



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Sunday March 21st 2021 at 10:45.**

The current lockdown restrictions have resulted in the decision to not meet in person at Bethesda Chapel at present. We plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, but will still continue to provide this written service sheet. 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, wherever we are.

**Alec welcomes us.**

**"Good morning everybody. Welcome to the online presentation for Blackburn Baptist Church for the 21st of March 2021. This presentation is coming from the Black Forest in the south of Germany. Let's start straight away."**

**We can join together in singing or reading a hymn familiar to many of us, At the name of Jesus, played on the recording today with an organ accompaniment.**

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,  
every tongue confess him King of Glory now;  
'tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,  
who from the beginning was the mighty word.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name  
from the lips of sinners unto whom he came;  
faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,  
brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,  
through all ranks of creatures to the central height;  
to the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast,  
filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue  
all that is not holy, all that is not true;  
crown him as your captain in temptation's hour,  
let his will enfold you in its light and power.

Surely this Lord Jesus shall return again,  
with his father's glory, with his angel train.  
For all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,  
and our hearts confess him King of Glory now.

## **Alec reads for us, Luke 5, 27-39**

### **Jesus Calls Levi and Eats With Sinners**

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

### **Jesus Questioned About Fasting**

They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking."

Jesus answered, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.'"

**We can share in song again, written more recently: "What a beautiful name", sung by Hillsong who are based in Australia.**

You were the Word at the beginning, one with God the Lord Most High,  
your hidden glory in creation now revealed in you our Christ.

What a beautiful name it is, what a beautiful name it is,  
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a beautiful name it is, nothing compares to this,  
what a beautiful name it is, the name of Jesus.

You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, you brought heaven down.  
My sin was great, your love was greater, what could separate us now?

What a wonderful name it is, what a wonderful name it is,  
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a wonderful name it is, nothing compares to this,  
what a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus.

Death could not hold you, the veil tore before you,  
you silenced the boast of sin and grave.

The heavens are roaring the praise of your glory,  
for you are raised to life again.

You have no rival, you have no equal, now and forever, God you reign.

Yours is the kingdom, yours is the glory,  
yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is, what a powerful name it is,  
the name of Jesus Christ my King.  
What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against;  
what a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus.  
What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus,  
What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus.

What A Beautiful Name lyrics © Hillsong Publishing, So Essential Tunes, All Essential Music, Be Essential Songs, Hillsong Music Publishing Australia  
CCL No 5664

### **Alec now shares his message. "I am who I am"**

What does your Jesus look like?

Who is this Jesus? What is your Jesus interested in?

What does he think is important? What really matters to him?

What counts with Jesus as you understand him?

What Jesus is really saying here to us today in this passage is „I am different. Different from everyone else, different from who you think I am.“

What do I mean?

Jesus' approach to people was a different way of doing things, and his approach to traditional ideas of true religion was equally different.

Let's look at how Jesus approached a guy called Levi and how he got on with him. „He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.“ Luke 5:27-28

This is Jesus' principle for discipleship.

Discipleship means that Jesus must be the number one priority in an individual's life. Not just when we feel like it but always. That is what sets us free to live and avoid being bound by the powers of evil. As Sangster said, if Jesus Christ is not Lord of all He is not Lord at all.

But I can hear you thinking Lord, why did you pick out Levi? He was a tax collector. You know they made themselves idolaters by co-operating with the Romans and so implicitly accepted Caesar's claim to Lordship, they betrayed their people by working for the Romans and they could and would sell whole families into slavery in order to meet their demands. On top of that the tax collectors were dishonest.

Lord why did you go to this outcast of a man called Levi?

That is not only a very good question, it is a very important question for us today living in Blackburn.

Should we really get close to those who by some might be considered socially objectionable or undesirable, to people like the tax collectors and so-called „sinners“ of Luke's gospel? To those

involved in prostitution, modern slavery and drug dealing, to those sleeping on the streets, to the unemployed? To those who simply don't fit our concept of pure living, our thoughts of true religion?

Jesus accepted all individuals as valuable, as people of worth. Is it our understanding that it is not part of a call of discipleship to be isolated from so-called sinners?

Luke presents Jesus as a friend of sinners, as a friend of outcasts, and as a friend of the oppressed.

Jesus views people in terms of what God could make them into, rather than pigeonholing them into who they currently are.

There is a very striking quotation in Origen's „Against Celsus“ 3.59f where Celsus criticises the religious gatherings of Christians because they “invite anyone who is a sinner, or foolish, or simple-minded. In short, any unfortunate will be accepted in the kingdom of God.” Origen wrote in the year AD 248.

Would Celsus have written that of our church? I hope so!

Levi wishes to celebrate his calling by introducing Jesus to his friends. Such is often the case with recent converts to Jesus, isn't it. Relatives, friends and neighbours are often the first to hear about the new discovery which is really great. The tragedy is that after people have been in a church fellowship for some time, they may find it hard to relate to outsiders. Jesus does not suffer from this problem; he consciously makes an effort to associate with those outside his community. He does not run or hide from the world in need, but engages with it realistically so its real needs can be addressed. Often what wins an outsider to the living God, maybe especially those connected with other religions, is a genuine friendship. Despite Levi's low social status, he feels free to associate with Jesus. Jesus' invitation has made that clear.

„And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.“ Luke 5:29

This story in Luke 5:27 –32 is paralleled in Matthew (9:9-13) and Mark (2:13 –17).

Table fellowship in the ancient world meant mutual acceptance. Eating together means being together, talking together, sharing together, laughing together, crying together.

Jesus has transgressed the social boundaries. His willingness to share with the “outsiders” of society is the visible expression of the new age he was ushering in through his death on the cross.

Jesus introduces a complete reversal of human judgment, even or especially of religious judgment. It's turned upside down on its head. This story of the banquet at Levi's house is a clear expression of just such a reversal.

Jesus does not merely forgive sinners, he openly associates with them.

In the Kingdom of God those in a desperate situation will get the attention they need. They will not be excluded. They will be included in our fellowship. They will see and hear of the Lord Jesus. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom that challenges social norms, distinctives and exclusions. God does not play by our rules.

A contrasting attitude to the Kingdom though emerges in the grumbling among Jewish leaders. Their commitment to purity, their sense of what God requires of them and their fear of risking exposure to the world cause them to reject outsiders and to criticise those who try to relate in a healthy and engaging way with them.

The ancient practice of fasting had a rich heritage in Judaism. It was a highly regarded act of worship. The Day of Atonement was celebrated with a fast (Lev 16:29, 31). A four-day fast commemorated the fall of Jerusalem (Zech 7:3, 5; 8:19). Fasts could be acts of penitence (1 Kings 21:27; Joel 1:14; Is 58:1-9) or could be associated with mourning (Esther 4:3). The Pharisees fasted twice a week, on Monday and Thursday. Fasts are serious expressions of worship.

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick (do). I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:30-32

The Pharisees, the strict religious party of Judaism, began to see that the dynamic word of the new Rabbi was not saying quite what they would like it to say.

„Israel, who followed a law that would lead to righteousness, did not succeed in reaching the goals of that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. Romans 9:31-32

In Luke 19:10 we read: „For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 we read also: “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.”

Then Jesus makes reference to an example which shows where the real cure comes from. This must have especially spoken to our writer Luke who as we know was a medic.

The “healthy” are the self-righteous, referring to the Pharisees who cannot see their condition, while the “sick” are the sinners who recognise their condition and their need for help.

Jesus’ point is that we are all sinners; some recognise it while others do not.

But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matthew 9:12-13

Do we see that our concepts of, our understanding of, our thinking about, our expectations of who God is and what He does are maybe different from what the Bible teaches us in and through Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible God.

As we read in Hosea 6:6: „For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”

Or in Luke 15:7: „Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Or again in Psalm 40:6-8: „You do not want sacrifices and offerings; you do not ask for animals burned whole on the altar or for sacrifices to take away sins.

Instead, you have given me ears to hear you, and so I answered, “Here I am; your instructions for me are in the book of the Law. How I love to do your will, my God! I keep your teaching in my heart.”

Tax collectors and outcasts are not the only people with whom Jesus shares meals in Luke’s gospel. However, in the three instances where Jesus goes to the home of a Pharisee (7:36ff, 11:37ff, and 14:1ff), controversy arises. Pharisees were highly respected by the common people of Jesus’ day although they were neither amongst the wealthiest people then nor a part of the priestly aristocracy. They were seen as the most committed to serving God, their devotion to which was expressed through the study and observance of the Torah and by maintaining purity in all matters. Of particular concern to them were the interpretations of the law that guided them in regards to food and meals, and, thus, they maintained a separation from others and ate only with those who, like them, observed the laws of purity. No doubt it is their practice, their popularity, and the presence of an ever-increasingly popular Jesus (note Luke’s constant acknowledgement of such in chapter 4:15, 22, 32, 36-37, 40 and 42) that gave rise to their complaints about Jesus’ (and his disciples’) practice of eating with such “sinners” (for Luke this term is first used by the Pharisees in their question—see vs. 30).

But why? Why does Jesus associate with sinners when so many righteous people do not want to have anything to do with them? Many people think one must choose absolute separation if one is to remain pure, but for Jesus this is a false choice. There is no compromise with holiness in his relationships with sinners, because one of the very characteristics of God's holiness is the way he reaches out in mercy to those in need (1:46-53). God graciously takes the sinner who is responsive to him and begins the work of transformation.

Jesus' reply makes it clear that recovery, not quarantine, is the message of his ministry. Jesus pictures himself as a doctor who treats the sick, not the strong. Jesus' point is that those who know they need help will respond to the Physician. Often the unrighteous are aware of their need, whereas the unrighteous "righteous" are not. The unrighteous need a breath of potential acceptance and a trace, an aroma of God's grace to open up to his work.

Jesus' second point is a mission statement that explains why he seeks the outsider. This is one of several such mission statements in Luke (7:34; 12:49, 51; 18:8; 19:10). Jesus has come to minister to those who have need of repentance. He calls to them to repent. Repentance is a major Lukan theme, and only Luke mentions it in this scene (3:3, 8; 13:1-5; 15:7-10; 16:30; 17:3-4; 24:47). Here Jesus offers a picture of true repentance: it is like going to a doctor for help. The "cure," if it is to come, must come from outside of oneself. A repentant heart is open to God and to his administering the necessary medicine for life. God graciously gives this medicine to those who seek forgiveness through him. Jesus sees opportunity for restoration for sinners and works to achieve relationship with them so they can experience the healing they need. When tax collectors and sinners come to the table in the clinic, Jesus, the Great Physician, is not about to turn them away. As in the other events written down in Luke 4:31—5:32, Jesus reaches out to all types.

But let’s be honest with ourselves here. We, like all people, have trouble accepting those who are different. When someone marches to the beat of a different drum, to a different time signature, in a

different key and with different and maybe varying rhythms we feel forced to ask questions about them and ourselves. Jesus' outreach to sinners was a different way of doing things, and so was his approach to traditional customs of piety and religion.

Finally the Pharisees have plucked up enough courage to ask why Jesus' disciples do things differently. Of course, they are really asking about Jesus. He is their major concern. When it comes to ascetic practices like fasting, Jesus is not like the Pharisees, or even like his forerunner John the Baptist. So Jesus' meal with sinners is not the only thing that bothers the leadership. He hangs out with outsiders and he does not follow the usual practices of piety and religion. Why is that?

Specifically, they ask him about fasting and prayer.

Jesus' reply not only explains why his community does not engage in such practice but makes an additional point about what his presence represents. Jesus' simple answer is that now is the time not for fasting but for celebration. He compares himself to a bridegroom at the time of his wedding. His presence marks the beginning of a new era. You do not fast at a wedding!

The marital imagery pictures God's relationship to his people in the Old Testament and in later Judaism (Is 54:5-6; 62:4-5; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16; Hos 2:14-23; 4 Ezra 2:15-41). But nowhere in Judaism do we have the image of the Messiah as bridegroom.

The New Testament uses this imagery often (Mt 22:2, 25:1; Lk 12:35-36; Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7; 21:2). Jesus is saying that the present is a special time to celebrate the arrival of a new point in God's plan. Later, when the bridegroom is removed (4 Ezra 10:1-4), there will be time to fast. This reference to removal is Jesus' first hint that rejection will come. Then there will be need for reflection and fasting. People will long for the ultimate redemption that the bridegroom's initial arrival promised (Rom 8:17-30; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Rev). Jesus does not regulate or legislate fasting. He says simply that it will become appropriate again.

But Jesus does not stop there. He drives home the point that his presence represents something new in God's plan, calling for a new way of ordering the spiritual life. Luke 5:36-39 shows us three pictures, which Luke calls parables, to make the point.

Jesus is like a new piece of cloth. No seamstress worth her salt would take a new piece of cloth and patch it onto an old garment. Such a match produces two problems. The new cloth will tear the old, and the pieces of material will not match. There is a paradox, there is irony here: the patch that is supposed to fix the garment would end up ruining both. This new era Jesus brings simply cannot be wed to the old practices. It is new and requires new ways.

There will be some who are prepared to take bits and pieces of his new message and to stitch them into the fabric of their own old ideas where that has become threadbare. But Jesus says His Word is meant as a total replacement, not as a source of useful patches. Do we really believe that? Or are we trying to patch up our lives and our relationship with Jesus with our selection of what we like from His Word? That will never work; that will never be effective. Our life of faith is an all or nothing faith. Either we follow God's Word or we don't with all the consequences in each case.

The second picture involves wine and wineskins. In the first century, wineskins would have been made of goatskin or sheepskin taken from the neck area of the animal (Gen 21:14-15; 19; Ps 119:83). Again, the result of putting new wine into old skins would be disaster, a tragic waste of

wine. The new wine would ferment and cause the old wineskins to burst—the new wine would then be lost and the wineskin rendered useless.

There are those who want not some of the old and some of the new, but ALL of the new, provided they can keep the old as well. That however simply will not work.

There can be no syncretism, no mixing, between what Jesus brings and the old tradition of Judaism. If it were tried, both would be destroyed. Jesus brings a new era and a fresh approach to God that cannot be mixed with the old traditions. In many ways the book of Acts is the historical outworking of this point. The gospel is a new way, so the practices of Judaism cannot contain it. This is why Luke will later call Jesus a prophet like Moses (Lk 9:35; Acts 3:12-26; see Deut 18:15). Jesus, like Moses, is the leader-prophet of a freshly formed community of God, revealing the new ways the new movement requires.

So new wine must be poured into new wineskins. Jesus' presence requires a new way, new forms and a new spirit. Even when fasting continues after the bridegroom is gone, it will be different. It will always be done in hope of his return.

There will be others of course who are not even prepared to taste the new wine. The prejudiced person will not even try the new or admit that it might have any merits. He will not bother to compare the two, because the old is good enough. That is a clear refusal to accept the very possibility of change.

Jesus knows that some, especially among the Pharisees, will not come to him, because they are satisfied with the wine they have. Nothing will change their mind. Rejection by some is inevitable. Jesus' presence means a choice between him and the old style of Judaism. With Jesus' presence things are different. To mark the difference, Jesus does not fast. New times require fresh ways.

Jesus does not specify here exactly what makes his way new. The association with practices of eating and fasting suggests that piety motivated by law and tradition may well be in view. The new dynamic Jesus brings will rely on the Spirit of God (Acts 10:34-43; 15:1-21). Things done merely for the sake of tradition will not be persuasive anymore. Jesus' new way brings freshness and a dynamic, responsive quality to our walk with God.

Our message is titled „I am that I am“. Not „I was“ or „I might be“ or „I may get to it“ but „I am that I am“.

If we have asked God in Jesus Christ for forgiveness for the mess we have made in our lives, if we have given our lives back to our Creator, if we recognise Jesus as Lord of our lives, if we have become and are His disciples then we will realise who Jesus is; that He is different from what we had previously thought and expected Him to be. That He is in control, always has been and always will be.

He is alive. He is who He says is. He lives in me and in you. Let us live daily in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Amen.

**We can listen, sing or read the words of a song written by a group of songwriters including Chris Tomlin and Matt Redman, who have also written a**



**number of other songs we have been singing or listening to over the last months. It begins quietly and slowly, then builds in volume and with increased percussion.**

The name of Jesus is a refuge,  
a shelter from the storm, a help to those who call;  
the name of Jesus is a fortress,  
a saving place to run, a hope unshakeable.

When we fall you are the Saviour, when we call you are the answer,  
there is power in your name, there is power in your name.

In the name of Jesus there is life and healing,  
chains are broken in your name.  
Every knee will bow down and our hearts will cry out  
songs of freedom in your name, oh, in your name.

Bring salvation, bring your kingdom,  
let all that you have made bring glory to your name.  
When we fall you are the Saviour, when we call you are the answer,  
there is power in your name, there is power in your name.

Songwriters: Chris Tomlin / Daniel Carson / Ed Cash / Jesse Reeves / Kristian Stanfill / Matt Redman  
The Name of Jesus lyrics © Music Services, Inc  
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### **Victor leads our prayers today:**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of grace you have given us in your Son, Christ Jesus, we are grateful for he is our freedom, and there is no more for heaven to give, our joy, our righteousness, our steadfast love, our deep and boundless peace. We thank you, Lord, that throughout the darkest nights of the pandemic up until this moment, you never forsake or left our side.

Lord Jesus, we humbly ask of you to forgive our trespasses this day, we pray that we exhibit divine forgiveness even for those who trespass against us. We pray Oh Lord, for daily renewal of our mind as encouraged in your word, and we ask Lord that you shall strengthen the frail among us, for those that are awaiting hospital appointment that it shall be hastened and that the long life which you have promised shall be our lot.

We pray for our community Lord, although the virus seems to be curtailed by the wonderful and efficient process of the vaccination program, we ask Lord Jesus, that you continue to protect us against the arrow that flies by night and the noisome pestilence that goes around in the daytime.

Our Father and our God, we pray for Her Majesty the Queen and Her husband, that you continue to satisfy them with good health and foster the royal family with divine unity, particularly at this time, we pray for the United Kingdom at large and the cabinet, we pray

that your divine wisdom will be displayed with the way situations are been handled throughout this soon-to-end pandemic.

We give glory to you Lord for as we are going into this week your presence shall go with us, we thank you that your right hand shall be our shield and buckler and that by the end of this week, your goodness and mercy will abound with us now, then and forever, in Jesus name, we have prayed. Amen!

**As we bring our time together to a close, we can read the words to another song, Casting Crowns singing Who am I.**

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.

Who Am I lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Mgb Ltd., My Refuge Music, Be Essential Songs  
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**Alec shares some closing words, and leads us in the Grace**

"Hello again. We've almost come to the end of our online presentation from Blackburn Baptist church for today. I hope you've been challenged, I hope you've been excited, encouraged and informed by sharing together with us. If you have any questions or comments you would like to make, please refer to our homepage or make the comments on our YouTube channel.

After the Grace which I'm going to share with us in a minute, there are 2 bonus songs for today. They are both the same song, in 2 different languages, in English and in Polish. I hope you enjoy listening to them and passing them on to your friends as well. Let's share in 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."**

**Now for the bonus song, sung first in English and then in Polish, "Jesus' blood"**

You left Heavens praise for the sake of us,  
offered up your will, for the joy to come.  
You embraced the cross, taking all it's pain  
so I could walk away, free and unashamed.

I owe my life to you my Saviour,  
I owe it all to you alone,  
your sacrifice has won my freedom,  
I was born by Jesus' blood.

Risen from the grave, seated now on high,  
over all you reign, all power in your hand;  
Eternity will sing of your holy name,  
King of all the earth, in majesty to come.

I owe my life, to you my Saviour....

When at last I stand before the throne of grace,  
wonder fills my heart, your majesty reveals;  
I will bow my knee, joy with angels' song.  
Worthy is the lamb, all praise to You alone.

I owe my life to you my Saviour....

Jesus' Blood lyrics © Life Worship  
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My apologies if any of you were hoping to be able to access the YouTube links to the songs played on Sunday. They can be found on our YouTube channel, or via our website. I generally include them but have not been able to copy them this week! You can of course sing or hum along to any tune you wish, and especially if the words are new to you, you can let your creativity and musicality have free reign!