



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on May 2nd 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.**

The lifting of lockdown restrictions has resulted in the decision to meet in person at Bethesda Chapel once again. We still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet for those unable to attend Bethesda. 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.

**We continue our studies in Luke's Gospel, and our worship today is led by Tim, who welcomes us all, wherever we are.**

"Welcome to our service today – it's a privilege to be here and be part of the family of God. We're reminded that it's not through anything that we've done that we enjoy this privilege, but only because of what Jesus has done. Our first song reminds us that our only plea before God's throne is what Jesus has done for us."

**We can watch or listen to our opening song: Before the Throne of God Above (or read the words aloud or in our hearts:)**

Before the throne of God above,  
I have a strong and perfect plea,  
a great High Priest whose name is love  
who ever lives and pleads for me.  
My name is graven on his hands,  
my name is written on his heart,  
I know that while in heav'n he stands  
no tongue can bid me thence depart,  
no tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair  
and tells me of the guilt within,  
upward I look and see him there  
who made an end of all my sin.  
Because the sinless Saviour died  
my sinful soul is counted free,  
for God the Just is satisfied  
to look on him and pardon me,  
to look on him and pardon me.

Behold him there, the risen Lamb,  
my perfect, spotless Righteousness,  
the great unchangeable I AM,  
the King of glory and of grace.  
One with himself, I cannot die ,  
my soul is purchased by his blood,  
my life is hid with Christ on high,  
with Christ my Saviour and my God,  
with Christ my Saviour and my God.

Original words by Charitie Lees Bancroft (1841-1892), alternate words and music by Vikki Cook  
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<https://youtu.be/83j7ISWF0cA>

### **Tim leads us in a brief prayer :**

We praise and thank you, Lord, for all you are and all you have done for us. We are unworthy of your love and grace, but we thank you that you have remembered us. May we remember you and live in gratitude to you for what you've done for us. Be with us in our service today and help us draw closer to you. Amen.

### **Hywel now reads our Bible passage for today, Luke 6, 43-49**

"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

### **We can watch, listen or read the words to our next song: Here is Love:**

Here is love vast as the ocean,  
loving kindness as a flood,  
when the Prince of Life, our ransom  
shed for us His precious blood.  
Who His love will not remember?  
Who can cease to sing His praise?  
He can never be forgotten  
throughout Heaven's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion  
fountains opened deep and wide,  
through the floodgates of God's mercy  
flowed a vast and gracious tide.  
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,  
poured incessant from above,  
and Heaven's peace and perfect justice  
kissed a guilty world in love

Robert Lowry, William Edwards, William Rees  
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[https://youtu.be/gpafI7bFN\\_I](https://youtu.be/gpafI7bFN_I)

<https://youtu.be/4-yDCiEWC4s>

### **We prepare to meet around the Lord's Table, as Tim leads us in a time of Communion.**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are coming to receive the communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We can only do so because of his great love for us. For, although we are completely undeserving of that love, in order to raise us from the darkness of death to everlasting life as God's children, Christ humbled himself to share our life and to die for us on the cross. Because of that, his life and power can come into our lives – taking the bread and wine is a symbol of that.

In remembrance of his death, and as a pledge of his love, he instituted this remembrance meal which we are now to share. But those who would eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord must examine ourselves, and, where need be, seek to amend our lives. We must come with a repentant heart and steadfast faith. Above all we must give thanks to God for his love towards us in Christ Jesus.

(We are led in a short prayer of thanks.)

Since Jesus has opened a new and living way into God's presence for us, by the shedding of his own blood, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds.

We invite all who know and love the Lord Jesus to join with us in this remembrance. Let's remind ourselves in the words of Paul to the Church in Corinth how this was instructed. (We read from 1 Corinthians 11, and we share together in the bread and wine.)

### **Brenda now leads us in our prayers of Intercession.**

Our Loving Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You once again for your presence with us and for your goodness, love and guidance each day. We ask You for so much but there are also many things that we need to say sorry for, so we ask You to please forgive us for things we have done wrong and omissions we have made.

We pray for your presence with each one joining this service today, whether it is here in the sanctuary, elsewhere on-line, or by printed script. May it be an inspiration to us all. We

continue to thank you for our connections in so many ways and that we have been linked through these last months. Also thank you for a new coordinator for our Prayer Chain and we ask for your blessing on him, as we also thank you for the good and caring work done by our previous coordinator.

Lord God, we pray again for Your guidance for our country's leaders as they try to lead a safe return to normality. Lord, may care, testing, treatments and vaccinations continue to be effective. We pray for strength for those working tirelessly to achieve protection for us all and ask that the rest of the world will soon be able to share fully in this.

Heavenly Father, our world has many needs especially where isolation is difficult and war and persecution continue. We bring to you the situation in Chad, asking for improvement there and praying for your care for Brian and Jackie Chilvers, our Link Missionaries, who have had to return home. Lord God, we also bring before You the Israeli people following the terrible disaster and loss of life there. We pray for the many countries with little health provision and where millions are hungry and need help, more-so now with the pandemic. We especially think of India and ask that the help that's being sent and more care, organisation and vaccine may lead to a better situation, and we also remember other countries with similar problems.

Lord we pray for inspiration and persistence for those attempting to lead the cleaning up of this beautiful world that You have made and to address the problems of global warming. May all be united and supportive in this major effort.

We ask for Your presence, and comfort Heavenly Father, with the many who are mourning the loss of loved ones at this time especially remembering those we know and are close to.

Lord God, many people everywhere have problems. Some have lost income and businesses and have families to support. We thank You that the government along with many others have helped and we pray for the continuation of this and that all may have food and shelter. May there soon be an upturn in the economy throughout the world and the solving of problems caused by the pandemic and here, by Brexit.

Heavenly Father, we bring to You those who feel continuing loneliness and we remember those in care homes and their families, especially the ones from our fellowship, who still can't see their loved ones properly. We remember our Queen and her family as many of them now try to continue with the leadership they are able to give. Give them your guidance and strength of purpose.

Many of us have personal worries, illnesses and difficulties Lord, and some problems are on hold. We pray that the NHS can move quickly to getting back to normal and for Your presence and healing for many we know who are ill or struggling at this time. In a quiet moment, we name some before You now.----

Please be with our Pastor, as he now isolates in England. Thank you for his safe return. We pray also for the Deacons working in the background and ask for your guidance for our church's witness and care - care for those with long connections here and those who live or might soon live nearby and we thank You for the success of the new work with children. We also bring this town of Blackburn before You and ask for the growth of Christian witness here.

Lord, we pray for all Christian leaders throughout the world, asking for inspired leadership and wisdom, and also we bring before You the work of the BMS, the Leprosy Mission and other charities we support, as they seek to do their best for You in challenging times. Many people throughout the world have turned away from You, Lord God, but please help all Christians to continue to tell of the promises of Jesus Christ whenever and wherever we can.

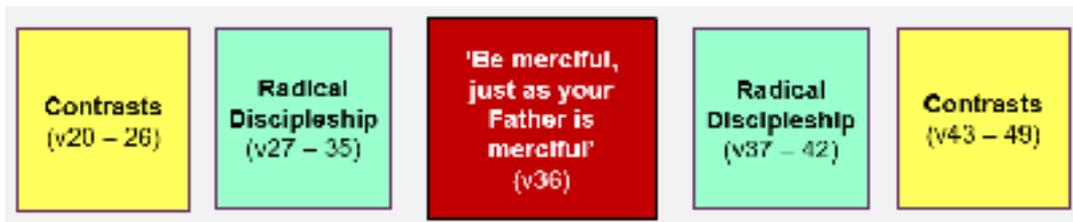
So now we offer all these prayers and the many in our hearts to You, Heavenly Father, in the Name of Jesus Christ Your Son. Amen

## Tim shares his talk: Fruit and Foundation

### Introduction

I recently spent some time at home pressure washing the stone flags on the path outside our front door. The difference in how they looked was amazing – they had got very dirty with the accumulation of rain, etc, over the (I'm sorry to admit it!) several years since I last cleaned them. Yet in truth I hadn't really noticed the build up of dirt before I took the pressure washer to them. I'd got so used to the state they were in that I'd become blind to it. Our lives can be a bit like that – we sometimes need to take a step back and really look carefully at what they're like to see where changes need to be made – where, if you like, we need a 'spiritual pressure wash'. The Bible regularly encourages us to do this kind of self-examination. For example in Lamentations 3:40 or in the passage we read during our preparation today for communion in 1 Corinthians 11:28. We also saw this at the end of last week's passage in Luke 6, where Jesus said we should look carefully at our own faults before pointing out those of anyone else (verses 41 and 42).

Our passage today calls further for us to reflect on our own lives, particularly in relation to what Jesus has been teaching in this sermon that's recorded for us in Luke 6 (sometimes called the 'sermon on the plain' from verse 17 where it says he 'stood on a level place'). So what had Jesus been teaching in the sermon? Let's take a brief overview:



The way Jesus' sermon is recorded for us by Luke has a kind of symmetry, which we often find in the Bible. It starts with giving us the contrasts in verses 20 to 26 between the blessing for those who recognise their spiritual need and cry out to God for his help, even if they don't seem to have many benefits in this world, and the woe for those who are self-righteous and feel no need of God's help. The sermon also ends in verses 43 to 49 with contrasts, as we'll see today, between good and bad fruit and good and bad foundations. In between, we have sections that deal with what Colin called last week 'radical discipleship' – how followers of Jesus should live, contrary to the norms and expectations of the rest of the world. First, we are encouraged to love our enemies in verses 27 to 35, then not to judge others in verses 37 to 42. This structure draws our attention to what comes in the middle, which is verse 36: 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful'. This is probably the key part of the sermon, as all the rest springs from this. We are sinners deserving judgement, and we must recognise this and ask God for his pardon. When we do, he is merciful to us because of Jesus. And so we should show the same mercy to others that we have been shown, even when they are our enemies, or people with faults of their own.

Have we learned this lesson? Jesus encourages us to examine our own lives in two ways in today's passage, using two vivid illustrations. First, he takes us into the orchard, asking us to think about fruit trees and consider what kind of fruit we see in our lives, particularly judging this from our words. Then he takes us to the building site, asking to think about what kind of foundations our lives have, particularly judging this from our actions. As I was thinking about these two

illustrations, I was reminded of some verses in Paul's letter to the Colossians which use these same pictures: 'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.' (Colossians 2:6,7) – we'll come back to these words.

### ***Good and Bad Fruit (verses 43 to 45)***

Jesus first takes us into the orchard to consider fruit trees and the kind of fruit they bear. In verse 43, he reminds his listeners that the quality of the fruit depends on the quality of the tree. A healthy tree, with roots that are drawing on good nourishment, will produce good fruit, and the reverse is also true. The quality of the fruit depends on the nature of the tree and what's inside it. There's a parallel here for our lives – the quality of the fruit our lives produce depends on what's inside us – on the state of our hearts as we see in verse 45. Unfortunately, our basic human nature is *not* healthy – it's been spoiled by sin – so our lives are not naturally going to produce good fruit. It's only when we become rooted in Jesus by receiving him as Lord, as it says in that verse from Colossians 2, that the internal change in our hearts takes place that we need - which will then allow us to produce good fruit.

So by examining the fruit of our lives, we can recognise whether this change has taken place in us – Jesus says in verse 44 that each tree is recognised by its fruit. And we can't fake it! That's what verse 45 tells us. There's a story of a small boy who would sometimes be punished for doing something wrong by being sent to stay in his room. However, he found he could get out of his bedroom window and escape by climbing down an old fruit tree to the ground. One day, however, his father told him that he was going to chop down the fruit tree, because it hadn't borne any fruit for some years. So that afternoon, the boy bought a big bag of apples, and during the night, he tied them onto the barren branches of the tree. The next morning, his father said to his wife, "I don't believe it! That old tree hasn't yielded any fruit for years, and now it's covered with apples... but the most amazing thing is that it's a pear tree!" We can pretend for a while – a bit like the boy, tying fruit onto dry branches, but the truth will be observed in the end. That's really what the Pharisees of Jesus' day were doing. They tied some external religious practices onto their lives, but their hearts were untouched and they produced bad fruit – pride, harshness, envy and so on.

One clear evidence, Jesus says, of what's inside, is the way we speak (see the last part of verse 45) – our conversation reveals much about us. Does it reflect the kind of characteristics we have been reading about in Jesus' sermon of love for others and avoiding judging others harshly? What does my speech say about me? If you want to read more about this, look at James chapter 3 verses 7 to 12, where James uses very similar language to Jesus.

The first thing we need to do, the most important thing, is to come to Jesus, to ask him for forgiveness, ask him to give us new hearts – change us inside - which he can and will! Then God's Holy Spirit can get to work in our lives to start to produce in us what we can't naturally produce for ourselves – good fruit that lasts. This is God's will for us – Jesus said in John 15 verse 8: 'This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples'. The fruit of our lives shows who we are.

It's the Holy Spirit's work to do this in us, but we have to be willing to co-operate and not resist his work. The New Testament is full of wonderful advice and instructions about how we can co-operate with the Holy Spirit in his work of renewal and making us fruitful – for example, read:

- Galatians 5 verse 16 to 25, where we read about keeping in step with the Spirit
- Colossians 3 verses 1 to 17, where we read about keeping our minds set on heavenly not earthly things

- Ephesians 6, where we read about actively putting on the armour of God
- Romans 12 verse 2, where we read about not conforming to the world's way of thinking but having our minds transformed through God's word

If we are doing this, what would we expect good fruit in the Christian life to look like? Well, it's not just one thing. I recommend, if you've not read it, Mark Greene's book, 'Fruitfulness on the Frontline', which talks about six types of good fruit, ways God can be at work in us and through us in our daily, everyday lives:

- Modelling godly character – developing and showing the character and likeness of Jesus
- Making good work – doing the tasks God has called us to well to his glory
- Ministering grace and love – doing acts of kindness, forgiveness and help
- Moulding our culture – holding up God's values in our own situation
- Mouthpiece for truth and justice – speaking up and acting for justice on behalf of the downtrodden
- Messenger of the Gospel – sharing the good news of Jesus with others

### ***Good and Bad Foundations (verses 46 to 49)***

Next, in the conclusion of his sermon, Jesus takes us to the building site and encourages us to examine the kind of foundations that our lives have, as evidenced by what we do. Jesus is really asking here, "Have you been listening to what I've been saying?" Sometimes Debbie may ask me to do something, and maybe my mind is on something else and the evidence that I've not really been listening is that I don't do what she asked!

The danger that Jesus highlights in verse 46 is that we can be superficial followers of him – we might say the right things, but not back it up with our actions. Is our daily life consistent with our 'Sunday life'? We might call him 'Lord' with our voices but in practice be saying more loudly that he's not really Lord because we don't obey him. The backdrop here is the widespread ownership of slaves in the first century Roman culture – the slave had no choice but to obey *all* the master's instructions without question. I wonder if we sometimes have a 'pick and choose' approach to what Jesus says to us? Well, I agree with that bit, so I'll do that, but what you said there - that's really a bit too hard, Jesus. Calling Jesus Lord is not consistent with disobedience – if we do that, we're kidding ourselves. James puts it very simply and bluntly in his letter: 'Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.' (James 1: 22).

The emphasis before was on what we say, but here it's very much on our actions. What actions is Jesus talking about? Well at the very least the ones he has been talking about in his sermon – recognising our need of God, avoiding self-reliance, loving our enemies, giving generously, not judging others harshly. I'm sure we all need to examine ourselves in some of these areas.

Verse 47 gives us a good model for what Jesus really wants of us. He wants us to be people who:

- Come to him (we're open to receive from him)
- Hear his words (we're listening and attentive)
- Put them into practice (we're obedient servants)

In verse 48, Jesus compares those who do this to those laying a good foundation on a building site, one that's deep and solid, founded on something that's fixed and secure. What is the good foundation for our lives? It's clear that Jesus is talking about *his* words and teaching – Jesus

himself and what he says – that is the only sure and solid foundation for life. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 verse 11 that ‘no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ Going back to our verse in Colossians 2, we need to be ‘built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught’.

If we’re relying on him and doing what he says, that is the way that our lives can weather the storms of circumstance. Notice that Jesus said in verse 48 ‘when a flood came’, not ‘if a flood came’. The storms and floods are going to break upon us at some point and it’s our foundations that determine the damage that will be done.

To emphasise his point, Jesus describes the opposite in verse 49 – the house built with no foundation, or a very shallow foundation. We can try to build our Christian lives on other things – emotions, exciting experiences, but these won’t hold us up when the hard times hit.

So, the question for each of us, for me, is ‘Am I building my life on that solid foundation – Jesus’ words? Not just hearing them, but obeying them?’ As Colin noted last week, we can’t do this in our own strength, but only with the Holy Spirit’s power and help. But it’s about our will and desire to obey. Just like the man with the withered arm who we read about in the first section of this chapter, when Jesus gave him the command to stretch out his arm, he couldn’t do it in his own strength, but he had the will to obey and as he tried, he found that Jesus strengthened him and he *could* obey. Jesus, through his Spirit, gives us strength and grace when we need it, and forgiveness as we fail, as we sometimes will.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, let’s return to our verses from Colossians: ‘So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.’ (Colossians 2:6,7). We need to be rooted in Christ, his life in us, changing us from the inside so that our lives produce good fruit. And we need to be built up in him, upon the sure foundation of his word that we have been taught, trusting in his Holy Spirit to help us act in obedience to him, in gratitude for all he has done for us.

**Our last hymn** reminds us that we stand in the strength that God gives us, listening and responding to the call of Christ to follow him - ‘O Church Arise’.

O Church, arise, and put your armour on;  
hear the call of Christ our Captain.  
For now the weak can say that they are strong  
in the strength that God has given.  
With shield of faith and belt of truth,  
we’ll stand against the devil’s lies;  
an army bold, whose battle-cry is Love,  
reaching out to those in darkness.

Our call to war, to love the captive soul  
but to rage against the captor;  
and with the sword that makes the wounded whole,  
we will fight with faith and valour.

When faced with trials on every side  
we know the outcome is secure,  
and Christ will have the prize for which He died,  
an inheritance of nations.

Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
arise, shine for the risen son.  
Lift your eyes, we are his radiant bride,  
arise, O church, arise.

Come see the cross, where love and mercy meet,  
as the Son of God is stricken;  
then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet,  
for the Conqueror has risen!  
And as the stone is rolled away,  
and Christ emerges from the grave,  
this victory march continues till the day  
every eye and heart shall see Him.

So Spirit come, put strength in every stride,  
give grace for every hurdle,  
that we may run with faith to win the prize  
of a servant good and faithful.  
As saints of old still line the way,  
retelling triumphs of His grace,  
we hear their calls and hunger for the day  
when with Christ we stand in glory.

Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
arise, shine, for the risen Son.  
Lift your eyes, we are his radiant bride,  
arise, O church, arise.

Stuart Townend, Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Chris Tomlin.

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We bring our service to a close as Tim encourages us to join together saying:

**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.**