



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on October 15th 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, Kate the violin and Judith the flute. Nigel is operating the PA system.

Alec welcomes everyone, saying Good Morning! We have come together to worship the living God, the sustainer of the universe, who is here and we have the freedom to come together. He then read the opening verses from Psalm 121:

**"I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."**

Isn't that wonderful? Whether we are here in Blackburn or any other place, the same God is with us. Just as we have been praying over the last weeks for Pakistan and North Korea, today we watch a short video from Open Doors, showing some of the challenges faced by Christians in China. The Pastor used to be a Communist, with his life being dominated by red, the Party. The phrase your sins are scarlet, but become white as snow, has special significance in the light of this. The level of persecution is at its highest since the Cultural revolution of the 1960's and 1970's, but "I have placed before you an Open Door, that no-one can shut." Revelation 3.

Alec then led in prayer for the Church in China, before introducing our Opening hymn:

**My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly trust in Jesus name.**

**Christ alone, Cornerstone, weak made strong in the Saviour's love
through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all.**

**When darkness seems to hide His face I rest on His unchanging grace;
in every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.**

Christ alone, Cornerstone...

**When He shall come with trumpet sound Oh may I then in Him be found;
dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless stand before the throne.**

Christ alone, Cornerstone...

AUTHORS: Edward Mote, Eric Liljero, Jonas Myrin, Reuben Morgan, William Batchelder Bradbury CCLI SONG # 6158927
COPYRIGHTS@2011 Hillsong MP Songs (Admin. by Hillsong Music Publishing UK) Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (Admin. by Hillsong Music Publishing UK) CCL No 5664

Notices were shared by Tony: Ladies Bible Study on Tuesday morning, now at 10.30am, Saturday afternoon at 3pm New Life International Church celebrate their anniversary, with a service to which all are invited. On Sunday October 22nd we have a visiting speaker, Danny

Cliffe. A full list of forthcoming speakers is available. Responses to the BU Consultation document should be returned before the end of October.

Alec invited all to join in a time of Praise and worship

The splendour of the King, clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.

**How great is our God,
sing with me: how great is our God,
and all will see how great, how great is our God.**

And age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One, Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb,

How great is our God....

Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.
Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.

How great is our God....

Authors: Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves and Ed Cash, CCLI Song 4348399; Copyright © 2004 worshiptogether.com songs/Six Steps Music/
adm. by Kingsway Music CCL no 5664

In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain;
then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am His and He is mine - bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand:
till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Authors: Stuart Townend & Keith Getty CCLI SONG # 3350395 Copyright © 2001 Thankyou Music (Adm. by CapitolCMG Publishing.com excl. UK
& Europe, adm. by Integrity Music, part of the David C Cook family, songs@integritymusic.com) CCL no 5664,

Shirley led our Prayers:

"Loving God, we thank you that in all the changing circumstances of our lives you are a God we can depend on - always faithful, always true, always loving, always merciful.

For all your mercies, we praise and thank you.

We thank you that you are a God who is constantly at work - in our day to day lives, in our fellowship, in the church, in the world.

For all your mercies, we praise and thank you.

Day by day, week by week, year by year, you are working out your purposes.

For all your mercies, we praise and thank you.

Seen or unseen, recognised or unrecognised, appreciated or taken for granted, you are moving through your spirit, striving to build your kingdom and fulfil your will.

For all your mercies, we praise and thank you.

Loving God you do not work alone but have invited us to play a part in your purpose,

In your mercy, teach us to respond in faith.

Help us to keep our side of the bargain, to do our bit as you do your. To be a people whose lives clearly witness to your love, to live in a way that is consistent with what we believe and honouring to you.

In your mercy, teach us to respond in faith.

Help us to make the most of out of everything you have given us, to use our gifts, to grasp our opportunities. And to offer our time, our money and our talents freely in your service.

In your mercy, teach us to respond in faith.

And help us finally, having played our part, to leave all things in your hands, knowing that, though all else may fail, your love never fails. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Dear Lord, as we come to you today I would say "Lord teach us to pray that your kingdom will come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven " May be, as we speak, the Israel Defence Force will be entering Gaza with the intention of conquering Hamas, the terrorists who brutally killed, maimed and kidnapped Israeli men, women and children, but in this process have and are endangering the lives of innocent Palestinian men, women and children. We know dear Father, that your word tells us of the call of Abraham and that hem also Isaac, Jacob and all their descendants, who would be as numerous as the stars in the sky, were given the land which has been the bone of contention foe so many years.

Lord, teach us how to pray that whatever our thoughts and opinions are on this most difficult, traumatic situation, we know that you are Sovereign over all, and that the desire of your heart is for all to come to the knowledge of your Son Jesus, who died for us on the cross at Calvary.

So many countries need your help Lord, and we pray for all who are persecuted for their faith, all who are living in poverty and we pray too for all aid workers, wherever they are, that you would protect, direct and bless them for their compassion and support for those in desperate need. Help us too, dear Father, at BBC to be a church that is known for its love, compassion and prayer for others. We pray too for Alec our Pastor, the Leadership and all those who seek to serve you here.

There are quite a few in our fellowship at the moment who need our prayers for many different reasons. Those who are sick in hospital. Those waiting for appointments, those recovering at home and those who need a special touch from you, so we lift them before you now, dear Lord, in the silence of our hearts.

At 2.30pm this afternoon there will be a Pro-Palestinian rally calling for peace to be held in Blackburn town centre. We pray Lord that it will be a peaceful rally honouring to you. As we pray this may we pray for the peace of Jerusalem as in Psalm 122.

We pray for the peace of Jerusalem: - may those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels. For the sake of my family and friends I will say "peace be within you". For the sake of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your prosperity.

And we close our prayers with this from Micah 6:

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the lord require of you, of us?

To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Amen.

Our Bible reading, Hebrews 11: 1-3 and 8-16 was read by Sheila.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Alec's Message today was entitled: "COMFORT ZONE"

God knows who we are and where we are and he knows the situation we are in with all its joys and encouragements, challenges and difficulties. He has a plan for our lives, (Ephesians 2:10), he gives us a future and a hope, (Jeremiah 29:11), he is with us by his Spirit and he will never leave us alone. We need neither to fear, nor be discouraged.

We are being transformed into the image of Christ.

"Whenever, though, they turn to face God as Moses did, God removes the veil and there they are—face-to-face! They suddenly recognize that God is a living, personal presence, not a piece of chiselled stone. And when God is personally present, a living Spirit, that old, constricting legislation is recognized as obsolete. We're free of it! All of us! Nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of his face. And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him." (MESSAGE)

But we all, seeing the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit of the Lord." (modified MEV)

2 Corinthians 5:1-11 We are called and chosen of God to live according to the Word of God in the power of the Spirit. "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others." We are to live by faith not by sight.

So we come back to what Sheila read for us from Hebrews 11.

Who was Abraham? Where did he come from? In what situation did he find himself?

Today we look especially at his faith in response to God's call to him to offer his son as a sacrifice. We may look at other faith adventures he had with God in two weeks' time.

Faith had led Abraham to obey God's call and leave the familiar to discover the territory he was destined to inherit from God. So he left with only a promise and without even knowing ahead of time where he was going, Abraham stepped out in faith. He left his comfort zone.

Abraham puts his trust in God's guidance, rather than on human devices. He left his control position.

Abraham was ready to obey God. In Genesis 22:1 we read: "Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

If we ask ourselves why God would want Abraham to sacrifice his son, we also need to ask why Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son. The simple answer is he heard from God. Abraham's willingness to present Isaac as a burnt offering meant that he had to be fully convinced God had spoken to him.

When God first spoke to Abraham, he responded with three words, which mean much more than, "I am here." They mean, "I am ready to serve you and do your will!" Other believers have said these same words when they were willing to obey God. Every time, God revealed His desire only then!

*Jacob said these words in Genesis 46:2, and then God told him to head to Egypt.

*Moses said these words in Exodus 3:4, and then God sent him to deliver the Israelites.

*Samuel said these words in 1 Samuel 3:4, 5, 6, and 8, and then God revealed he would remove Eli's house.

*Isaiah said these words in Isaiah 6:8, and then God sent him as a prophet.

Abraham heard from God and was willing to obey him.

We should have the same responsive hearts toward God. Often, that is when God reveals His will for us. The Word of God is what we "hear." When we become convinced that God is speaking to us through Scripture, we are to respond as quickly and obediently as Abraham did.

Abraham obeyed God even when it appeared to make no sense at all

In Genesis 22:2 we read: "Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

There are two reasons why this was a difficult test for Abraham.

First, and most obviously, it meant sacrificing his "only son whom he loved."

Second, it seemed irrational. When God repeated His covenant to Abraham, He said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them... So shall your descendants be" (Genesis 15:5; see also Genesis 12:2 and 17:6). Later, in Genesis 21:12, God said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," letting him know the descendants would come from Isaac, as opposed to Ishmael.

When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac had no children. The dilemma for Abraham was, “God promised me lots of descendants, and they are supposed to come through Isaac, but I have to sacrifice him before he has had any children?”

But despite any confusion Abraham may have had, he obeyed.

God’s Word might not always make sense, but we must still obey. In Isaiah 55:8–9, God says: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Nor are your ways my way. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

We will not always understand why God does what He does, and we will not always understand why God wants us to do what He wants us to do. Even at those times our response should be to trust Him and obey.

Abraham did not delay obeying

In Genesis 22:3 we read, “So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.”

After receiving one of the most difficult commands given in Scripture, Abraham “rose early.” He did not delay in doing what God wanted even though the thought of it must have been very challenging. He saddled his donkey and split the wood for the offering. Abraham had a large number of servants, and these are the tasks they would normally perform, but he did everything himself. More than likely he saw this as a command God gave to him alone.

From this we learn that delayed obedience is disobedience. When we know what God wants us to do, putting it off is the same as not doing it. James 4:17 says, “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

Abraham would not let anyone interfere with him obeying.

In Genesis 22:5a we read, “And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey.”

There is no indication the servants knew what God told Abraham. More than likely they would try to restrain him from going through with the sacrifice when they learned what he had planned. We are not told whether it crossed his mind to allow them to go so they might stop him. When he arrived at the mountain, he told his servants to stay behind, so they would not interfere.

We must not let anyone or anything interfere with us obeying God. While the servants would have thought they were preventing Abraham from making a terrible mistake, they would have been preventing him from obeying God.

Sometimes it is well-meaning people who provide the greatest threat to us obeying.

Matthew 16:21–23 records: “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Peter meant well, but Jesus would not let him interfere with obeying His Father. Think of friends who say: “You shouldn’t forgive that person because they’ll just do it again!”

“You will be in danger if you go to that part of the world as a missionary.”

“You shouldn’t talk to everybody about Jesus being your Lord and Saviour; people won’t accept you if you do that! They might stop talking to you or meeting with you and doing things together.”

Sometimes obeying God means ensuring these people do not interfere with us doing what God has called us to do.

Abraham understood obedience is worship

In Genesis 22:5 we read: “He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.””

The sacrifice God wants is obedience. King Saul did not understand this, so Samuel rebuked him in 1 Samuel 15:22:

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.”

God wants obedience more than He wants physical sacrifices. Proverbs 21:3 says, “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.”

The Jews in Jeremiah’s day were religious, but they were also disobedient. God rebuked them in Jeremiah 7:22-23 saying:

“I did not... command them in the day that I brought them out of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, “Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you that it may be well with you.””

God said it was obedience, and not physical sacrifices, that would allow them to prosper. The greater the sacrifice involved in obeying God, the greater the worship; therefore, the greatest act of worship in the Old Testament might have taken place when Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac. The first use of the word “worship” in the Bible occurs in Genesis 22:5.

When some people hear “worship,” they may think of little more than singing or chanting or kneeling on a mat. Abraham said sacrificing his son was worship because he understood worship takes place when we obey God.

And Abraham was not the only one “worshipping” on the mountain that day. He said Isaac would worship too because he saw Isaac’s submission—something requiring immense obedience—as an act of worship too.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1 ESV). Second only to Christ, is there a better picture in Scripture of these words than Isaac?

We should live so obediently to God that our very lives are sacrifices. Complete surrender and submission is the greatest worship we can provide, and it does not take place on one day per week—it is a daily activity.

Are we going to stay in our comfort zones? Or are we truly willing to obey God, to give ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him, which is our spiritual worship?

Alec then invited all to sing our Closing (offertory) hymn:

Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:

'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:

'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
and see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

Then sings my soul....

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Then sings my soul....

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart;
then I shall bow, in humble adoration
and then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul...

Songwriter: Stuart Hine CCLI SONG # 14181 How Great Thou Art Lyrics © 1949 Sony/atv Tree Publishing, Universal Music Publishing, I Am
They Publishing, Manna Music Inc CCL no 5664

Alec closed in prayer:

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for all that you have given us, all the many gifts you give us each day. Thank you above all for sending your son to die for us on the cross, and the forgiveness and new life that is ours, through Jesus Christ. Thank you for the gifts that have been given, bless them and multiply them that they be used for the extension of your kingdom, And be with us now as we pray together, as we chat together, this day and in the coming days. Amen