



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on March 19th 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 is being led by Alec, with `Joy playing the piano and Paul W the double bass. Judith had intended to join them playing the flute, but instead was spending the time in Accident and Emergency with Joan, who had a fall the previous evening (She was later admitted)

As the service was not recorded, this is briefer than usual, containing the songs, reading, and message only, as shared by Alec.

The service began with a **Welcome & Introduction** from Alec, continuing with **Psalm 84**.

How lovely is your dwelling-place, Lord Almighty!

My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young - a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob.

Look on our shield, O God; look with favour on your anointed one.

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere;

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour;
no good thing does he withhold from those whose way of life is blameless.

Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Hymn:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

**This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.**

**This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.**

Perfect communion, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight.
Angels descending bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

This is my story, this is my song....

Perfect submission, all is at rest. I in my Saviour am happy and bless'd,
watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

This is my story, this is my song....

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Notices were then shared by Tony, before a time of Praise and worship - beginning with:

All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, alleluia!

Bright burning sun with golden beam, soft shining moon with silver gleam,

**O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

Swift rushing wind so wild and strong, white clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!

New rising dawn in praise rejoice, you lights of evening find a voice;

O praise him ...

Cool flowing water, pure and clear, make music for your Lord to hear,
Alleluia, alleluia!

Fierce fire so masterful and bright giving to us both warmth and light,

O praise him ...

People and nations, take your part, love and forgive with all your heart;
Alleluia, alleluia!

All who long pain and sorrow bear, trust God and cast on him your care;

O praise him ...

Let all things their creator bless and worship him in lowliness,
Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Spirit, Three-in-One,

O praise him ...

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And continuing:

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....

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And finally:

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.

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Hebrews 11, 32-40 was read by Jean W

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawn in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Alec shared his Message - Fear of Giants or Giants of Faith

We are looking today at the very familiar story of David and Goliath. Probably we all know the story? The writer to the Hebrews didn't have enough time or space to include it in the account that Jean read of giants of faith from Hebrews 11; I do not have time to tell about David he said. But we do this morning. David was truly a giant of faith. The whole of 1 Samuel 17 is filled with a vivid description of this actual real-life historically accurate event from which we can learn so much.

From an allegorical perspective this situation is like many with which we are confronted; apparently insurmountable circumstances which could cause us to despair. Constellations in our lives which take hold of our minds and our behaviour tying us down so to speak in one way or another; and then so many things become more difficult when we are faced for example with the giants of fear and anxiety; with the giant of comparing ourselves senselessly with others; with the giant of sleeplessness; with the giant of uncertainty; with things which seem to take control of our thoughts, that dominate our daily lives, that accompany us seemingly the whole time, that are so frustrating to us; endless medical challenges; difficult relationships; sins and illnesses from the power of which we may often appear hopeless to extricate ourselves; and quite honestly in our own strength we are.

But the longer you live, the longer we live in the Lord as His children with His Spirit living in our hearts, the better prepared we are, the more properly armed we are to tackle the next hurdle in front of us. We tackle the giants which are confronting us and take steps forward to defeat them.

But we need to learn how. It is not in our strength but in God's strength. The giant in today's story is not an allegorical giant but a real physical being.

Verse 1 says we are in a war whether we recognise it or not, whether we like it or not, whether we feel we might want to be involved in it or participate in it or take part in it or not we are in a war and as a church, that is to say as a body of believers, we have enemies in the spiritual realm.

When the Israelites under Saul saw what they were up against they were all without exception scared stiff, dismayed and terrified. For the Philistine Goliath, over 9 feet tall and fully equipped with seemingly impeccable armour and weaponry, was boasting about defying and destroying the whole of Israel; and when on one day he stepped out from the lines and shouted his usual defiant calls and the Israelites saw the man they all ran from him in great fear.

This last episode happened on the first occasion that David went to the war front. As the youngest son in a big family he spent his time normally looking after sheep at Bethlehem.

When David took food to his brothers on the front he heard the Philistine giant Goliath taunting God's people. Now just think carefully for a moment at how David reacted and responded; he didn't try and accommodate Goliath. He didn't say well I think we should tolerate what he is saying. He didn't think well we need to find some way of getting on with him. He didn't propose entering into a dialogue with him; he simply said, "Who is this who is defying the armies of the living God?"

But they laughed at him; for after all he was the youngest son of his father and just a simple shepherd boy; they scoffed at him; his oldest brother got really angry with him and said, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."(17:28)

Then in verse 29 David responds to his brothers and says, "Now what have I done? Can't I even speak?"

But David doesn't give up. He takes the same matter further. Because this is about the honour of the God of heaven; this is about the Name of the Lord being upheld; this is about

the Lord being glorified on the earth amongst men; it is about God's Will being done on earth as it is in heaven; you remember, "You shall have no other gods before me."

David was the only person who was in a position to defeat Goliath. He was known for his very close relationship with God. Do we have a relationship with God like that? God said he is a man after my own heart; can He say that of us?

David's concern was for the Glory of the Lord. His concern was for the Name of the Lord. He did not bother two hoots about his own name and reputation or what people thought about him. His eyes were on God alone in all the decisions he took and in the way he lived and fought the battle.

He had a completely different way of approaching the enemy. He did not accept what men offered to aid him. He knew He needed something else or rather someone else, God who can do all things, for without Him he could do nothing.

Of course he needed help from those whom God sent to Him to help him.

Of course God had trained him exactly, precisely, perfectly for the role he was now to carry out.

He remembered how God had led him and helped him before. Goliath the giant was not the first challenge he had faced.

God had brought him up and trained him in facing difficult challenges; God had showed him that His strength was not in himself but in the Lord and that is precisely what he told Saul as we see from verse 32. He says: "Let no one lose heart on account of the Philistine, your servant will go and fight him."

David did not allow himself to be diverted from looking at God. He had been prepared by God for this time, for this fight, for this challenge. God called him and he was ready.

He did not allow himself to be distracted by others' unawareness of what was going on in the situation. He knew it was about a challenge to God's honour and glory; David knew this was a direct attack on the name of the living God by a non-believer. He knew that only through dependence on God's leading and guiding that he had come this far and he was absolutely certain that God had prepared him to face Goliath through the experiences God had led him through. So now he got on with it. He faced up to Goliath in the name of God and in His power and might and nothing would be able to stop God's amazing triumph, his complete victory.

God is building His church; and the gates of hell cannot and will not prevail against it. David sees something or rather someone that remains hidden from the minds and hearts of others. He doesn't just look at the giant. He sees the spiritual reality in and behind the situation.

He knows where his strength lies, so he rejects the offer of the king's best armoury; he turned it down as he was not used to it.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, a church that had gone through many bad patches with all the scars that that brings, and he writes:

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that

sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Day in, day out Goliath mocked the living God. For forty days every morning and evening he came forward and took his stand.

Apart from David, amongst the people of God, amongst the Israelites, nobody mentioned even the name of the living God. The soldiers and even David’s brothers did not mention God. It was as if they could see only the apparently indestructible giant.

In this bible passage David refers to God 8 times. He refers to the giant only twice. Even Saul is convinced by David’s faith. Saul says: “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

When we are confronted with our giant what do we do; do we focus on the giant? Or do we focus on God? Do we focus on the giant of unbelief in Blackburn; the giant of false gods in Blackburn; the giant of idol worship of all sorts in Blackburn and compromise and accommodate and tolerate what God teaches us in His Word that we are clearly not to tolerate? Do we focus on the giant? Or do we focus on God? Do we speak or remain quiet or behave for our own sake, in our own interest and for our own protection, which in any case is a futile endeavour with no hope of eternal success, or do we focus our eyes, hearts and minds on the living God?

If we look at the giant we will begin to falter and will be destroyed. If we look to God, the giant will be eliminated, the giant will be destroyed; the one who has no power over us when we look to the Lord will be completely powerless faced with our faith in the living God for there is nothing that our God cannot do.

The longer we wait before we act, the more we look at the opposition and the size of the task the bigger and more difficult and more unmanageable the task appears to be.

David did not wait unnecessarily to do what God had called him to do; and neither in God’s grace am I. He looked to the Lord not at the task. He looked at and lived in the power of God and did not fear the enemy.

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40, 31)

Our enemy wants to create fear and anxiety in our hearts and lives, he wants to create uncertainty and chaos in our thinking, he wants to hurt us and destroy us. He tried to destroy our church. But He has no chance of doing that. But Jesus says: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

Who is your Lord this morning? Who or what are you looking at this morning? At the enemy or at God who gives life in abundance.

Jesus said:” A thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I came so that my sheep will have life and so that they will have everything they need.”

There is one very short final point; just two sentences.

Goliath was not the last enemy that had to be defeated. In 2 Samuel 21:22 we read of four further giants that fell at the hands of David and his men.

Let us be encouraged. Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith and not at the giant.

Prayers led by Jane

To begin with, **A Presence Prayer** from Tearfund's Lent Devotional. Please respond with the words in bold.

God of all,

As the dawn colours the sky, and the birds call forth the new day

– **Open my heart to your presence.**

As I go about my daily routine; as I eat, drink, work and play

– **Open my heart to your presence.**

As I walk among the beauty of your world; as I take in its wonders

– **Open my heart to your presence.**

As the clouds of grief, sorrow and worry surround me

– **Open my heart to your presence.**

As I face doubt, uncertainty and the shaking of my beliefs

– **Open my heart to your presence.**

As the sun lowers, darkness falls, and I lay down my head to sleep

– **Open my heart to your presence. Amen**

Heavenly, Father, we thank you that you are indeed with us every moment of every day; you know our thoughts, our feelings and our actions and yet, so often, we fail to consider you in all that we do. We are sorry, Lord. By your Spirit, help us to become more aware of your presence with us, being alert to your prompting to say or do what is in your will for us. Protect us, dear Lord, from the things that would distract us or seek to lead us away from your truth and holiness that we see demonstrated perfectly in Jesus. Help us to be more like Him. We are truly amazed that you would want to be our closest of friends, to share our daily lives with each one of us. We praise you, our Lord and our King!

Today we pray for all those in authority, in the UK and across the world, for those with the power to be harsh or merciful, to oppress or release, to be greedy for themselves or generous to their people. Father, touch all leaders by your Spirit that they may know the truth that lies in Jesus and that it may set them free. We pray not only for politicians, national and local, but also for managers, employers, the police, teachers, for anyone who has authority over another, that they, and we, may always see ourselves as servants, not masters.

We pray for all church leaders in all denominations at this time when the world seeks to impose its values on the church and make it in its own image instead of Christ's. May they be strengthened to maintain and stand up for the truths of the Bible. As they come together before you, renew them by your Holy Spirit that they may lead their churches in ways that reflect God's glory and His love and care for His creation and all people. We pray for your renewing Spirit to come upon us and dwell with us here too Lord, as we continue to seek your way forward for Blackburn Baptist Church;

enable us all to hear what You are saying to us as your body in this place as we meet and share together. We pray especially for our Members' Meeting this afternoon for your leading and our willingness to follow.

Father, once more we bring to you the needs of those who suffer in your name: those who have to hide their faith because of extreme persecution, where even their lives may be in danger. So uphold them and comfort them, placing your loving arms around them that their faith may be strengthened and your power and glory may be displayed in their lives. We pray for those serving you overseas, especially Brian and Jackie as they complete their last few months in Chad, that the work they are doing may have long-lasting benefits for the hospital there.

We continue to pray also for our friends here at home who are suffering pain and distress from ongoing health issues. We pray for Sheila after her accident. Please bring your comfort and healing to them all. We thank You for those who have recently received long-awaited treatment and pray that You would continue their recovery. Finally, Lord, we pray for your protective shield to be continually around our church family and this area, that your work may not be hindered in this place, for Your praise and glory. Amen

And we closed as we sang our Offertory Hymn:

Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee: 'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee: 'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
and see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

Then sings my soul....

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Then sings my soul....

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart;
then I shall bow, in humble adoration
and then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul...

Songwriter: Stuart Hine CCLI SONG # 14181 How Great Thou Art lyrics © 1949 Sony/atv Tree Publishing, Universal Music Publishing, I Am They Publishing, Manna Music Inc CCL no 5664

We said together the words of The Grace:

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.

