially those who live with us!

But with everything that has happened in the last 15 months and more, and possibly even with other things that have happened in your life as the years have gone by, joy may be the last quality that you would seek to entertain. And yet the promise of God's word is that joy is something God can restore. Psalm 51:12 says *'Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.'* You see, God can cause our hearts to smile even if things on the outside seem to be falling apart. Because the sort of joy we are talking about here is not based on the outward things around us, but is something that can only be found in Christ the focus of God's presence. The Psalmist says: *'You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore'* (Psalm 16.11). Christ is at God's right and he is the source of our eternal joy and gladness. The more we spend time with our Saviour and Friend the more our spirits will be exhilarated by such intimate fellowship.

So, if we lack joy, let us make a determined effort to spend time in God's presence. Let us enter his gates with thanksgiving, consider his incredible loving-kindness toward us in Jesus, and celebrate how great and glorious God is and we will experience his joy.

You see, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ wants every one of his children to experience joy to the full! We know this because of his word recorded in John 15:11: *'I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.'* Notice when it was that Jesus spoke these words. It was a strange time to talk about joy, for soon he would be in dark Gethsemane. Shortly after that he would be facing His accusers and hearing the taunts and mocking of those who hated him, and then he would be crucified. In the face of all this he spoke of 'my joy'! and it is significant that so far as the scriptural records are concerned this is the only time that he spoke of his joy. How unique this joy must have been if it still remained with him in his time of greatest trial and testing! The Lord's provision for all His children is that his joy should be their joy 'that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.' We have this joy through the indwelling power of the

Holy Spirit. For joy is the second fruit of the Spirit after love! And out of joy flows a peace that passes all understanding, for Christ is the Prince of Peace.

My Song

We have said that the Christian faith is a religion of joy. And because it is a joyous religion, it is also a religion of song and dance. The phrases 'song of joy' and 'shout for joy' are found repeatedly in the Psalms, the book of sacred songs, enthusing the reader to '*sing to the LORD a new song!*' (96.1) and to sing with unrestrained enthusiasm and a wide-range of musical instruments (150). Paul's rallying cry to the Church at Colossae is: '*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*' (Colossians 3.16). I love that incident in Acts 16 where we find Paul and Silas in the darkest and dankest prison imaginable and yet they were so filled with Christ's own joy that they could sing praises to God at midnight! And all the other inmates listened, absolutely Gob-smacked. They'd never seen anything like this before!

And in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, and chapter 5, we find a vision of heaven and innumerable hosts of angelic beings singing the beatific equivalent of Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus' in praise of the Lamb. The jokey image of Christians in the next life dressed in white, sitting on clouds and playing harps might indeed be ridiculous and a mockery of true heavenly bliss, but at least it captures one great truth: that making sweet-music is a celestial reality.

But then you might ask: what have we got to sing about? My answer is found in two verses, one from Peter and one from Paul. In 1 Peter 1:8 we read: '*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*' And in 2 Corinthians 9:15, Paul declares: '*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.*'

In these verses, we find God's indescribable gift and our inexpressible and glorious joy. God's incredible gift is Jesus. The fact, that God gave Jesus, leaves us unable to declare its wonder. Our inexpressible joy is joy so full it defies description.

Let us look just for the moment at Peter's words 'you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.' What an incredible statement! These believers had never seen Jesus, as Peter did, yet they were able to love Jesus and rejoice in Christ with indescribable joy. They were experiencing persecution and had been scattered abroad. How could they have indescribable joy? Because they were born-again (1 Peter 1:3) He tells them: '*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*'

This ought to be the main reason Christians rejoice in the Lord. Notice that Peter tells his readers that their joy is based on the fact that they had a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. As Tim reminded us two weeks ago, this hope is the hope of living again. This life is not all there is. There is a real place called heaven, and if you are saved, you are going there. In 1 Corinthians 15, the great resurrection chapter, we read, '*If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied*' (v19). You see, some at Corinth were clearly saying that even if the resurrection is

not true, they were glad for the life they were living as a Christian. But Paul tells them 'not so'. He said those who hope only in this life are most to be pitied. My friends, we have a home beyond the river! As Peter says: we have 'an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven.' As well as our heavenly inheritance in Christ being imperishable and free from anything that will deform or debase it, it is also unfading. This word is taken from the name of a flower, the amaranth. This



flower always comes back! Our inheritance may be covered by the cold winter's frost and snow, but it will always be there! Our inheritance in heaven is reserved for us. This means that God personally attends to our inheritance very carefully. He takes it upon Himself personally to look after it on our behalf. Jesus promised, *'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also'* (John 14:1-3).

My JOY is...

1. My salvation in Christ.
2. Not dependent on my circumstances, but on the Lord.
3. Knowing my Heavenly Father rejoices over me today.
4. The joy of the Lord within me through his Spirit.
5. My ongoing strength to face tomorrow with a...



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5. My ongoing strength to face tomorrow with a smile.

Our final hymn today is a modern setting of a familiar psalm, The Lord's my Shepherd. This version has a refrain, generally sung by men and then echoed by female voices, but if you are reading this at home you can sing whichever part you wish!

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me lie in pastures green.
he leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone, (I will trust, I will trust in you)
and I will trust in You alone, (I will trust, I will trust in you)
for your endless mercy follows me, (endless mercy follows me)
your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
and He anoints my head with oil,
and my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And I will trust in You alone, (I will trust, I will trust in you)

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
for You are with me, and Your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.

And I will trust in You alone, (I will trust, I will trust in you)

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

We share the Grace 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.

