



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on May 21st 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, as we continue our studies on Faith in Action, from the book of James.,

Alec shared a Welcome & introduced our Opening hymn, played by Kate, Paul W and Judith:

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
praise Him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if with His love He befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him;
let the amen sound from His people again,
gladly for aye we adore Him.

Authors: Catherine Winkworth, Joachim Leander CCLI SONG # 43073 Copyrights: words and music Public Domain CCL No 5664

In the absence of Tony, Alec gave the Notices, reminding us of the Church members meeting to be held following this service, and including sharing the news of the Coronation Party held recently. He gave thanks that it remained fine until the clearing up was completed! He believed this was an answer to prayer.

Alec then invited us to share a time of Praise and worship, beginning with a video shown on the screen:

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness?
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger?
The King of glory, the King above all kings.
Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder?
And leaves us breathless in awe and wonder?
The King of glory, the King above all kings.

**This is amazing grace, this is unfailing love,
that You would take my place, that You would bear my cross.
You laid down Your life that I would be set free,
Oh, Jesus, I sing for all that You've done for me.**

Who brings our chaos back into order?
Who makes the orphans a son and daughter?
The King of glory, the King of glory.
Who rules the nations with truth and justice?
Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance?
The King of glory, the King above all kings.

This is amazing grace.....

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
Worthy is the King who conquered the grave
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.....

This is amazing grace....

Songwriters: Farro Joshua Neil / Wickham Phil / Riddle Jeremy CCLI SONG # 6333821 COPYRIGHTS @ 2012 WC Music Corp.
(Admin. by / Small Stone Media BV, Holland (Admin. in the UK/Eire by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org)) Bethel Music
Publishing (Admin. by Song Solutions) Phil Wickham Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Seems Like Music
(Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Sing My Songs (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org)
CCL No 5664

Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness,
opened my eyes, let me see beauty that made this heart adore you,
hope of a life spent with you.

**Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God.
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.**

King of all days, so highly exalted,
glorious in heaven above; humbly you came to the earth you created,
all for love's sake became poor.

Here I am to worship...

I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross,
I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross.

Here I am to worship...

Authors: Tim Hughes, Chris Tomlin CCL Song CCLI SONG # 3266032 Copyright@2000 Kingsway Music CCL no 5664

Lord, I lift your name on high; Lord, I love to sing your praises.
I'm so glad you're in my life; I'm so glad you came to save us.
You came from heaven to earth to show the way

from the earth to the cross, my debt to pay:
from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky—
Lord, I lift your name on high.

Author: Rick Foulds CCLI SONG # 117947 Copyrights©1989 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.) CCL No 5664

Our Bible passage was read by Sheila: James 2: 14-26

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Alec shared his Message “Working together”

“I think the following expression probably fits the whole book of James but I am applying it particularly today to the passage which Sheila kindly read for us. It is so colourful, so deep, so powerful, so rich and so challenging.

The passage today is so challenging because it talks of the dangers of having a faith that is false. The dangers of having a faith that is not real. The dangers of having a faith that is like an imposter. The dangers of having a faith that is not genuine.

Three times in the space of thirteen verses James makes this crystal clear. First in verse 17 where he writes “Faith by itself ... is dead.” Then in verse 20 where he says “Faith without deeds is useless.” And finally in verse 26: “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” once again.

Now we might not see Ewood Park full to capacity if any one of my colleagues or I preach at that stadium though I pray the day will soon come when we can worship the living God there.

But if that football stadium is even half-full of spectators and the home team loses 7-0 the home supporters would be justified in calling out slogans to the team to the effect that they call themselves soccer players but they are not showing it.

I think you know where I am coming from! If we call ourselves believers, if we call ourselves Christians, if we call ourselves followers of Jesus, if we claim to be Jesus' disciples, but don't deliver on that then we are deceiving ourselves. We might be wearing the equivalent of the blue and white-quartered shirts. We may be turning up at places where believers come together; we may have all the apparent outward signs of being believers, maybe perhaps wearing what we think are the right clothes and singing what we think are the right songs, but no inward reality. So that when the opposition starts attacking us we are hopelessly defeated. We may be very religious having a form of godliness but denying its power.

You know very well that these are difficult words to say as well as to hear. But there is a great danger of self-deception and the Bible doesn't avoid talking it about so nor may I. James, the brother of Jesus, who only really recognised that his brother Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God after he was raised from the dead; James who had massive pastoral experience as the first Bishop of Jerusalem writes not maliciously and judgementally but lovingly and caringly and says, "Watch out! Don't be deceived! Don't deceive yourselves!"

In other words, he sounds a warning note that has hints of Jesus' words in Matthew 7. I expect you know that in this chapter in the Sermon on the Mount, at one point Jesus says to his disciples, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." In other words, it is distinctly possible to be self-deceived. And to be self-deceived about what genuine faith is has consequences. James is not unique in this respect. Other Gospel writers, other writers of the New Testament letters do the same thing, so it is really important; we cannot and should not gloss over it.

I remember once having filled up at a petrol station and driven off happily down the road. It wasn't long before I was aware that the vehicle behind me was switching its lights on and off and waving at me to pull over and stop, which I did. I did not know why I should. But I soon did. The driver of the other vehicle had stopped behind me, got out of the car and walked peacefully towards me carrying something in his hand. It was the petrol tank cap from my vehicle. He had been parked behind me at the petrol station and seen how I had mistakenly left the petrol tank cap behind me and driven off without it. In those days they were not all lockable. The man brought me the tank cap and alerted me to the danger.

James is alerting us to a danger, to a distinction that may not be so patently obvious but is actually incredibly harmful. He is addressing the possibility, the danger which is attached to that which closely resembles the real thing but it is not real; it is false. It is to put it bluntly, dead.

This may be a kind of optical conditioning because if you watched the recordings of the messages during the pandemic and if you were present when I repeated this illustration here live, you will know how significant it is and how loud it speaks.

MINERAL WATER BOTTLES (Two apparently identical drink bottles were shown to the congregation).

Both bottles look the same. They have the same outward appearance. They both are the correct size, right shape and form, right label, right colour, full to the brim. There is only one

difference between the real thing and what we might call the genuine fake.

There is to the naked eye an invisible mega-microscopic hole in the fake bottle top which has been injected with a needle containing an almost infinitely small amount of a soluble, invisible, colourless and odourless poison for which there is no antidote.

You see true faith is different from false faith and we need wisdom and understanding, the Word of God and the Spirit of God to see the difference.

This coming week is multi-faith week in Blackburn. How important it is that we respect one another as those whom God has created and made to live in harmony with Himself, with one another, with our environment and with ourselves as individuals.

But we need to be alert to what are sometimes mistakenly called “faith-based initiatives.” In Acts 26 we read the account of the Apostle Paul and his encounter with King Agrippa. Paul speaks very clearly about the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and Agrippa understands exactly what Paul is saying. Paul does not say to King Agrippa, “Do you believe the prophets? That’s awesome! Well done, that’s really impressive! Do you have some kind of faith? That’s amazing! Maybe you could take some faith-based initiatives in your kingdom. You know, maybe you could describe your faith journey to a few people at a garden party or something. Maybe you could establish a little faith community.” No, Paul does not say anything like that at all and Agrippa knows it. He understands exactly what Paul is saying. “I know what you’re trying to do Paul. You’re trying to get me to believe in this Jesus of Nazareth.” And Paul says, “That’s exactly what I’m trying to do. Why? Because there is no faith that will save you apart from a faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son of the only living God.

Let us be absolutely clear on this! Just having some kind of belief in the existence of God; just having some kind of faith in the uniqueness of Jesus, will neither help us nor save us. Verse 19 reads: “Even the demons believe” that there is one God. They are terrified by that and it makes them “shudder.”

Matthew 7:15–21 warns us to look out for false prophets, ferocious wolves in sheep’s clothing. By their fruit you will recognise them Matthew writes. These are massive challenges aren’t they? But let’s move on to the encouraging things!

This next point is perhaps the key point of the message today. The Gospel always produces changed lives. We are made whole by faith in Jesus Christ, and the evidence of this is things done in His name and for His glory.

James is not saying, “If you have a compassionate heart, if you have a controlled tongue, if you have a clean life, then on the basis of that you can make yourself acceptable to God” ; he isn’t saying that. What he is saying is that when God comes to live within us, he’ll clean up our life, he’ll control our tongue, and he will produce compassion within us. These will be the evidences of our faith in God, living proof of the fact that God is living in us by His Spirit, transforming our lives.

So what is the basis of our acceptance by God? It is what Jesus has done for us on the Cross! What is the evidence of our acceptance? It is in the way we live, in the way we behave. That we forgive others as God in Jesus Christ has forgiven us; that we have a compassionate heart.

Now we see what our title means today. It is not you and I working together although that is something very special and important; it is not even God and we ourselves working together which is even more amazing; it is not these things that are meant by the title. The meaning as

written in verse 23 is seen in the life of Abraham and in the life of Rahab because it is where both of them show faith and actions working together and faith being made complete in what they did. Read James 2:20-25

God said to Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him. Abraham was called by God out of a pagan lifestyle in a place called Ur of the Chaldees; then he was told by God to look up at the heavens and count the stars and God told him that just as he would be unable to count up all the stars so he would not be able to count all his children. So Abraham believed God; which is remarkable, amazing, almost dare I say it unbelievable except that it wasn't. Abraham believed God and that was counted as his being made righteous. But I forgot to tell you that Abraham was childless.

25 years later his child was born; and then God speaks to him again and says to him, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

And so that is exactly what Abraham did. Except that God then intervened when he had seen that Abraham was doing what he had told him to do. What Abraham believed and did fitted exactly together. He had an authentic lifestyle; his life and character demonstrated a profile of faith and actions working together, faith and deeds working together.

True faith produces results, and in particular and as expressed in Abraham's case here, the result of trusting, costly obedience to the word of God. Isn't that what we see in Abraham's life? How do I know that I am in Christ? I know it because of my trusting, costly obedience to the Word.

We conclude today by looking at the life of Rahab, a shady lady, a lady of the street, not even a Jew but a Canaanite prostitute; but a lady who said, "I know that the Lord your God is God in heaven and on the earth below." That shows us in a nutshell where her faith lay. To get the background to what she did we really need to read Joshua ch. 2, where it says that she took spies into her house, hid them up on the roof, looked after them for a while, and made sure that they could sneak out unharmed because the gates of the city were locked.

So why did Rahab do that? What was so special about her doing that?

She did it because it seemed to her that a person who believes in the living God, who is sovereign and compassionate, would act in this way. It just seems to me that someone who believes, even if it is a very new faith, even if it is an immature faith, would do what ought to be done."

Rahab put her home, her resources, her ingenuity, and her personal safety on the line because hers was a living faith.

From the lips of a Canaanite woman with a shady lifestyle comes this great Israeli declaration of the significance of a mighty God of Israel. Somehow or another, in the goodness of God, she got it! And she believed it! And having believed it, she demonstrated her belief.

You see the church is not a club for people who have got it all worked out, who have got everything sorted. The church is a refuge for people who have been rescued and set right with God.

A basically religious man and an irreligious lady; a man of significance, a man of repute and a lady of bad repute both do the same thing; they express their faith in the living God through the life they lead.

It is awesome to see how wonderful the living God is through the lives of these two people, Abraham and Rahab. But perhaps the most amazing part of this is that Rahab is an ancestress of the Messiah, Jesus! We read that in Matthew's Gospel 1:5! What kind of wonderful God is this, who reaches down into the lives of people and picks them up and gives them faith and changes them? Do you believe in the living God? Has he changed you?

Rahab's background, Rahab's past was no barrier to her to be found and to be rescued by the living God. Neither is your background nor your past a barrier. If God is speaking to you today open your ears and listen. Give Him back the life you owe. There is no other way to be forgiven, to be fruitful and to inherit everlasting life."

Our Prayers were led by Jean:

"Dear Lord, we pray this Sunday morning for grateful hearts. There is so much to be thankful for this morning, and we want to spend the day honouring you. Help us get closer to you through seeing the good in everything since every good gift is from you. This morning as we contemplate this new day, we ask you to help us. Help us to be aware of your spirit—leading us in the decisions we take, the conversations we have. May we be more like you, as we relate to the people we meet today—friends or strangers. We don't know what is going to happen today, but You do. So we give this day to You

Teach me how to choose only Your way today so each step will lead us closer to You. Help us to walk by Your Word and not our own feelings. Help us to keep our hearts pure and undivided. Protect us from our own careless thoughts, words, and actions.

Heavenly father, we pray for the world; your world, created by love; our world, spoilt by our selfishness and sin. We pray for lands ravaged by polluted water, squandered resources, places where people are governed unjustly and oppressively, nations torn apart by war; its children hungry and despairing. Please be with the people of Italy as they try to recover from the terrible flooding they have experienced this last week. Give guidance to the G7 members may they manage to agree on ways to combat the global warning crisis so we may preserve your world for future generations, and help people to learn to adapt to the climate changes to make the best of difficult situations. May your Spirit of truth and love bring peace and harmony to the world.

Lord we pray for integrity, truth and compassion throughout the Government may they consider all people from all backgrounds and ethnicities and help them to keep in touch with the ordinary people and to understand the continuing difficulties that many people are suffering with the economic crisis and the fuel problems.

We also ask that our local council also do their best for the people they serve.

Heavenly father we bring to you our church. We are smaller in number these days. Please be with those who no longer come to worship with us, they are friends of many years and we miss them and wish them well and that one day they will feel able to come back to join us. Some of our members are struggling with ill health at the moment. Please be with them let them feel Your love, reassurance and peace. Also please be with the families and help them look after themselves so they can give

their best to their ill loved ones. Lord please be with us all who have problems and worries. Help us to remember that bringing You our concerns is the best way forward and to ask you to guide us in the best way. Father please be with us at our church members meeting after the service.

Lord as we go out into the world this week, let the power of your Spirit flow through us, that we may come alive in Christ, be given strength beyond our own, and enable us to do what You call us to do

In the loving name of Your son

Amen"

We lifted our voices in song again for our Closing (offertory) hymn

When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word,
what a glory he sheds on our way!

While we do his good will, he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.

**Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.**

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
but our toil he doth richly repay;
not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
but is blest if we trust and obey.

Trust and obey...

But we never can prove the delights of his love
until all on the altar we lay;
for the favour he shows, for the joy he bestows,
are for them who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey...

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet,
or we'll walk by his side in the way;
what he says we will do, where he sends we will go;
never fear, only trust and obey.

Trust and obey...

Authors: Daniel Brink Towner, John Henry Sammis CCLI SONG # 22094 Copyrights Words and Music: Public Domain CCL No 5664

After Alec led a prayer of thanksgiving, we shared the blessing together:

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, may the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace. Amen