



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on October 29th 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. Trevor is playing the piano today, Kate the violin, Paul W the double bass and Judith the flute. Paul C is recording the service and Nigel is operating the PA system.

Our service today is being led by Alec, who welcomed everyone, and admitted he is a closet Rugby fan! There had been an important match last night, when South Africa had beaten New Zealand in the final of the Rugby world cup, but we weren't at church to celebrate that, but the victory of Christ over death, sin and the enemy, for us; over pain and suffering, all has already been won and we come today because of that, to worship him. He read from **PSALM 90:1-2**

Lord, you have been our dwelling-place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

So we sing with thankful hearts:

Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of Thy throne still may we dwell secure;
sufficient is Thine arm alone, and our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood, or earth received her frame,
from everlasting Thou art God, to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight are like an evening gone;
short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away;
they fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.

Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
be Thou our guard while troubles last, and our eternal home.

Authors: Isaac Watts, William Croft CCLI SONG # 43152 Copyrights Words and music: Public Domain CCL no 5664

Tony shares the Notices for the week: the Ladies Bible Study takes place on Tuesday at 10.30am, and also on Tuesday St Lukes are holding a Light and Laughter Party for primary school age children at 5.30pm. Tiddlywinks meet on Wednesday at 9.30am, and New Life International Church meet as usual on Friday and Saturday. Next Sunday will be a Communion service, followed by lunch, and 19th will be our next Church members Meeting after the service.

Before we sang again, Alec showed some photographs taken at New Life International Church Anniversary Services, celebrating 15 years of meeting together. (apparently the services are generally shown on Facebook live, and all will be made welcome should they wish to attend in person)

PRAISE SONGS, beginning with a new song to us, played all the way through by the Worship group before singing:

When trials come no longer fear, for in the pain our God draws near
to fire a faith worth more than gold,
and there his faithfulness is told and there his faithfulness is told.

Within the night I know your peace; the breath of God brings strength to me,
and new each morning mercy flows
as treasures of the darkness grow, as treasures of the darkness grow.

I turn to wisdom not my own for every battle you have known,
My confidence will rest in you -
Your love endures, your ways are good, Your love endures, your ways are good.

When I am weary with the cost I see the triumph of the cross,
so in its shadow I shall run
til you complete the work begun, til you complete the work begun.

One day all things will be made new, I'll see the hope you called me to
and in your kingdom paved with gold
I'll praise your faithfulness of old, I'll praise your faithfulness of old.

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There is a hope that burns within my heart, that gives me strength for every passing day;
A glimpse of glory now revealed in meagre part, yet drives all doubt away:
I stand in Christ, with sins forgiven; and Christ in me, the hope of heaven!
My highest calling and my deepest joy, to make His will my home.

There is a hope that lifts my weary head, a consolation strong against despair,
that when the world has plunged me in its deepest pit, I find the Saviour there!
Through present sufferings, future's fear, He whispers 'courage' in my ear,
for I am safe in everlasting arms, and they will lead me home.

There is a hope that stands the test of time, that lifts my eyes beyond the beckoning grave,
to see the matchless beauty of a day divine when I behold His face!
When sufferings cease and sorrows die, and every longing satisfied,
then joy unspeakable will flood my soul, for I am truly home.

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"Known and Loved" CityAlight, another unfamiliar song, Trevor again played the verse through first.

There is hope in grace unceasing, You withhold your wrath from me,
poured it out upon my Saviour on the cross of Calvary.

There is hope now for the hopeless, there is victory all can know
for the tomb lies bare and broken and death's pow'r is overthrown:

**Jesus Christ my hope forever, hope unlike the world can bring;
Your steadfast love beyond all measure, there is hope in Christ my king.**

There is hope for sons and daughters who have wandered on their own,
hear the songs of joy from heaven as the lost are welcomed home.

Jesus Christ my hope forever....

Hallelujah, Hope of heaven, precious treasure of my life,
all my joy is in your presence, I am yours and you are mine.

I will wait until I see him though the twilight turns to night
for my hope is not defeated it will greet His dawning light.

Jesus Christ my hope forever....

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QeF2rhMr6U>

Jane leads in prayer:

Lord God, we come to You today with thankfulness for Your faithfulness to us, individually and as Your body in this place, often over many years. We thank You for the provision You make for every aspect of our lives. We thank You that we have food to eat, warm homes, loving families and fellowship with good friends. We thank You most of all that we can know You, our Heavenly Father, through the sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us on the cross, paying the price for our sins. Thank You that in him we can have new life and by the power of the Holy Spirit You are able to transform us day by day to become the people You want us to be, more like Jesus, our Saviour.

We are so grateful for all that You do for us, Lord, and yet we know that there are many who do not have the comforts in life that we have and many more who do not know the love that You have for them as Your children. We pray for all those in this country who are struggling with the costs of daily life, trying to find a job or a home, or trying to feed their families. Lord, we pray for politicians that they would earnestly seek ways to meet the needs of everyone in our society; grant them Your wisdom and compassion, O Lord, and use Your church to reach out with the eternal hope that can only be found in Jesus. Open our eyes and hearts and show us how we can help.

Father, when we look at the wider world and the horrific things happening in so many countries because of wars and natural disasters, we cannot but think, 'What is the world coming to?' So many thousands in despair, displaced from their homes and without the basic necessities of life, and those waging the wars seemingly careless of the traumas they are inflicting on innocent civilians, including many children. We think especially of Ukraine and the Middle East, but there are many other places as well. Our Father, we pray that You would intervene and change the hearts of all who are fighting for their own misguided and selfish agendas, that peace may return; we pray for all who are trying to negotiate for cease-fires – give them Your wisdom, Lord. We pray too that a way would be found to get much more aid to where it is needed most, to bring hope to those in such desperate need.

Lord, we live in a broken world and we turn to You as the only One who can fix it. Send out your Holy Spirit, we pray, across all the nations that many may see Jesus and allow You to transform their minds and lives

through him. Transform us too into the image of Your Son that we may willingly be Your voice, Your hands and feet, in the places You take us to each day.

Our loving God, we are also mindful of the many within our fellowship who are suffering from long-term illnesses, disabilities and the stresses of life. We thank you for your sustaining power for them and for those who care for them. Lord, we pray for your healing and your peace, that they may know your love for them, maintaining the hope and joy that only comes from knowing You in whatever circumstances. May they be encouraged knowing that others care for them and pray for them. Lift their hearts, we pray, in the precious name of Jesus. Amen

Bible reading by Brenda: Romans 12, 1-21

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble service in the body of Christ

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love in action

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary:

'If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Alec shares his Message: "Comfort zone"

The reading that we have just heard is a massive challenge for us all.

We will come back to that in a minute.

Let's look at Genesis 22:5 and continue where we left off two weeks ago when we looked quite a bit at the life of a true servant of God, Abraham.

Maybe you remember we looked at his life under five headings:

- * He was ready to obey God
- * He obeyed God even when it appeared to make no sense at all
- * He did not delay in obeying
- * He would not let anyone interfere with him obeying
- * He understood obedience is worship

Abraham was a guy who was prepared to step out of his comfort zone. But this didn't give him an easy journey. You will remember we talked about God telling Abraham to take his son and then to sacrifice him although he had been promised by God that he would be the father of many nations through Isaac, the number of which would be similar to like counting all of the stars in heaven.

So how did Abraham resolve the seemingly impossible dilemma, the problem, the challenge of God promising him children through Isaac, but then commanding him to sacrifice him? The answer is in Abraham's words to his servant: "We will come back." In Genesis 22:5 we read:

Abraham said to the servants, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there and worship, and then we will come back to you."

Abraham expected to sacrifice Isaac, and then return with him. He believed God would raise Isaac from the dead. Hebrews 11:19 says Abraham was "concluding that God was able to raise Isaac up, even from the dead." This answers the question of whether Abraham would have sacrificed Isaac. Yes, he would have, believing God would bring him back to life.

There are two reasons Abraham's faith is even greater than we might initially think. First, Abraham did not simply expect God to raise Isaac's intact body back from the dead. God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, which means he expected God to bring Isaac's body back from being turned into ashes.

Second, we are aware of God raising people from the dead: the widow of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17:17-22), the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:32-35), Lazarus (John 11:1-44), and Dorcas (Acts 9:36-41) to name just a few. Remembering these accounts makes it easier to believe in someone being raised from the dead. Abraham's faith is so great because there are no recorded instances of God raising anyone from the dead before Genesis 22. The idea that anyone could die and come back to life was completely new. Abraham had to believe God would do something that there was no record of Him doing before.

Abraham knew there were only two possibilities. God would do something unprecedented, unknown, not yet experienced or He would become a liar. As impossible as it seemed to Abraham that God would raise Isaac from the dead, it seemed even more impossible that God would lie. Hebrews 6:18 says, "It is impossible for God to lie" and Abraham believed these words centuries before they were written.

As Abraham believed what God said to him, so should we believe what God says to us.

If we have come back to God in repentance and faith, if Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives then His Spirit lives in us and we have been given the right to be called the children of God.

And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for all God gives to his Son Jesus is now ours too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. (Romans 8:17).

Remember this—the wrong desires that come into our lives aren't anything new and different. Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says. He will show you how to escape temptation's power so that you can bear up patiently against it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We shall not all die, but we shall all be given new bodies. It will all happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For there will be a trumpet blast from the sky, and all the Christians who have died will suddenly become alive, with new bodies that will never, never die; and then we who are still alive shall suddenly have new bodies too. For our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever. (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

God's grace will be sufficient for the trials we experience (2 Corinthians 12:9).

If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins. (1 John 1: 8-9)

Abraham believed what God said to him. Do we believe what God says to us.

But in view of God's mercy to us what sort of people should we be becoming right now, what sort of lives should we be living, what kind of evidence should people outside the family of God be able to see in us of our new life in Jesus? Are we identifiable as believers in Jesus who live according to His Word or are we religious nomads, wandering from one empty desert to another in search of what is not to be found in that kind of life?

Are we still living in one or more of our comfort zones? Are we making sure that we are safe and secure in our world looking to fulfil our goals and reach our targets regardless or indeed despite of what the Lord is saying to us?

Is "our" church service a "comfort zone" for us? Or are we in our hearts open to all who choose to share with us in worshipping the living God? Are we open to all who with all their hearts seek and look for comfort here amongst us in a comfortless world, in a violent world, in a world which normally only has room for us if we look like, speak like, behave like those whom we think fit into our nice little group, into our concepts of who should be allowed to belong? Or do we step outside and demonstrate God's love to others.

What about our comfort zone of how we talk about Jesus? Are we really open to share what God has done in our lives through the death and resurrection of Christ and through the mercy of God in His revealing Himself to us? Or are we too scared to do that? Do we think it is unwise to speak of Jesus as the only true living Son of God to some areas of our community? Is that too uncomfortable for us? After all we say, we have to be tolerant. But what if the consequences of our being as we call it "tolerant" are that masses of individuals and families do not come in contact with the kingdom of God and die before they are able to live?

Yes there is a time and a place under heaven for everything. But if we do not share the good news of Jesus Christ in the way we behave to one another and/or do not step out in faith will we not be held eternally responsible?

We are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Why? Because of God's mercy. This is our spiritual worship. We are not to be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Let's be honest this doesn't sound comfortable at all does it; and it isn't! But only as we do this will we be able to test and approve what God's will is; his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Good, pleasing and perfect-to God. We don't please ourselves. We make it our aim to please Him!

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (NKJV) Is the will of God for your life acceptable to you?

Let's really try and grasp this properly; let us truly get a grip on this. This is dynamic not static. This moves other people and moves the church forward; it doesn't come to a stop. It doesn't break up the church it takes the breaks off so we can move and grow. This is life transforming in the Name of Jesus and through the power of God.

Maybe you think like this? The will of God may be good and perfect and all that; but it is not acceptable, not to me. I can't live like that and I don't want to live like that and, and, and... don't try and drag me out of my comfort zone. I am happy being religious and coming to church and being a member and all that; but you just take the Word of God too seriously; I mean it sounds as if you actually believe what is written in the Bible. I don't need to be transformed; especially not in my mind! There is nothing wrong with the way I think! And I am not like the urban landscape or an ecological system that needs to be renewed. I am OK as I am. Do you think like that?

Jesus Christ, God's only Son made the world and sustains it. In mercy and love, in faithfulness and in justice God the Father sent His Son into the world to die to pay the penalty for our massive mistake, we might almost say unforgivable mistake of leaving him, our creator, out of the box, out of the puzzle; Jesus came that we might have our eyes opened to the love of God; that we might open our ears, eyes, minds and hearts to God in faith and repentance. We are to walk by faith not by sight. By faith not by what we can physically see or measure.

Very early in the morning I sat at the gate in a plane at Frankfurt Airport waiting to roll to the runway for take-off. The pilot announced that due to very poor visibility at Manchester Airport we would not be able to leave the gate in Frankfurt for at least another hour. My day had started at 4 am UK time and I wasn't really excited at the prospect of waiting and waiting. I wanted to get back to work.

Eventually we left the gate, taxiing slowly towards one of the runways and finally took-off. Shortly before our expected much delayed arrival at Manchester International Airport the pilot informed us that visibility was indeed so bad that we would need to do a number of circuits before being allowed to land. After 3 or 4 rather lengthy round trips in the air around North Derbyshire through which I probably mistakenly began to feel and even think that the fuel available for getting down safely on our own steam was probably reaching a critical point the pilot said we would be landing on automatic pilot. Our responsibility was to make absolutely sure that our mobile phones and appliances were in flight modus or completely switched off which he seemed to prefer. He wanted to make sure we didn't interfere with the way ahead and with the correct operation of the navigation systems. So thank God we landed safely without really being able to see anything at all.

We all want to see where we are going. But we need to live by faith not by sight. Are we prepared to leave our comfort zones and to step out in faith, even if we cannot see the way ahead but knowing through the Word of God what God has called us to do and then doing it?

Like Abraham:

*may we be ready to obey God

*may we obey God even when it appears to us to make no sense at all

*may we be people who do not delay in obeying

*may we not let anyone interfere with our obeying God

*may we begin to understand that obedience is worship

Our final, well known, (Offertory) Hymn

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall, let angels prostrate fall.

Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him,

crown him, crown him, crown him oh crown him Lord of all.

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,

ye ransomed from the fall, ye ransomed from the fall,

hail him who saves you by His grace, and crown him,

crown him, crown him, crown him oh crown him Lord of all.

Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget

the wormwood and the gall, the wormwood and the gall.

Go spread your trophies at his feet, and crown him

crown him, crown him, crown him oh crown him Lord of all.

Let ev'ry kindred, ev'ry tribe

on this terrestrial ball, on this terrestrial ball

to Him all majesty ascribe and crown him,

Crown him, crown him, crown him oh crown him Lord of all.

O that with yonder sacred throng

we at His feet may fall, we at His feet may fall,

join in the everlasting song and crown him,

crown him, crown him, crown him oh crown him Lord of all.

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Alec closed in prayer,

We belong together because we belong to you, we share together because we share with you, you are our living sacrifice, and so we want to be living sacrifices for you. We offer you once again our hearts, our minds, our lives, all we are, individually but really today as your church. We thank you for all you have done and are doing and will do for us, for the sake of your name, for the sake of your honour and for the sake of your glory. We ask you to use the gifts that we bring to you physically and digitally at this time for the extension of your kingdom, that your name may be known and honoured and worshipped in this area of Blackburn and throughout this borough. We praise you and thank you for who you are. You mean everything to us. We have given our lives now back to you. May our worship be acceptable in your sight. May your will be acceptable and followed in our hearts, in this church. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen