



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on November 21st 2021 at 10:45,
meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.**

We realise that not everyone is yet able or ready to return to the Chapel, we still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast a recording of the services, and will 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.

Today's service is led by Colin, and continues the theme of Creation, which we began two weeks ago. The final service in this series will be in another two weeks.

Colin begins as he welcomes everyone to this time of worship, on this cold and frosty morning, especially those who may have had a long sleepless night. He wondered if any had heard of the survey carried out this week, asking "Who was Britain's greatest monarch?" The answer was perhaps surprising - King Athelstan - you are not alone if you've never heard the name. The grandson of King Alfred, he was the Anglo-Saxon king who defeated the vikings and united Wessex, Mercia etc, centralising government and becoming the first King of England, (Although the vikings did retake York after his death in 939AD!!)

Our theme of celebrating creation continues, as Colin reads from Psalm 84, reminding us that even the smallest creatures can teach us a lesson in so many ways.

As its cold and frosty, **he leads us into our first hymn today, which we sing to the tune of "As with gladness men of old"** played on the piano by Alec: - preparing us for the forthcoming Advent and Christmas season!

For the Beauty of the Earth

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:

'Lord of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.'

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flow'r,
sun and Moon and stars of light:
'Lord of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.'

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild:
'Lord of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.'

For each perfect gift of Thine
to our world so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n:
'Lord of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.'

Words: Sandford Pierpoint, Music:traditional
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Colin then leads us in prayer:

Almighty God, how great you are. Creation cries out in awe at your power and wisdom, for the universe shines with your glory and greatness. Each atom and molecule carry a tiny part of your amazing plan. Every microbe speaks of your breath-taking beauty. Our Father, we praise and worship your holy name. You sit enthroned in the heavens above, and the earth is your footstool. We are your people, the sheep of your pasture, and you are our God. We praise and thank you for everything you mean to us. You never grow weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of Your understanding. You have been good to us and day by day shower us with your love and compassion. You picked us up out of the miry clay and clothed us in Your own goodness, in the designer clothes of salvation. You cleansed us of our sins and will wipe away every tear from our eyes. You are our banner and shield, our strength and protection. And we come to you this morning, seeking your blessing so that our lives in the fulness of your Holy Spirit may be focussed more fully on the wonders of your world and the need to be active disciples of Jesus, people who are willing to stand up for your Creation as servants of your kingdom. 'For the earth is the LORD's and all its fulness.' Amen.



Notices

- Refreshments after the service
- Coffee Morning – Tuesday @ 10-12
- Afternoon Fellowship – Tuesday @ 2.15 pm
- Fellowship Meeting – Thursday @ 7.30 pm
- Operation Christmas Child – last day for boxes today
- Advent Sunday next week – God with us! Come and hear a testimony

For the first time since Lockdown 1, we take up an Offering. Jane and Janet collect thanksgiving gifts whilst Alec plays quietly on the piano.

Colin leads in a prayer of thanksgiving.

"Thank you Heavenly Father for these gifts. We pray that they will be used in your service in the glory of your name and for the extension of your kingdom. We also thank you for these shoeboxes, and as they go to their various destinations we pray that the children who receive them will indeed glorify our Lord and Saviour over Christmas time. Amen

Colin reminds us that two weeks ago we began our series on creation, whilst COP 26 was taking place in Glasgow, looking at the world and our responsibilities. So, as part of the theme for today, Colin tests our knowledge with a Quiz on Trees, answers to be found at the end of the written service!

A. How much of the UK's land area is covered by ancient woodland? 1. 20% 2. 12% 3. 2%
B. Possibly the most famous tree in the UK, 'The Major Oak', is found in which forest? 1. Sherwood 2. Epping 3. Bowland
C. What age is the oldest tree in the UK? 1. 500 2. 1000 3. 3000
D. The bark of which tree is also known as 'nature's aspirin'? 1. Oak 2. Hawthorn 3. Willow
E. The wood of which tree was the most popular choice for water pipes until the 1700s? 1. Beech 2. Elm 3. Oak
F. Often used to make walking sticks, what is the common name for the sloe tree? 1. Hazel 2. Spruce 3. Blackthorn

G. Which tree's leaves are the symbol of The National Trust?

1. Sycamore
2. Oak
3. Beech

I. Which tree is a traditional feature of churchyards?

1. Yew
2. Sycamore
3. Silver Birch

Time for more music - complete with actions for those feeling energetic or in need of some movement: both songs were shown on the screen at Bethesda

Firstly - **The Butterfly song,**

If I were a butterfly,
I'd thank you, Lord, for giving me wings;
and if I were a robin in a tree,
I'd thank you Lord, that I could sing;
and if I were a fish in the sea,
I'd wiggle my tail and I'd giggle with glee;
but I just Thank You Father, for making me - ME!
 'Cause you gave me a heart and you gave me a smile,
 you gave me Jesus, and you made me His Child,
 and I just Thank You, Father,
 for making me - ME!

If I were an elephant,
I'd thank you, Lord, by raising my trunk;
and if I were a kangaroo,
I'd hop, hop, hop, right up to you;
and if I were an octopus,
I'd thank you, Lord, for my good looks;
but I just Thank You, Father, for making me - ME!
 'Cause you gave me a heart...

If I were a wiggly worm,
I'd thank you, Lord, that I could squirm;
and if I were a crocodile,
I'd thank you, Lord, for my big smile;
and if I were a fuzzy-wuzzy bear,
I'd thank you, Lord, for my fuzzy-wuzzy hair;
but I just Thank You, Father, for making me - ME!
 'Cause you gave me a heart...

**And then one known to many, with a variety of slightly different words!
He's Got the Whole World in His Hands**

He's got the whole world in His hands
He's got the whole wide world in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got the little bitty baby in His hands
He's got the little bitty baby in His hands
He's got the little bitty baby in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got you and me brother in His hands
He's got you and me sister in His hands
He's got you and me brother in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands

He's got everybody here in His hands
He's got everybody here in His hands
He's got everybody here in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands.

Words Geoffrey Love

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands lyrics © Chappell Music Ltd

CCL No 5664

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDBJNQiugnM>

Shirley leads us in our Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, as we bring our prayers of intercession before you, it is hard sometimes to believe those around us, still lest the world around, can ever change for the better: we see countries broken by war, people consumed by hatred, thousands living in fear, nations turned against nation, multitudes made homeless by disaster, continents facing famine, and again we wonder what the prospects really are, what help anyone can offer, what help can possibly be given. Transforming God, may your light shine where there is darkness.

We continue to pray for countries such as Nigeria, Afghanistan and North Korea as they persecute your people. Gives those who face death as they seek to aid all in dire distress from natural causes as well as the evil of domination. May they know your strength, presence and peace at these times.

We thank you Father for the good news we have heard that our government has decided to ban the activities of Hamas in both their military and political stance. Also we give thanks that the labour government have clearly stated their support for Israel and are against anti-semitic activity wherever, especially mentioning the Jews in the UK.

We thank you Lord for the magnificent Knife Angel sculpture against violence and aggression outside our cathedral and pray that the Knife Angel concert in the cathedral on Friday will draw many young people, and that they will respond to the gospel message. Thank you too for the good things that we have the privilege of doing in our fellowship. The movie morning, Tiddlywinks, Bible study and prayer and Ladies Afternoon. We pray that the folk in our area, adults and children, will see us as a welcoming community that loves them with the love of Jesus.

As we lift before you all those near and far who need a special touch from you, those still grieving for loved ones, those who are ill physically or mentally, those struggling with debt and hardship, we **choose** to focus on you, our dear Lord and Saviour.

You in the warmth and brightness of a sunny day
you in the beauty of our countryside
you in the kindness of a stranger
you in the face of a loving mum caring for her disabled child
you in the smile and exuberance of a little child
you in the patience of a nurse or doctor
you in the joy of laughter
you in the compassion people have as they work for the Children in Need charities.
Help us to see beneath the surface, recognising you are at work and that things can change. Help us to see beyond appearances, recognising you are a God able to transform even the most hopeless of situations. Give to us and to all people the assurance that there is no one and no situation unable to be transformed by your power.

Transforming God, may your light shine where there is darkness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

To finish:

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust have a child like no cares could destroy:
be there at all waking and give us we pray
your bliss in our hearts Lord at the break of the day.

Lord of all the goodness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe;
be there at our labours and give us we pray
your strength in our hearts Lord at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace;
be there at our homing and give us we pray
your love in our hearts Lord at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm;
be there at our sleeping and give us we pray
your peace in our hearts Lord at the end of the day. Amen

Janet reads our Bible passage for today, Genesis 2, 4-9, 15-20a

"This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground - trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam, no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. "

"May God's word be blessing to us all".

Colin now shares his Message for today: 'The Crown of Creation'

Two weeks ago, we looked at *Genesis 1*; today, we are taking a look at *Genesis 2*, though only part of it, as this is a 'big chapter' with many big ideas. Whereas the first chapter focussed on God the Creator, this second chapter focusses on Man the creature. It helps us to understand who we are and our place in the world. But in both chapters the creation of Man is presented as God's crowning achievement. So, my message this morning is titled 'The Crown of Creation'. It has three headings.

The Bread of Life

What we must note first of all is that this chapter sets the scene for what happens in chapter 3. And in both we are introduced, not simply to God, but to the LORD God, a title that is not found elsewhere in *Genesis*. And, in fact, this is the first use of the name LORD (Yahweh or Jehovah) in the Bible. The title LORD (with capital letters) speaks of God as the Great I AM. It denotes that God is deeply personal and personable. He is not some aloof God, who is distant and remote and beyond our reach. He has created us for a personal relationship with himself. Indeed, he is the one who came into this scene of time - an event we celebrate every Christmas - and shared his life with the likes of you and me. That is why, among other things, we call Jesus, 'Lord'. In fact, our English word 'lord' comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for 'bread' (as does our word 'loaf') because the ancient gentry would keep a continual open house, where all could come and get bread to eat. As a result, they gained the honourable title of 'lords', meaning 'dispensers of bread'. This is a wonderful idea, because as Lord of all, Jesus declared 'I am the Bread of Life'. And he certainly keeps an open-door policy in the kingdom of heaven for anyone seeking the 'bread of life', that spiritual and eternal food for this life but more importantly for the life to come. As Lord, Jesus is interested in you and he's interested in me. He longs to share the delights of his heavenly kingdom with all of his creation. He is into the re-creation or renewal business just as much as the creation business. 'For I have come,' he said, 'that you may have abundant life.'

The Breath of Life - Last time we emphasised the amazing truth that humans, both male and female, were made in the image of God. In this first section of our reading from *Genesis 2*, we are given more detail about this unique nature. First, Adam was 'formed' from the dust of the ground. We are creatures of the earth. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for 'ground' here is 'adamah', so the name 'Adam' literally means 'ground' or 'dust'. Now scientifically, we are made up of about 70% water. And the rest of our body can be broken up into minerals and elements that are from the ground. I'm told we are worth less than £10 if we're broken up into these minerals and elements. And yet Psalm 139 says 'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' The Hebrew word for 'formed' in *Genesis 2* is the same word used of a potter, who skilfully shapes and fashions a pot with his own hands. The Bible says this is what God has done with us. Psalm 139 also says: 'For you formed my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother's womb.' He 'shaped' us to be something glorious. We can see a personal touch here, in that God formed Man from the dust of

the ground and then breathed the 'breath of life' into his nostrils. To me, this conveys a touch of intimacy, which in itself shows that we are special to God.

Think for a moment about the remarkable complexity of the human body. Physically, we are the result of two sets of 23 chromosomes which unite at conception. A single human chromosome contains twenty billion bits of information, which corresponds to about 500 million words, or two million pages. At 500 pages per book, this means that a single human chromosome is equal to about 4,000 books of information. We each have 46 chromosomes, or 184,000 books of 500 pages each! That's probably more than the books they have in Blackburn library. Isn't that amazing?!

The Bible also tells us that it is God who gives and takes away breath from every living creature. Psalm 104 says: 'You send forth Your Spirit (or 'breath') and they are created ... You take away their spirit (or 'breath'), they expire, and return to their dust.' God breathed his Spirit into Adam and he became a living soul or person, to reflect the image of the Creator. So, if we are breathing today, we should thank God for it. Because only God can 'breathe life' into something and make it 'live', both physically and spiritually, whether it is a person, a group, or even a church. The only reason anything succeeds is that God 'breathes' into it his breath or Spirit.

Indeed, if you are an asthma sufferer, you'll know all about the importance of breath and being able to breathe. Two of my three children have suffered from asthma and I can tell you how panicked Joy and I became sometimes when they struggled to breathe. I can remember spending a night in hospital with our youngest following a bad asthma attack, which forced us to call 999. After all, you have to be able to breathe to live! And so, the breath of life is surely one of the greatest blessings from Almighty God.

The Breadth of Human life - Another action that God performed on behalf of the man is that he placed him in the Garden of Eden that he had prepared for him. 'Eden' means 'delight'. I reckon our fascination with gardens is a throwback, a trace memory, you might say, of the time when our forefathers inhabited the Garden of Eden. Indeed, the Greek word for garden is *paradeisos* from which we derive the word 'paradise'. Heaven is sometimes described as 'paradise' in the sense that everything in it is utterly perfect. In Luke 23 Jesus says to one of the criminals crucified with him, 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' Paradise is where Jesus is and where he is Lord and King. When Christ has pre-eminence in our lives through his Spirit, we will experience a flavour of the Paradise that will be ours for ever one day.

It is in Eden that we read about the first Word of God, the first command of God, to humans. It comes specifically in our text from Genesis 2:15-17. It is spoken, not written. It says, 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." These words form the climax of the first half of our chapter.

The Hebrew word that is translated as cultivate literally means 'to work or serve'. Adam was, in a sense, a servant of the garden or of the land. Some people think of 'paradise' as a place where you lie in a hammock under a palm tree, never lifting a finger. But God planted a garden and put Adam there to cultivate it and keep it. A proverb says, 'God gives every bird his worm, but he does not throw it into the nest.' Even in paradise, Adam had to work for his food. Every resource necessary for humans to thrive is to be found in the earth and in nature. Indeed, *Genesis 2* teaches that the earth is bountiful in raw materials.

God also assigned Adam the work of naming the animals (2:19-20), a job, we might say, with a more mental challenge. Therefore, God gave man both physical and mental work as important enterprises. And so, working with both our hands and heads is equally important. God created us to engage in productive work, and there is satisfaction in doing your work well. Whether you are a hospital cleaner, carer or consultant, you can take legitimate satisfaction in the work God has given us to do, for these are essential to the furtherance of human life.

A few years before the fall of communism, a joke was going around Moscow about two workmen with shovels. One worker would dig a hole every 20 feet along the street. The second worker would come along behind him and fill up the hole, and the process was repeated. A man watching them shouted, 'Comrades, what are you doing? You dig a hole, then the other fellow fills it up. You're wasting the Party's money!' "You don't understand," one of the workers replies. "Usually we work with a third fellow, Mikhail, but he's home drunk today. I dig the hole, Mikhail sticks in the tree, and Dimitri here puts the dirt back in the hole. Just because Mikhail is drunk doesn't mean that Dimitri and I have to stop working." Hopefully, your work isn't that futile!

But God's instruction also stated that humans were to 'take care of' the Garden. The Hebrew word here means 'to watch or preserve'. He was to guard the garden, to conserve it. Adam was appointed by God to be steward and caretaker of the garden, to treat it as his home. What does this tell us about our duties as stewards of Creation? Surely, that we should treat the environment around us - the natural world - with respect and live in a sustainable way, so that we pass on to future generations a world that is fit to live in, free from the corrosive effects of pollution and other forms of destruction. Sadly, the effects of disobedience to God's command are all around us, for example, in the littering and fly-tipping that is so prevalent these days.

Finally, in our passage we meet two trees: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Or, in other words, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death. Both symbolize the Word of God; in that they invoke either God's blessing or God's curse. This means that obedience to God's Word brings life, whereas rebellion

against it will bring only destruction and death. This sets the scene for what will happen in Chapter 3, as we'll discover in two weeks time.

But we also have these two trees in the midst of our lives today, for the Word of God is still active and powerful. Together they come to their fullest meaning in the coming of Jesus and the tree on which he was crucified. Jesus chose the path of obedience that led him to Calvary's tree. At the cross of Christ, the blessing of God and the curse of God come together in one great climactic moment in the history of the world. Because the wrath of God against the sin of the world was poured out on his Son, the eternal blessing of God's grace now flows out to the whole world, to sinners such as you and me. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, God sets before us today in the gospel life and death; a blessing and a curse. And the Lord is saying to us 'Choose life'. We do not need to seek a tree in a Garden or a cross on a hill; what we need to seek, and what we will find through the Gospel, is the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, in whom through his death and resurrection a New Creation has been born. May we seek the Lord while he may be found and discover in him our hope of eternal life. For his Name's sake. Amen.

We bring our time together to a close as we sing a hymn written by Isaac Watts , **I sing the mighty power of God**, played on the piano again by Alec. **The tune we used was "The head that once was crowned with thorns" but you may wish instead to read it aloud or in your hearts.**

I sing the mighty power of God

I sing the mighty power of God
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad
and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at his command,
and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord
that filled the earth with food;
who formed the creatures with his word
and then pronounced them good.

Lord, how your wonders are displayed,
where'er I turn my eyes,
if I survey the ground I tread
or gaze upon the skies.

There's not a plant or flower below
but makes your glories known,
and clouds arise and tempests blow
by order from your throne;

while all that borrows life from you
is ever in your care,
and everywhere that we go to,
you, God, are present there.

Words: Isaac Watts
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And finally we share 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.**

Quiz answers:

- A. 3, 2%**
- B. 1. Sherwood Forest**
- C. 3. 3,000 years**
- D. 3. Willow**
- E. 2. Elm**
- F. 3. Blackthorn**
- G. 2. Oak**

And finally, I would have expected H but we have

- I 1. Yew**