



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on July 30th 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 service today is being led by Alec; Trevor, Kate and Judith are playing the music.

Trevor plays 'Jesus stand among us' as we wait for the service to begin

Alec welcomes everyone, saying we are a congregation from many nations today, including Nepal, Ukraine and Ireland. He then reads our Opening reading Psalm 27:1-6.

The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked advance against me to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.
Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.
One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.
For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.
Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

Our Opening song (shown on the screen) is based on these verses:

You are my anchor, my light and my salvation.
You are my refuge, my heart will not fear.
Though my foes surround me on every hand,
they will stumble and fall while in grace I stand.
In my day of trouble, You hide me and set me above
to sing this song of love:

**One thing I will ask of You, this will I pray:
to dwell in Your house, O Lord, every day
to gaze upon Your lovely face,
and rest in the Father's embrace.**

Teach me Your way, Lord, make straight the path before me.
Do not forsake me, my hope is in You.

As I walk through life, I am confident
I will see Your goodness with every step.
And my heart directs me to seek You in all that I do,
so I will wait for You.

One thing I will ask of You, this will I pray:...

Author:Stuart Townend CCLI Song # 3359231Copyright © 2001 Thankyou Music (Adm. by CapitolCMGPublishing.com excl. UK & Europe, adm. by Integrity Music, part of the David C Cook family, songs@integritymusic.com)CCL No 5664

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jORqgbn1AqI>

Tony shares our notices, no midweek activities are taking place at present; next Sunday will be a Communion service.

Our Prayers were led by Brenda, and were shown on the screen in order that all could join together in praying aloud. Brenda read the words in red (the lighter type) whilst all response with the words in black - darker print.

"Our prayers this morning are in a different form and are on the screen. I will read the words in red introducing the points of prayer. Then, if you would like to, please join me using the words in black, so we can all pray together. Let us pray."

Heavenly Father, as we first of all bring our praise and thanks before You, we think of the words of the song we have just sung - 'You are my anchor, my light and my salvation. You are my refuge, my heart will not fear.'

We give You praise and thank You that we can rely on You for the firm guidance and strength You give, and for Your comfort and peace as we go through life. Most of all, we thank You for Jesus and the way He died on the cross for our forgiveness.

Another week has gone by and many good things have happened to us and there have been times of rejoicing and smiling.

Thank you for good news, for meetings and other contacts with friends and family and for our food and home comforts. Thank you for books to read, interesting TV programmes and other hobbies and interests that we enjoy. Thank you for the rain and sunshine and the beauty of the world around and the amazing design of each living thing.

However there have been times when we have not worshipped You as we should, when we have made omissions and done or said the wrong things.

We ask, sincerely, that You will forgive us, Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, Your Son, and help us to do better in the future, as we trust in You.

We think of the nations of the world today and all that is happening in the cities, towns, villages and the countryside. There are many good things, but much loss and grief, as wars and persecution continue in some places. Fires rage, floods overwhelm and there is strife and pain in families and among neighbours and no way to pay the bills.

Lord God, we pray for those who are suffering at this time in so many ways, and for peaceful settlement of strife, help for those in distress, inspiration to combat climate change, and a turn to You and change in the hearts of many.

Our thoughts now go to the leaders and governments of nations, some who try to be upright and true, but some who are corrupt and cruel and self seeking.

We give thanks to You for the good and faithful ones and ask for a change in heart and a better vision for those who seek violence, persecution and destruction.

There are many leaders in other places, in towns, churches, schools, businesses and all sorts of groups.

Heavenly Father, we ask that wisdom, kindness and consideration be shown by all those who have responsibility for the welfare of others.

There are continued challenges in our Health Service as care is disrupted by strikes, and there are other workers asking for more pay and better conditions.

May there be guidance from You, Lord, to those trying to answer the problems and a way found to deal fairly with all these issues.

Many we know, some here today, are in special need at this time. Some are not well and have long term problems whilst also waiting for treatment, others are coping with bereavement and family problems. There are difficult decisions to make sometimes and problems to solve. We ask for Your presence with those in particular need at this time and who have challenges in all sorts of ways. Almighty God, our anchor, give comfort to the suffering, guidance where needed and confidence to rely on You while reaching out into the unknown.

This is a time of a break for some, and for most of our church activities during the school holidays. We can draw breath and think about what we are doing and plan for our future, at a time when our building is also being improved and decorated.

We thank You for this time of renewal and pray that as the weeks go by, You will continue to bring others here and show us how to bring more to You and to grow our church. We ask You to lead us forward with Your guiding presence.

There are many involved in the continuance of our worship, outreach and activities and much goes on behind the scenes planning and arranging.

Lord, we thank You for our Pastor and Leadership Team and all who help in whatever way they are able - managing the property and finance, in the kitchen, making music, caring for others and in many other ways. May all feel encouraged, appreciated and upheld and may we all help in doing this.

Lord we are here this morning to praise and pray to You, to hear from You and feel Your presence. We also want to spend time together and encourage each other.

Heavenly Father, we pray that Your presence will be with us and we will feel Your comfort and inspiration as we continue to worship and have fellowship together. May we be inspired to go into the coming week ready to do Your will. We ask all these prayers in the name of Jesus, Your Son and our Saviour. Amen.

Alec invited all to join in a time of praise and worship, as we sang 3 songs: accompanied by Trevor, Kate and Judith:

Who else commands all the hosts of heaven?
Who else could make every king bow down?
Who else can whisper and darkness trembles?
Only a Holy God.

What other beauty demands such praises?
What other splendour outshines the sun?
What other majesty rules with justice?
Only a Holy God.

**Come and behold Him, The One and the Only;
Cry out, sing holy, forever a Holy God;
Come and worship the Holy God.**

What other glory consumes like fire?
What other power can raise the dead?
What other name remains undefeated?
Only a Holy God.

Come and behold Him...

Who else could rescue me from my failing?
Who else would offer His only Son?
Who else invites me to call Him Father?
Only a Holy God.
Only my Holy God.

Come and behold Him....

Songwriters: Michael Farren / Rich Thompson / Dustin Smith / Jonny Robinson CCLI SONG # 7073332 Copyrights © 2016 CityAlight Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) Farren Love And War Publishing (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) Integrity's Alleluia! Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) CCL No 5664

Mine are days that God has numbered, I was made to walk with Him,
yet I look for worldly treasure and forsake the King of kings;
but mine is hope in my Redeemer, though I fall, His love is sure,
for Christ has paid for every failing, I am His forevermore.

Mine are tears in times of sorrow, darkness not yet understood,
through the valley I must travel, Where I see no earthly good;
but mine is peace that flows from heaven and the strength in times of need,
I know my pain will not be wasted, Christ completes his work in me.

Mine are days here as a stranger, pilgrim on a narrow way,
One with Christ I will encounter harm and hatred for His name;
but mine is armour for this battle, strong enough to last the war,
and He has said He will deliver safely to the golden shore.
And mine are keys to Zion city where beside the King I walk,
for there my heart has found its treasure, Christ is mine forevermore.

Come rejoice now, O my soul, for His love is my reward;
fear is gone and hope is sure, Christ is mine forevermore.

Come rejoice now, O my soul...

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

From heaven you came helpless babe, enter'd our world Your Glory veil'd;
not to be served but to serve and give Your life that we might live:

**This is our God, the Servant King - He calls us now to follow Him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the Servant King**

There in the garden of tears my heavy load He chose to bear,
His heart with sorrow was torn yet 'Not my will but Yours', He said.

This is our God, the Servant King....

Come see His hands and His feet - the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space to cruel nails surrendered.

This is our God, the Servant King...

So let us learn how to serve and in our lives enthrone Him;
each other's needs to prefer for it is Christ we're serving.

This is our God, the Servant King...

Author: Graham Kendrick CCLI SONG # 78897 Copyright ©1983 Makeway Music CCL no 5664

Shirley came forward to bring our Bible reading: Mark 4: 1-20

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered round him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 'Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.'

Then Jesus said, 'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.'

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, 'The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

Then Jesus said to them, 'Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop - some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.'

Alec than shared his Message: HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR

It is a remarkable event. An amazing opportunity to hear directly and personally from Jesus! There are just so many people there. And Jesus is not so legalistic, so tradition-bound, and so completely inflexible that he says, "I'm sorry, but this wasn't on my programme; you need to get the seats set up first and give me time

to change into my suit and tie; and by the way get the PA system and microphones sorted". No. He doesn't say that. He doesn't think that at all. He sees that the crowd gathered round him is so large and so longing to hear what he has to say that he gets into a boat and sits in it on the lake while all the people are along the shore at the water's edge. God seems to have everything under control, because he always does, and he has already completed the risk assessment and made more than adequate allowance for conforming to the Health and Safety regulations.

Then Jesus starts by saying LISTEN! For that is what it is all about. That is what our lives are all about. That is what "church" is all about. About listening to Jesus and obeying Him, Jesus our King. Be still and know that I am God. Listen to Jesus.

Well of course not everybody wants to listen to Jesus; not now and not then. People might listen to everybody else but not to him. They will be politically correct and possibly tolerate everybody else except for Jesus and his followers. In our modern world being inclusive sometimes seems to mean that you are allowed as a matter of course to exclude Jesus and His followers.

In Mark 3 we read: "Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from all over the place. Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him, for he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him." When Jesus speaks, people are healed. Where Jesus is, there is life.

"Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." (Mark 3:20-21).

This Jesus who speaks from a boat to the masses is viewed as a crackpot by his family. They thought he was out of his mind. They wanted to try and control him, to put him into their box to get him and keep him under their control. Do we attempt to do that with Jesus? This would be like keeping him safe in the box and not letting him interfere with the way we are running our lives. Is that what we try to do with Jesus? It's our life Jesus; please stay in the box. Please stay at a nicely and easily acceptable distance. I won't trouble you. Don't get in the way of my decisions.

Is that the way we think of Jesus? Is that the way we behave towards Jesus? Is that the way we treat Jesus?

The Jesus that the crowds want to hear is God with us. Yet the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

The religious authorities misrepresented, rejected and opposed the One who had been sent from God. What an almost unbelievable paradox. Do our churches today behave the same way? Do they play around with the Word of God interpreting it to mean what they want it to mean? The religious authorities misrepresented, rejected and opposed the One who had been sent from God Himself.

Maybe you ask yourselves then the question, why were the crowds gathered? Was it because of His miracles? Was it to be able to say they were there and had seen him? I think they were there because of their expectations of the kingdom of God. Is that why we are here this morning, because we have expectations of the kingdom of God?

After his water baptism by John, the Spirit came upon him and after John was put in prison Jesus went into Galilee: Galilee, that place in the north. A God-forsaken place we might think? But that is exactly, directly and purposefully the place to which Jesus is sent and goes. He goes proclaiming the good news of God. Just like we do? "The time has come" he said "The Kingdom of God is near. Turn from your wrong ways and believe the Gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

The people longed to be freed from political oppression; they longed for a never-ending kingdom and they thought Jesus would give them what they wanted. The disciples of Jesus picked up on this quickly and when Jesus went off very early one morning to a lonely place to pray to His Father they went looking for him. Eventually they found him and told him: "Wow! You have made a good start Jesus, this kingdom idea is catching on: Everyone is looking for you".

But Jesus said, "Let`s get out of here and go to some other villages and preach; for that is why I have come."

Is the Jesus we are looking for and wanting to hear about and hear from the real Jesus? Or is he a Jesus who's made in our image, according to our ideas, our thoughts, our precepts and our wishes?

You see when God made us He made us in the image of God. And when this image was scarred, he carried real scars in the body of Jesus to be able to remake us in His image; like the potter with the clay. So let us not dare to say we are followers of Jesus if we really want to do everything our own way. Let us not make God in our image according to what we want him to be or would like him to be.

Jesus says, "Listen." And he tells a story.

It has been 400 years since the last prophet said anything from God; and here is God Himself in the person of Jesus speaking in stories.

Maybe you think if Jesus had studied theology before he had ever preached he might have been able to do something better than just tell stories? But you see Jesus reveals the secrets of the kingdom in a veiled way, in a hidden way. Who Jesus is is not immediately obvious and those who don`t really want to know who he is will not find out; because only through faith, only through believing can anyone ever recognise who Jesus is; although of course the demons believe that there is one God and tremble, (James 4:19).

In Mark 4:12 Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. This operates like a kind of filter indicating a filtration system or a sifting out. Those who truly believe will understand who Jesus is and what He is saying. But those who are determined to remain in their unbelief will not get it at all.

The people of Isaiah`s day were incapable of comprehension, they were unable to understand. Why? Because they lived a long time ago? Because they were not well-educated? No; because they simply did not want to know, because their minds were set against the truth.

But God says through the same prophet Isaiah "so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11)

People today want to find in Jesus the one who will fulfil their needs as they understand their needs to be and their expectations fit in with those felt needs.

Jesus has come to give us life and life to the full and more life but to give us that, he had to die and be raised from the dead; and to receive this life we need to make a 180 degree about turn, to turn away from following our own goals and our own initiatives and doing things just the way we want to, and ask him to forgive us for ignoring him, for not following him, for disobeying him, for going our own way. And then if we ask something in the Name of Jesus according to His will we will receive it and our joy will be full.

You know if you stop believing in Jesus as Lord and Saviour and as King of your life, you don't believe in nothing; you believe in anything and everything. You probably tolerate everyone and everything except those whose mouths and whose lives speak so clearly of Jesus. Jesus is who he says he is. He can be trusted in whatever life situation we find ourselves.

The only way we come to God is through Jesus being revealed to us and through God's grace believing in Him. Not through being brought up in a Christian family or regularly attending church gatherings though these may indeed be a great blessing and a landmark in that direction. Faith is a gift of God, we don't have that in ourselves for we have naturally programmed our thinking and behaviour through our own choice not to follow God but to follow our own selfish and egoistic ideas. I think that God accepts our intellectual integrity but not our intellectual arrogance. Faith seeking understanding is the way to go. We believers didn't cut out our brains and stop thinking when we started walking by faith. Through faith we understand that God made the world. Through faith we understand that He is keeping track of what He has made and looking after it.

Now Jesus tells and uses a simple story to explain what really matters. He describes in the story what He Himself is doing. He asks questions and then answers them. The significant thing, the central point is God's Word, spoken and revealed. The main character in the parable is the farmer who sows the seed, the Word of God.

People are not flooding into our churches in this country. Not at the moment. They are not listening to these messages in their hundreds, not at the moment. They are not longing to get bibles into their hands, not at the moment. But they need to hear and to read the Word of God. Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, like he says to us if we are his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

Following the break-up of Soviet Russia, in the city of Khabarovsk, the largest city in the former Soviet Far East, 18 miles from the border with China, there was a church service at the close of which the pastor had invited the worshippers to go to the back of the church if they wished to be given a bible and they ran out of bibles because everybody had stayed to be able to receive the Word of God for themselves.

Last week I had a short video call with Pastor Satish in India. He needs 20 bibles for his church. He needs 200 dollars to be able to buy them.

Our church motto is on prayer. "Prayer is like the air that we breathe; wherever we are we pray." I think we are living like that. But we should not neglect our daily bread either. The Lord Jesus, the Word of God said "I am the Bread of Life".

Having a bible, reading a bible, searching the scriptures to understand the truth is basic nourishment for our spiritual lives. Without knowing the Word of God in our hearts we will not be able to stand in the evil day. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit.

After his baptism the Spirit of God came down on Jesus and he was then led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written, "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Jesus told the devil "No! For the Scriptures tell us that bread won't feed men's souls: obedience to every word of God is what we need." (TLB)

Jesus knew the Old Testament writings. He knew Deuteronomy 8:3 where it says:

"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." Deuteronomy 8:3

Do we know what it means to be humbled?

Do we know what it means to be humbled by God?

Do we know what it means to be humbled by God to the point that we really understand that we are not to live by bread alone but by the Word of God, that the Word of God is our daily bread?

Jesus is God spoken and shown to be who He is:

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (NIV)

“The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son”. (GNB)

God has verbalised His thoughts, He has spoken to us all we need to know. There is nothing missing, nothing unnecessary in the Word of God. We need the law, the history, the prophets, the psalms, the gospels, the acts and the letters-all of them. The entrance of God's Word brings light, shows us who we are, made in the image of God. Made with an inherent dignity. Psalm 8/Psalm 139.

The Word tells us that we are sinful; separated from God; that we made a one-sided mess out of the relationship with our Maker.

It tells us that God has intervened on behalf of a messed-up universe and sent His Son to die to take the penalty for our sins and to open the way for forgiveness and new life forevermore for those who turn away from wrong, turn back to God, believe and live in faith.

All this is written in the Bible. If we read the Bible and seek to hear the voice of God, He will speak to us and we will be enabled to understand what He is saying to us.

The Seed is the Word.

The soils are the reactions to the Word.

I wonder what our reaction is this morning.

Let us pray!

We joined together in singing our Closing hymn

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.

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We shared in a Closing prayer, finally saying 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.