



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on July 9th 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 Communion service today, which also includes Believers Baptism, is being led by Alec.

Alec gave a warm welcome to everyone, and read Psalm 100:

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Alec then invited all to join in our opening hymn - standing, seated, kneeling, however they felt led: (accompanied by Kate playing the piano, Paul W the double bass and Judith the flute)

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

**O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow;
no other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

For my pardon this I see: nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my cleansing this my plea: nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow

Nothing can for sin atone: nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Naught of good that I have done: nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow

This is all my hope and peace: nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my righteousness: nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow

Author: Robert Lowry CCLI Song # 21332 Copyrights, words and music Public Domain, Ccl No 5664

Our Notices for the week were shared by Tony, with our usual weekly activities taking place, together with a reminder that the next Church Members meeting was scheduled for Tuesday July 18th at 7.30pm. The deacons would appreciate any comments following on from last weeks update, and if there are any queries they are available to listen, answer or enlarge on any points of concern.

Alec led in **Breaking of bread**: (firstly sharing photos of the 3rd anniversary of Tiddlywinks! He issued an invitation to anyone to drop-in to see the group in action.)

He prayed, thanking God for his presence here today, and asking for forgiveness for those things we have done and should not have done, and have not done that we should have done.

Paul said: I share with you what I have received from the Lord, that on the night he was betrayed, Jesus broke bread and gave thanks.

Tony led in a prayer of thanksgiving for the bread and wine, representing Christ's body and blood shed of us on the cross at Calvary, so that we might be his friends and be together with him in paradise.

We joined together in singing the first 3 verses of our communion hymn:

Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away, slain for us: and we remember:
The promise made that all who come in faith find forgiveness at the cross.
**So we share in this Bread of life, and we drink of His sacrifice,
as a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.**

The body of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, torn for you: eat and remember
the wounds that heal, the death that brings us life, paid the price to make us one.
So we share in this Bread of Life....

The blood that cleanses every stain of sin, shed for you: drink and remember
he drained death's cup that all may enter in to receive the life of God.
So we share in this Bread of Life...

Alec continued: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had broken it said Take, eat, in remembrance of me. **Tony and Jane distributed the cups of bread and wine**, and we were invited to eat the bread as we received it, as a sign of our individual relationship to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When all had been served and after a time of silence, Alec continued: In the same way after supper, he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. Drink together as a symbol of our unity in the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After drinking together, we sang the 4th verse of the hymn:

And so with thankfulness and faith we rise to respond: and to remember
our call to follow in the steps of Christ as His body here on earth.

**As we share in His suffering, we proclaim: Christ will come again!
And we'll join in the feast of heaven around the table of the King.**

Authors: Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Stuart Townend CCLI SONG # 5003372 Copyright © 2007 Thankyou Music (Adm. by CapitolCM@Publishing.com excl. UK & Europe, adm. by Integrity Music, part of the David C Cook family, songs@integritymusic.com) CCL No 5664

Our Prayers were led by Becky:

Good morning, Heavenly Father.

As we are gathered together this morning we want to praise your holy name, we want to bend the knee and worship you. We want to give you thanks for all the blessings you have given to us this very week. We want to share your love with all the people who haven't yet come to

know you, and boast what a wonderful Father we do indeed have. We want them to feel the joy and happiness it gives to us to know that we are loved by you - you loved us so much that you sent down to earth your own precious son, so that we can have eternal life. How wonderful is that? Those among us who are parents know exactly how it is to love our own children. We would do anything to protect them and keep them from harm. You, heavenly Father, did just that to prove that love to us without doubt. We want to love you back with every fibre in our bodies, we want everyone to know how deep your love is for your children. There is no hardship to be given this love, just ask the Lord to come into your life and use you to lead others to him. Day by day you will be more blessed. You will be happier and never feel alone. God is my comfort when I am frightened or depressed or unsure of any situation. God is my teacher when I can't make a decision and 'ummm' and 'aaah' over everything. God is my rock always. I never feel foolish when I talk to him, I never feel insignificant. I am important to him just the way I am, warts and all. Oh heavenly Father it really is the best thing in the world to be loved by you. I am so lucky.

God created this world for us too, this absolutely amazing world with all the amazing wild life, flowers and beautiful trees. He created the moon and the sun, the four seasons, day from night. We have many nations, but we are all equal. He loves us all in equal measure, he has no favourites. It makes no difference if we are rich or poor, if we are skilled or unskilled, or the colour of our skin. That is how God treats us, but he does want one thing from us though, he wants us to love one another. To love in the same way that he loves us. As a mother of four children, I couldn't love one child of mine more than the other three. This is how God/Jesus feels, we are all equal in his sight. He loves us all the same. If we go to God hurting, he will comfort us. He will help us to get better. When we cry, he cries just the same we do, with our children. We are God's children and he wants to make us aware that we are loved wholly and absolutely. He loves us whether we come to church or not. He loves us just the same whether we sing his praises or pray, or if we don't. Just like us as though when our children put their arms round us and tell us they love us, it makes us so happy. When we worship God/Jesus and tell him we love him and need him in our lives it makes God very happy too.

How very fortunate we are that we can come to church and worship quite openly. We can read our bible anytime, anywhere, on a bus or train, in a cafe or sitting on a park bench. We can meet together as often as we like and discuss our bible and learn with each other. Let us try to please our Father even more by us learning to love another a little more. They say no people are the same, we all have differences, but we are all God's children.

Now more back to our own everyday life, we do need to all be consistent in our prayer life. We pray for peace among the nations, remembering Ukraine and Russia, and every wartorn country. Dear Father in heaven, please help these poor people. Please change these troubled terrorists ways of thinking. It is never too much to ask you. Let them realise how bloodshed and deaths is not the answer. We pray as well, Lord, for the needless killings and torturous happenings in surrounding cities. The youngsters all carrying knives again. Pointless, needless deaths. Heartbroken families that will never be the same again. Sickness and accidental deaths are hard enough to bear, but deliberate, sadistic revenge killings makes a loss a lot harder.

We bring people from our own church before you God. Please place your healing hand on all the people we know personally, who are struggling, please take their pain away, as only you can, help them to be able to bear their pain. Please help the families belonging to these people too. Give them courage and strength to help them say the right words of encouragement. We think of the late Don B and Joan A, who will be deeply missed. Please

give strength and the right knowledge to all the hospital staff, nurses and Doctors. Give them patience and understanding when they themselves are tired and strained. We also ask for leniency from wholesalers and business people not to abuse their rights to increase prices. Lots of families are desperately struggling with the rising cost of food and domestic bills at their highest peak, with some set to increase even more. Please let the shopkeepers play fair to the public and not take advantage as many are doing.

Once again I bring before you our church here at Blackburn Baptist, and our church leaders, Alec our Pastor and our leadership team. They all work so hard to keep us 'clued up". We pray for strength for them as they try to keep up with all they have to do on top of their own commitments and families. Help us to support them in any way we can.

In closing Lord, I ask you to bless each and every one of us present this morning. We all have problems of our own, some bigger than others, but a worry or concern nevertheless. Help us to pray and support each other. If anyone of us needs to share, help the person they confide in to be patient and understanding and ready to listen. A problem shared is a problem halved as the saying goes. You ask us to be your hands and feet, ears and eyes, and you will lead us. You wouldn't ask us if it were not so.

Thank you for listening Father God, please be with us all, prompting us all to know, what you would like us to do. I ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Today's Bible reading, Joel 2:12-17 was read by Jane

'Even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'

Rend your heart and not your garments.

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing - grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly.

Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.

Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the portico and the altar.

Let them say, 'Spare your people, Lord. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations.

Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?"

Alec then gave his Message "Return to me with all your heart"

Last week we concluded our service of worship with the song, "Come, now is the time to worship."

Even though he had unresolved questions and life was difficult Brian Doerksen was called by God to write that song. His challenges were being catapulted into a near bankruptcy situation and the diagnosis that his son had fragile X syndrome.

I am sure that we here today also have unresolved questions. We may have doubts about the purpose of our existence or about the meaning of our life on earth. Faced with the death of a loved one, or in the face of chronic pain and suffering, or confronted with continual conflicts in human relationships we may very probably have unresolved questions in our hearts. And of course I am also sure that there is definitely nobody here this morning whose life is not difficult. The challenges of obtaining much-

needed medical appointments, our struggles with the ongoing increases in the cost of living, our apparent inability to pay for adequate energy supplies for our homes; these and similar things are difficult and challenging for most of us most of the time.

Let's not deceive ourselves. Let's be honest with one another. We are all faced with unresolved questions of one kind or another and we are all finding life difficult in some ways if not in all ways. In these situations we do well to come to the Lord.

'Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart. Come, just as you are, to worship. Come, just as you are, before your God. Come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God. One day every knee will bow. But the greatest treasure, the greatest blessing, remains for those who gladly choose you now.'

Now is the time. Now is the time to choose. Now is where we are. In the prophecy of Joel Jane read even now is the time. The coming of the day of the Lord, that day when Jesus is coming again, needs and cries out for an urgent response. We are reminded of the initial message of Jesus Christ and of John the Baptist. They taught that the Kingdom of God was at hand and called the people to repent and believe.

What does repentance mean? It means God has opened our hearts to reveal who He is; a God of grace, mercy and compassion; a faithful and just God, a loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God who made us to live together in harmonious relationships with Him, with one another, within our environment and with ourselves. It means that the only true and living God has opened our eyes and ears and minds to see, to hear and to understand and grasp what He the living God is saying.

Don't rip your clothes to show your sorrow. Instead, turn back to me with broken hearts. I am merciful, kind, and caring. I don't easily lose my temper, and I don't like to punish.

Let your broken heart show your sorrow; tearing your clothes is not enough. Come back to the Lord your God. He is kind and full of mercy; he is patient and keeps his promise; he is always ready to forgive and not punish.

Mercy triumphs over judgement.

Change your life, not just your clothes.

But there's also this, it's not too late— God's personal Message! — "Come back to me and really mean it! Come fasting and weeping, sorry for your sins!"

Simply put repentance is making a 180 degree turn in the cul-de-sac of a one way street to hell. This seems to be negative but it isn't. It opens us up to knowing and believing that God who sent His only Son into the world to pay the penalty for the mess we have made of our lives accepts us and forgives us just as we are.

We are to turn back from, to turn away from living without reference to the only living God. We are to come to Him, to believe in Him, to worship Him- now.

But of course you may think and/or feel that there is no rush to turn your back on your own ways and ask for forgiveness and go God's way. You want to know what is involved in a decision like that.

So like Jesus said: "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'this person began to build and wasn't able to finish.' I think they call these kinds of constructions "Follies" which is literally what they are.

So when Warwick University built a new multi-storey campus carpark they got it all sorted except there were no ramps between the floors of the car park and vehicles were only able to park on the ground level.

Jesus also said like: "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, Jesus says, those of you who do not give up everything you have, cannot be my disciples."

So we must be aware of the costs of the decision we are taking if we repent and give our lives back to God in Jesus Christ and understand that if we choose to become disciples of Jesus it will mean giving up everything. If you are used to drinking yourself silly every day and night with your mates and you give your life to Jesus you might lose all your friends at one go. But Jesus will give you many new genuine good friends.

Our repentance and turning to the Lord are to be with absolute sincerity. It is our hearts and not our clothes which are to demonstrate our new direction of life. God looks on the heart. Let us be broken-hearted as we see maybe for the first time the mess we have made of our lives and let us turn from it to follow the Lord with genuine thanks for His grace and forgiveness. Turning away from our wrongs and the mess we have made of our lives will require from us a new obedience to God's commands and a consequently radical new life.

Outward changes in behaviour will be visible to all, but outward changes alone are not sufficient. We are to return to the Lord with all our heart. Now the Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language and I should say that in Hebrew the heart is not just the centre of our emotions. The heart stands for our whole personality and being. However our attitudes and behaviour have their roots in our intellect and thinking so the Apostle Paul calls in Romans 12:2 for "the renewal of your mind" as the basis, as the foundation for true transformation of life and personality.

He writes: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Joel's words warn us against the danger of half-hearted conversion, of half-hearted repentance and faith in believing. Are there any areas of our lives in which we are frightened of trusting God? Are we willing to do anything, anywhere for Him? We need to examine our lives to see if there is anything we are unwilling to hand over to the Lord. We could perhaps pray:

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

So point 1 we are to repent and believe now. Point 2 we are to weigh up the cost realising it will cost us everything to follow Jesus as Lord. And finally point 3.

Maybe you gave your life back to the Lord once a long time ago and you have drifted at times away from Him: Maybe even now you know in your heart of hearts that you are not really following Him closely. Jesus says to you this morning, "Return to me."

The prophet Joel uses an interesting picture. He talks of what we have lost through not following God as being what the locusts have eaten. He says God will now give those who turn back to Him with all their heart plenty to eat until they are full. They will have all they need. If we return to the Lord with all our heart we will have everything we need. But with what purpose does God do this? Clearly as it says in Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd; therefore I will lack no good thing. Oh yes, there is that purpose.

But there is so much more behind this. It is so that we will praise the Name of the Lord our God. It is so that we will praise the Name of the Lord our God who has worked wonders for us. It is so that we, His people will never more be ashamed. It is so that we will know that God is present with us, His people; it is so that we know that He is the Lord our God and that there is no-one else like Him.

So let us return to the Lord with all our heart; all of us. For this is not just for individuals, not even for all of us as individuals but it is for the Body of Christ; for we are God`s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do-together.

Repent, believe and be baptised.

Shown on the screen was a video: What we believe - (THE CREED), filmed in Kyiv

Our Father everlasting, the all creating One, God Almighty
through Your Holy Spirit conceiving Christ the Son, Jesus our Saviour.

**I believe in God our Father,
I believe in Christ the Son,
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
Our God is three in One.
I believe in the resurrection,
that we will rise again,
for I believe in the Name of Jesus,**

Our judge and our defender, suffered and crucified, forgiveness is in You;
descended into darkness, you rose in glorious life, forever seated high.

I believe in God our Father,....

I believe in You
I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord

I believe in God our Father....

I believe in life eternal,
I believe in the virgin birth,
I believe in the saints' communion,
and in Your holy Church.
I believe in the resurrection,
when Jesus comes again
for I believe in the Name of Jesus.

I believe in God our Father....

Authors: Ben Fielding, Matt Crocker CCLI SONG #7018338 Copyright:© 2014 Hillsong Music Publishing (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
CCL no 5664

At this point in the service, the Baptism of SHAY took place. Alec entered the water, and upon receiving an answer in the affirmative to the question he posed to Shay - do you wish to be baptised, duly baptised him by immersion. Both then left the pool, with Alec firstly issuing an invitation to baptise anyone who felt so called to respond right now. We continued with a time of **Praise and worship** as Shay and Alec left to change into dry clothes!

Kate, Paul and Judith played:

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy One, is here;
come bow before him now with reverence and fear.
In him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight our radiant king of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place:
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace -
no work too hard for him, in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

Author: David J. Evans CCLI Song # 120824 Copyrights © 1986 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd) CCL no 5664

We watched a video shown on the screen:

Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth
would care to know my name, would care to feel my hurt?
Who am I, that the Bright and Morning Star
would choose to light the way for my ever wandering heart?
Not because of who I am but because of what you've done;
not because of what I've done but because of who You are.

**I am a flower quickly fading, here today and gone tomorrow,
a wave tossed in the ocean, a vapour in the wind;
still you hear me when I'm calling, Lord, you catch me when I'm falling,
and you've told me who I am... I am yours, I am yours**

Who am I, that the eyes that see my sin
would look on me with love and watch me rise again?
Who am I, that the voice that calmed the sea
would call out through the rain and calm the storm in me?
Not because of who I am but because of what you've done;
not because of what I've done but because of who You are.

I am a flower quickly fading..

Whom shall I fear?
Whom shall I fear?
'Cause I am yours, I am yours.

Author: Mark Hall CCLI SONG # 4196651 COPYRIGHTS © 2003 Be Essential Songs (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC) My Refuge Music (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC) Who Am I Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Mgb Ltd., My Refuge Music, Be Essential Songs CCL No 5664

Alec prayed before we sang our final offering hymn, played by the worship group:

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty, hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore;
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,
be Thou still my Strength and Shield;
be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death and hell's Destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee;
I will ever give to Thee.

Authors: John Hughes, William Williams, Peter Williams CCLI Song #1448 Copyrights words and music Public domain CCLNo 5664

As we closed, we said together:

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.