



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on March 26th 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, with Trevor playing the piano, Paul W the double bass and Judith the flute.

**Alec begins with a Welcome & Introduction to everyone, whether here in Blackburn or watching on the internet.** Alec shared that the services have been seen in India, by Pastor Satesh Kumar who has felt led to ask Alec to work with him for a week, being a keynote speaker for a Pastors conference and Bible meetings. Alec then played a short video showing some of the work done and meetings held by Pastor Satesh, and asked for prayer that he would respond as God willed. Lasting two minutes, Alec played it twice.

**Alec then read**

**Psalm 43**

Vindicate me, my God, and plead my cause against an unfaithful nation.

Rescue me from those who are deceitful and wicked.

You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me?

Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?

Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me;

let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.

**Alec led in an Opening prayer:** God in Heaven, our Heavenly Father, we have come here today to meet with you and with one another, with all those who love you as their Lord and Saviour, to praise you, to worship you, to adore you, for who you are, for you are King of Kings, you are God of course, you are Lord of Lords, there is no-one in heaven like you. And we've come here to praise you for all you've done for us, in making us and sustaining each day, in building us up, in bringing us to a knowledge of you, a knowledge of Jesus Christ through your grace and through your mercy. And so we pray humbly, in your presence here that you would open each of our hearts and minds to hear what you are saying and to be willing to follow it. For we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and for his sake. Amen

**Alec invited those who wished to stand for our Opening hymn:**

Man of Sorrows! what a name for the Son of God, who came

ruined sinners to reclaim:

Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood,

sealed my pardon with his blood:  
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Guilty, vile, and helpless, we; spotless Lamb of God was he;  
full atonement! can it be?  
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Lifted up was he to die, "It is finished!" was his cry:  
now in heav'n exalted high:  
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

When he comes, our glorious King, all his ransomed home to bring,  
then anew this song we'll sing:  
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

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**Alec shared our Notices, including showing our new prayer cards.**

**We then began what Aled described as a block of Praise and worship, beginning with:**

And can it be that I should gain  
an interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain,  
for me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?  
    Amazing love! How can it be  
    that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

"Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
to sound the depths of love divine!  
"Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
let angel minds inquire no more.  
    "Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
    let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above  
so free, so infinite His grace,  
emptied Himself of all but love  
and bled for Adam's helpless race.  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free  
for O my God, it found out me!  
    'Tis mercy all, immense and free  
    for O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
fast bound in sin and nature's night,  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.

My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread,  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
and clothed in righteousness divine.  
Bold I approach the eternal throne  
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.  
Bold I approach the eternal throne  
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Authors: Charles Wesley. Thomas Campbell CCLI SONG # 25280 Words and Music Public Domain CCL no 5664 "And can it be" (5 verses)

**We then joined in a quieter, more reflective and contemplative song, shown on the screen:**

I cast my mind to Calvary, where Jesus bled and died for me;  
I see His wounds, His hands, His feet, my Saviour on that cursed tree.

His body bound and drenched in tears, they laid Him down in Joseph's tomb.  
The entrance sealed by heavy stone, Messiah still and all alone.

**O praise the Name of the Lord our God,  
O praise His Name forevermore.  
For endless days we will sing Your praise  
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God.**

Then on the third at break of dawn the Son of heaven rose again!  
O trampled death where is your sting? The angels roar for Christ the King!  
**O praise the Name of the Lord our God...**

He shall return in robes of white, the blazing sun shall pierce the night,  
and I will rise among the saints, my gaze transfixed on Jesus' face.

**O praise the Name of the Lord our God...**

Songwriters: Martin W. Sampson / Benjamin William Hastings / Dean Ussher CCLI SONG # 7037787. COPYRIGHTS © 2015 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (Admin. by Hillsong Music Publishing UK) Small City Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) CCL no 5664

**And finally in this block, again shown on the screen:**

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

### **Our Bible Reading, Isaiah 53 was read by Graham.**

Who has believed our message  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
He grew up before him like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.  
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.  
He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.  
Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.  
He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.  
By oppression and judgment he was taken away.  
Yet who of his generation protested?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.  
Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.  
After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.  
Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,  
because he poured out his life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors.  
For he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.

### **Alec then shared his Message.**

This may or may not be a short message, but it has everlasting consequences.

The title of our message is, "What is our message?"

The message today is very straightforward. It is extremely simple. It is not complicated in any way. I think it is extremely easy to understand. But it is about someone who completely changed my life, and is continually transforming me daily and all those who believe in Him into the image of the Son of God; and one day, one day soon we will see Him and be changed into His likeness forever. Let's pray.

Have you written a book? Have you written your autobiography yet? Have you perhaps written a biography of someone else?

Maybe you have and maybe you haven't. Autobiographies and biographies are written for all kinds of different reasons, aren't they? I am sure we may learn a lot about ourselves whether writing them or reading them.

Have you noticed that in recounting the lives of others generally speaking very little attention is given to their death? That would perhaps be distasteful or morbid, wouldn't it?

But this is completely different with Jesus Christ. The centrality of the death of Jesus Christ in His story is made very clear by the four gospel accounts in the New Testament.

One third of the text of Matthew, one third of Mark, one quarter of Luke and one half of John is taken up with the last week of Jesus' life before his death on a cross.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That is a great help to us, because we too are confronted by death; because we too are frequently if not always suffering and sorrowing.

The first five words that Graham read for us were "Who has believed our message?" Isaiah was a prophet sent by the living God, so we do well to ask ourselves the question, what is God's message? What is it that God is asking us to believe? What is it that God is asking the people living and working right outside this building in this borough of 130,000 people, in these weeks of Ramadhan, in these weeks of strikes and financial struggles, in our divided country where depression and anxiety and all

kinds of physical and emotional illnesses dominate the lives of so many of the people what is he asking all 130,000 of us to believe?

If we look at the gospel accounts, if we look at what God says to us in His Word, if we reflect on the dominance of the narratives of the events leading up to the death of Jesus which we find written there we should if our eyes and hearts are open to the truth be enabled with God`s help to see and to hear that the reason why Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, came to earth was to show the wonder of God`s love in dying for us a cruel death on a cross that we might live. May the living God make clear to us each day and night of our life on earth the extent, the width and the depth, of His sacrifice for our forgiveness.

That is the message.

Where are we now? Where do we stand before God? If we believe the message of God we are all sinners saved by God`s amazing grace. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was numbered amongst the sinners, who was numbered amongst us. In **Luke 22:37** we read the only words that Jesus Himself quoted from **Isaiah 53**, "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfilment." He poured out his life in death and he was counted with sinners. That is what we are looking at on this Passion Sunday, at the beginning of Passiontide, on Palm Sunday, in Holy Week and on Good Friday and Easter Sunday because this is so central, it is the very basis, the foundation of God`s message; and because it is God`s message, it is our message to all those with whom we are in contact and to those with whom in the coming days, week and months we will come into contact.

One thing above all else is clear from Jesus` ministry. He identified Himself with us. This is crystal clear.

The Pharisees, the religious leaders criticised John the Baptist because of the way he didn`t eat and didn`t drink and because of his simple lifestyle and unusual diet and they said he had a demon. **Read Luke 7:33-34.**

We see from this that the way in which the religious leaders looked at Jesus is perhaps surprising, because they did not include Jesus automatically in the ranks of the faithful but they actually set Him apart from themselves numbering Him with the transgressors and sinners.

In **Luke 15:1-2** we read: Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

It is remarkable, it is noteworthy, it should never be forgotten that immediately after this we read in **Luke 15: 3-7**

Jesus is there for sinners who are willing to repent.

In **Luke 19** we read of Jesus` meeting Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. He invited Jesus to his house and Jesus accepted. How did people react to this? "All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

Zacchaeus gave his life to the Lord, Jesus saying "The Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost."

Jesus identifies Himself with sinners.

God is here, Jesus is here today with us, God`s Spirit is with us. We know that and very often feel it too; it can sometimes be very moving.

If Jesus was physically present in Blackburn with Darwen today we would expect Him I believe to behave in the same way that He did 2,000 years ago during His life on earth. But you see He **IS** here. He lives in me and He lives in you. We are His Body here on earth right now. So we identify with those with whom He identifies because His Spirit lives in our hearts; we identify with sinners. Because that is what we were before He revealed Himself to us. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

That`s why Jesus came.

Jesus “lost” His good Name not only in His death when they looked up to Him on the Cross but in His daily life on earth through what He said and through what He did.

We see this very clearly in many instances; **the first episode** is recorded in all four Gospels. In Luke we find it in 7:36-50.

Jesus gets invited to dinner yet again by the religious leaders and He accepts. **Read Luke 7:36-39.**

Jesus would know who this woman was; she has come in off the street. The religious leaders felt he could not be who He said He is. They considered Him a rebel, someone who broke God`s law. Do we think and behave like Jesus did in this situation? Or do we think and behave like the religious leaders did?

**The second episode** is found in **Luke 6:1-11**. In this situation the religious leaders ask Jesus to tell His disciples to stop breaking the Sabbath laws. They do not realise who Jesus really is.

So I ask myself the question, do I know in my heart, mind and soul who Jesus really is and who I really am? Jesus who made Himself sin so that the sinner that I am could be forgiven?

**The third episode** occurs later and is recorded in **Luke 23:32**. Jesus has been led out to be executed and is placed on the Cross to die. What are the people who are watching thinking? Jesus, what are you doing there? Jesus, what are you doing up there with criminals?

In the course of Jesus` ministry and in the reality of His death He identifies with us sinners. But this does not exhaust the nature of His identification with us. He identifies with me and with you and with all mankind.

In **2 Corinthians 5:21** we read: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” The extent of His identification with us as sinners goes as far as He Himself becoming sin for us. Jesus came into the world to be sin for us that we might be forgiven. This is the message.

But Jesus just continues to show us who He really is; and how different this is from who we often think He is!

Once again the religious leaders find Him in Levi`s house. They say to Jesus, “Look here Jesus, we know this guy! You`re kind of new here aren`t you, but we know our way around. We know Levi and we`ve known him for years! He`s a cheat and a liar; are you listening? But we know you went to His house and even took your disciples with you; you must be crazy. Just what do you think you are doing in HIS house?!”

**Luke wrote, (5:29),** “Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law complained to His disciples. “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and “sinners”?” Jesus answers, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repent.”

You see the religious people are waiting outside for Jesus to welcome him, saying to Jesus what are you doing with that man in his house? So you see like Levi recognises his sinfulness when he comes into contact with Jesus Christ and he becomes a disciple of Jesus.

So let`s ask ourselves clearly:

What was Jesus doing in Zacchaeus` house?

What was Jesus doing with the lady off the street?

What was Jesus doing as the centrepiece of a trio of crosses with criminals?

**John 15:13** reads: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one`s life for one`s friends."

Why did Jesus have to die?

There is ultimately only one reason; alienation, that is to say our being separated from and far away from God our Creator and Sustainer.

"At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence. You must, of course, continue faithful on a firm and sure foundation, and must not allow yourselves to be shaken from the hope you gained when you heard the gospel. It is of this gospel that I (Paul) became a servant—this gospel which has been preached to everybody in the world." (**Colossians 1:22-23**)

What could any one of us do if God did not justify the ungodly?

How can God pardon sinners without encouraging sin?

How can God be simultaneously showing justice in punishing but mercy in pardoning?

There is only one solution, Christ being numbered with us sinners; through His closeness in dying identifying with sinners and paying the price for our sin. He identifies with us in whatever predicament, in whatever situation we find ourselves; in our alienation, in our lostness, in our embitterment, in our suffering, in our pain and in the tragic circumstances in which we may find ourselves.

He who is one with the Father becomes completely alienated from him so that we who are completely alienated become one with him. That`s why He dies.

So do we know now who the real Jesus is? Do we know now what we need to share with others?

THIS is the message that the church of God is communicating. This is the message for us to live out and share. No other message. No lies about us not being sinners in need of forgiveness; no lies about Jesus just being a prophet or a good moral teacher or a kind of good example to follow. We did not, we do not and we cannot contribute to the work of Christ on the cross. It is because of being the sinners who we are that He comes and identifies so closely with us, becoming sin for us and dying that we might live. Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and death. Hallelujah!

**Alec invited us to remain quiet for a minute, before our Prayers were led by Brenda:**

"Our new Prayer slogan is 'Prayer is like the air we breathe. Wherever we are we breathe'. Please join me now as we pray here together now."

Our Loving Lord and Heavenly Father, as Holy Week and Easter approach, we remember again how You died on the cross for us and rose again on that wonderful Easter morning. Lord God make us ready for this coming time of remembrance and celebration. We thank



You that we are able to be here again this morning, but we also think of those who are cannot be here, asking that You will be beside them and that those using the service recording or script feel part of our worship time, wherever they are.

Almighty God, we praise You for the wonders of Your creation and the beauty we see as spring unfolds around us with all its colour and freshness. At the same time we ask that the world's nations will be led to help to care for it and to protect it from pollution and the serious climate change problems.

Lord, we thank You that we can worship in peace together here, but we remember those who can't because of persecution and discrimination, especially remembering the ones on the Open Doors Watch List and we pray for strength and courage for those Christians with lives under threat. Our thoughts and prayers reach out to many suffering following many disasters and tragedies, taking homes and lives and leaving people with serious injuries and we especially think of the tornado in Mississippi yesterday.

Some are hungry and have no means of help to feed their families and some are fleeing their homes and becoming refugees. Father God, we pray for those from different places who have come to this country seeking asylum, work or education and ask that a better way can be found to welcome and care for them.

Lord, we continue to pray for Ukraine and its people and ask and ask that the terrible war with so much loss of life may end and also that the suffering people may get the help necessary to face the different horrors and threats happening there.

We bring our thanks to You for the work of many charities throughout the world, remembering all that is done by volunteers and we also pray again for the input and safety of our link missionaries, Jackie and Brian Chilvers.

Now we bring to You our own country and all the people of its cities, towns, villages and countryside. Many are struggling with finance at present as rising prices make it harder to pay the bills. May help be at hand where it is needed. Others need medical care of different kinds which is not always readily available and we pray for the success of new initiatives to help with this. Father God, we pray that the Government may be challenged to improve the situation for everyone and address the needs of many in different jobs so that no one feels forced to take disruptive action. May those in authority set a good example in their own personal behaviour.

At this time, we have many of our fellowship struggling with illness or pain, and waiting for treatment and some are in hospital. We bring them to You for Your care and healing. We pray for comfort for those in care homes and those cared for at home, and strength for those who are carers.

Now let us take a few quiet moments to name all the ones in our thoughts before you. -----  
Father God please bring peace and healing where it is needed. Thank You for our now improved Prayer Chain where we can share concerns and be asked to offer immediate prayers when necessary.

Lord God, we give You thanks for our church building and for the various improvements that are being done and planned here and thank you for the many things that happen here each week. We remember Lord, the subjects discussed at last Sunday's Church Meeting and the challenges brought before us. and we ask for a strong leading from You as we plan new things. May all that happens here be blessed by You and all of us be inspired by You. We pray that You will uphold Alec and all other leaders and give them the strength to deal with each task and calling You give them. May we, as the church family, give them all the support we can.

Heavenly Father, as we look back over the last week, we can all think of things we have done wrong and omissions we have made. ----- We now ask You to forgive us in the name of Jesus and may we do better in the coming week.

Lord, we thank You for our service this morning and for the message about 'Message' that Alec has given us. May we all feel the presence of Your Holy Spirit near us and as we go out into the world, please help us to try to share Your love and our faith with those we contact each day. We pray that this Easter many more may turn to You as the Light in their life and the Way to follow.

Please be with us all and keep us safe and guide us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen"

**Alec then asked Colin to come to the front**, to say a very fond farewell to Colin (and Joy, who was working) who are hoping to finally move this week, to be closer to their family. Colin was the first person Alec met when he arrived in Blackburn! Alec prayed, thanking them for all their service to God and the fellowship over the years and asking God's blessing to be upon them now and in the future.

**We were then invited to join in our Closing (offertory) hymn**

When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the Prince of Glory died,  
my richest gain I count as loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
save in the death of Christ my God:  
the very things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down:  
when did such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were an offering far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all!

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**We brought our time together to a close as we said:**

**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.**