



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on October 10th 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. As everyone is not yet able to return, 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.

Our worship today is led by **Colin, who welcomes us all**, especially anyone who is with us for the first time,.

There's a lot of depressing news in the papers at the moment, lack of petrol, empty shelves etc, reminding Colin of verses in Habakkuk; "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines; though the olive crop fails and the trees produce no fruit; though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour. "

Colin continues: "So although the petrol stations have run out of petrol, so the shelves at Tesco are empty, though gas prices are rising beyond I know not what and although inflation is rising and Covid, well it's always there isn't it, yet, yet we have come this morning to rejoice in the Lord our God and be joyful in the God of our salvation. So please, please let us forget everything that is going on in the world at large, yes there are lots of things we can be thankful for, at times people tend to forget that, but as Christians we should not forget that and should be joyful in the Lord, and we have every reason to be grateful to glory in the light of the world, and our first hymn, to be accompanied by my lovely assistant here (that's Joy, Colin's wife!) is "**Shine Jesus Shine**", and what a glorious day to sing this" (as the sun shines through the windows)

We read, sing or say the words:

Lord, the light of your love is shining, in the midst of the darkness, shining -
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us, set us free by the truth you now bring us,
shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory.

Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.

Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy,
send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.

Lord, I come to your awesome presence, from the shadows into your radiance,
by the blood I may enter your brightness,
search me, try me, consume all my darkness,
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory.....

As we gaze on your kingly brightness so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory, mirrored here may our lives tell your story,
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory....

Graham Kendrick
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Colin leads us in prayer:

"O Loving Heavenly Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. You reign in majesty, you are God forever and worthy of all our praises. You shine in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome your grace and glory. We thank you for calling us to come as a fellowship of your people into your presence today, to experience afresh the wonders of your love for each and every one of us. As we gather, help us to clear our minds and hearts of the worries and anxieties of this past week; fill our hearts with joy, recharge and refresh us with the sweetness of your presence. Empower us to live all the rest of our lives for you. We pray that your light will shine brightly in us and through us, through the Spirit of the Living Lord Jesus, making us shining lights for you. If there are any fault lines in our hearts this morning, cleanse us we pray. You said if our sins are as red as crimson, you would make them white as snow: through your mercy purge us, heal us and make us spotless, we pray, in the name of your well-beloved Son, our precious Lord Jesus. Amen."

Then shares the notices for the week:

- Refreshments after the service in the Community room after this service
- Coffee Morning (including guitar lessons and art lessons!) – Tuesday 10-12; next Ladies' Bible Study on 19 October, Ladies afternoon on Tuesday October 12th at 2.15pm, a time of sharing.
- Fellowship Meeting on Thursday @ 7.30pm (Bible Study – Ephesians 5)
- RISE Praise Evening on 19th October @ 7.30 – The Beacon or Zoom
- Bus Service Provision - we are still hoping it may be possible to re-introduce this at some point but it is not feasible at present - watch or listen for further news.
- Operation Christmas Child - boxes available from today.
- Death of David Smith last Tuesday – Rosemarie and David Jnr send their thanks for all the kindnesses shown by the fellowship, the Thanksgiving services will be taking place in Northern Ireland.
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- **Shirley leads us in our Intercessory Prayers:**

"Father God, you have promised that when we pray for something in the name of Christ it will be done. Teach us what that really means: to know and love Jesus so completely that our will and his coincide. Forgive us when we abuse prayer, looking only to our ends rather than yours. Forgive us when we pray emptily or half-heartedly, and then complain that our prayers seem to go unanswered. Help us to recognise prayer is your gift to us rather than ours to you, and so may we learn from it more of your purpose, and more about you. And when we cannot see any answers to our own needs or those of others, when we see only problems that seem beyond us, when we do not know what to pray for, teach us to leave all things in your hands. We come there now, asking not for our will to be done, but yours, to the glory of your name. Father we bring you this prayer in the name of Christ. Amen.

Father as we come to you today with hearts and minds concerned about so much that is happening in the world, we first acknowledge that you are a mighty loving God, Heavenly Father, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross to forgive us, save us, and give us fullness of life.

You know everything about each one of us and love us unconditionally, so it is an honour and a privilege to bring before you those who need your healing touch this day. We remember the many nations who are suffering from war, persecution, famine and lack of medicine. Afghanistan in particular still springs to mind as they meet with the United States delegation in Doha. They are in obvious need of things other countries can supply them with but we are not so sure that they will be willing to alter their ways regarding the education and treatment of young women. Give wisdom dear Lord to all who are in this debate that they might follow your guiding.

In the UK as we are thankful for the Covid vaccinations and the lifting of restrictions and beginning to enjoy times of fellowship together, we are very much aware of those who are struggling financially and are desperate to know how they can face this winter with a high rise in cost of fuel and food. Give wisdom, knowledge and expertise to those in government dear Lord to bring us through these difficult times in industry.

We remember too at this time our Police dealing with the horrendous task of the tragic death of Sarah Everard. Bring comfort dear Lord to her family, and determination to all who work in crime prevention that this will never happen again. We know too that the carrying of knives has escalated with young people who say it is for their own protection. May Christians and all seekers of peace and goodwill be inspired to provide activities that will encourage the young to know that there are other things to focus on and enjoy.

We continue to pray for the Chilvers (our BMS partners) in Chad. Protect them and bless them Lord as they work and witness for you.

We thank you Lord for the good things that are happening. For the young footballer Marcus Rushford who has just received an MBE for his amazing work to provide food for those in need.

We have also heard of the new books that are being provided to Junior schools where the characters in them are from different nations so that all children feel included.

We think too of the UK National Cyberforce at Samlesbury which will provide many jobs in the north-west.

And now closer to home, we pray for our fellowship here at Bethesda.

Loving God we remember especially today Rosemary Smith and her family as they mourn the sudden death of David. God of all comfort, comfort them and all who grieve for the loss of loved ones, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints".

We remember too Peggy Simmen and Brian Fish, both in care. May they have the peace that only you can give.

In the quietness of our hearts we now bring to you all who need a special touch from you this day.

And last but not least we bring Alec and the Deacons before you Lord: bless them, encourage them, reward them for their faithful service and may they lead us as a fellowship into all that you would have us do. Amen

As Shirley leaves the platform, **Colin introduces our next chorus**, to be shown on the screen: **Ask, seek, knock**.

Its a Childrens action song, that we can join in with as we wish - we can make up our own actions if we would like, or we can read the words aloud or silently if we prefer:

I'm reading my b-i-b-l-e and this is what it says to me -
it tells me that I'm never ever alone.

I'm learning how J-e-s-u-s came down to us and gave his best
without a doubt the best friend you'll ever know.

Our God knows exactly what I need so I remember this -
Let's go:

When you ask he cares, when you seek he's there,
when you knock knock knock knock knock,
God opens up the doors.

When you ask he cares, when you seek he's there,
when you knock knock knock knock knock
God opens up the door.

Songwriters: Beci Wakerley / David Wakerley
Ask Seek Knock lyrics © Hillsong Music Publishing Australia
CCL No 5664
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3vXskh11ig>

Colin introduces our theme for today, reminding us of the Encounters with Jesus we have looked at over the previous weeks, and leading to our reading for today, the Rich Young Ruler.

He reads the passage we will be considering, Mark 10, 17-31

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good - except God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give

false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.”

‘Teacher,’ he declared, ‘all these I have kept since I was a boy.’

Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’

At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!’

The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’

The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, ‘Who then can be saved?’ Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’

Then Peter spoke up, ‘We have left everything to follow you!’

‘Truly I tell you,’ Jesus replied, ‘no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’

In case some found this a difficult passage to follow, Colin suggested we might like to watch children reading this passage, shown on the screen, and accompanied by drawings:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7u3-uKEA-Q>

Colin then shared his message for today:

‘Heaven is not for sale’

I’m sure you’ve heard the story of three blind men? They stand beside a large object and describe it to one another by feeling it. The first says, ‘It’s long and thin.’ The second says, ‘It’s short and thick.’ The third says, ‘It’s small and fluffy.’ What are they feeling? Believe it or not: an elephant. The first feels its trunk. The second, a leg. The third, the tail. But they feel the same thing. The moral of the story is they’re all right but each thinks the others are wrong. The claim is that we all have a limited perception and subjective experiences, all of which may be equally true.

That’s how people in our society these days so often describe the pathway to heaven. All roads lead there, they argue. Listen to almost any funeral sermon and you come away thinking the only requirement to get to heaven is to die. Everyone’s going. Why? Because they were a good person. They did more good than bad. It doesn’t matter what they believed. Hell is only for *really* bad people, such as rapists and murderers, like Wayne Couzens, the London police-officer who used his badge to kidnap and murder Sarah Everard.

But that's not what the Bible says. Not all who think they're going to heaven will get there. Jesus described it not as a wide path, but a narrow one. Not a wide door but a narrow door. Some claiming to know Jesus will meet him at the end to find he never knew them. We cannot make our own way there. We must follow God's way, and his way is through faith and trust in Jesus alone. If we refuse him as Saviour, we lose eternal life. We are all sinners by nature and by practice, even if we haven't broken the law of the land, because we have all broken God's law, as summed up in the Two Great Commandments.

And so we come to the Encounter with Jesus in our reading from Mark 10, involving a man searching for a way to heaven. I have three headings for you as 'coat hooks' on which to hang our thoughts about this man's encounter with Jesus.

His Credentials

Throughout his ministry Jesus met a number of wealthy individuals who were deeply unhappy and desperately searching for that 'something' in their lives that would give them peace of mind and a sense of fulfilment which their riches clearly could not give them. This is the case in our reading. We can note TEN features about the man who met Jesus on the road to Jerusalem:

- He was young (25-40), fit and eager. He ran to catch up with Jesus.
- He was a Jewish ruler.
- He was wealthy. In modern day terms he was possibly a multi-millionaire.
- He was perceptive, because he saw in Jesus someone who was different from your typical rabbi, someone who could possibly answer the deep longings of his heart. You see, there was something missing in his 'well-heeled' privileged life.
- He was respectful. He knelt before Jesus and called him 'Good, Teacher'.
- He was courageous. Unlike Nicodemus, another Jewish ruler, who came to see Jesus at night time, when it was dark, so he could not be seen, the Rich Young Ruler came to Jesus in broad daylight, in full view of everyone.
- He was religious. He clearly reflected deeply on religious matters and concerns, such as eternal life.
- He was a truth-seeker. He wanted to know for certain how he could obtain eternal life and to experience the peace that must come to a person as a result of knowing that they have such a blessing.
- He was respectable and moral. Look at their conversation in verses 19-20. 'You know the commandments,' Jesus said and commenced to list some of the Ten Commandments, in no particular order. The man said he'd obeyed them from his

youth. Many rulers in those days, including the Caesars, were noted for their immorality and abuse of power.

- He was honest. He had this conversation and made this confession in public, so clearly he had a good reputation. Some commentators say that he had the sin of pride, but I'm not too sure. I think he was being truthful and sincere. He wasn't showing off or saying 'look at me, aren't I good person', because he knew that something was not quite right; he lacked the peace and assurance within himself that he thought should follow from a life devoted to being good. Indeed, we are told in Mark's account that Jesus *'loved him'*, because he was impressed by his frankness and honesty.

So, in short, he was every mother's dream son-in-law! No wonder the disciples were shocked after he went away without finding what he was looking for. *'Who then can be saved?'* they asked. If he's not good enough, they no doubt thought to themselves, who is?

His Consultation and Cure

This young man came to Jesus and he asked, what on the surface appears to be a very innocent question: (vs.17) *'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'* But instead of answering the question, Jesus asked **him** a question: *'Why do you call me "good"?'* No doubt when he called Jesus 'Good Teacher or Rabbi' he was thinking that Jesus would say: 'You are a great judge of character. I thank you for your wonderful compliment. What may I do for you?'

But instead, Jesus put this young man on the horns of a dilemma, as we might say, for Jesus was often accused by the religious leaders of making himself equal to God by appropriating God's authority. And so, Jesus responded with *'There is none good but One, that is, God.'* The word 'good' here means 'sinless.' Jesus was in effect saying: 'Why do you call me sinless? There is none sinless but One, that is, God.' In Romans 3 Paul tells us that *'There is no one that does good, not one.'* When we read this verse, at first we don't understand it, because even the worst of people can do some good; and have done some good in their lives. When the Word of God says 'GOOD' it literally means 'sinless' or morally perfect, in that they have not thought, done or said a wrong thing in their lives. So that verse in Romans could read: 'There is no one that is sinless; no not one.'

In effect what Jesus was saying here to this young man is: 'You cannot call Me Good; you cannot call Me sinless, unless you call Me God. And if you call Me God, then you can call me Good.' There is no one that has ever lived who was 'sinless' except Jesus; and Jesus was sinless because He was God. But please note: Jesus was not God because He was Good; Jesus was Good because He was God!

So, does this young man really think Jesus is a good teacher? Will he still call him that when the answer to his question comes? You can't call Jesus a good teacher until you're ready to accept him as Lord of your life. Was this man ready?

Sadly, we see soon enough that he isn't. He was basically looking for some spiritual something to add to his life – like an advanced diploma, or a new, healthy life-style. Just add a touch of Jesus, a little bit of sparkle, and all will be well. But eternal life is not another 'asset' to be acquired, to be stockpiled, to be worn as a badge of honour. Yes, I've no doubt the young man was prepared to make small changes to his life and I'm sure had he been alive today he would have been into New Years' Resolutions in a big way. Had Jesus told him to start a new fitness regime or diet, I'm sure he'd have been enthusiastic! But he was not prepared to make the sort of radical change that Jesus the Great Physician prescribed for him, because such a change would conflict with his wealthy life-style. In other words, he was a sinner like everyone else but a life-changing plan had to be on his terms. This shows that he failed to realise who Jesus was: the Christ, the Son of God and Lord of all. He failed to appreciate that he was looking into the eyes of the one who had the power to bestow eternal life, the very thing he was seeking after. As the Saviour of the world, Jesus doesn't point you on the way; Jesus is the Way. He's not an addition, an add-on; he's more like a subtraction. He will unravel or undo your life and remake it in himself according to God's perfect plan for your life and for mine. That's why Jesus says elsewhere in the Gospels that it's like being born again. The good-news of Jesus Christ is not some health supplement; it's a whole new life. If you want eternal life, if you want to be part of God's kingdom of blessing, it comes only through the life God gives by his Son through his Spirit. You must abandon all notions of a DIY fix-it righteousness for the righteousness of Christ, one that he can provide for us through his cross-work – his death and resurrection.

So Jesus' cure for this young man's complaint or condition – the one thing he lacked – was clear enough: *'Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up your cross, and follow me.'*

His Crisis

So, what was the young man's response? We are told that *'He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.'* This story should have had a happy ending. This young man could have offered to sell everything that he had and given it to the poor. He could then have followed Jesus, and he would have lived happily ever after. Just think what he could have achieved as an ambassador for Christ. But he chose to walk away from Jesus, and he left in a worse condition than when he first knelt before the Lord. Notice the word 'sad'. The original Greek word suggests that he felt shaken and shattered, and utterly crushed. When this young man walked away from the Lord, he didn't walk away with a smile on his face. He

walked away with tears in his eyes. He was a broken man. This was the saddest day of his life because the happiest day of a person's life is when they come to Jesus! For true happiness and contentment do not consist in the abundance of one's possessions, no matter how rich they may be. This young man left the greatest thing that he could have ever had. He left the One who could have saved him from his sins. He left the One who could have given him spiritual riches beyond measure. But he turned and walked away.

And so, no one ever came to Jesus with more, and no one ever left Jesus with less! You see, just because a person feels a sense of emptiness – a void, even – at the core of their being, and may even feel a sense of sorrow, guilt, and remorse for what they have done wrong, this does not make them right with God. A person can feel sorry for their sins, but that doesn't mean that they have salvation. Because unless a person turns from their own way and chooses God's way, the Way of Christ who loved us and gave himself for us, then they will spend eternity without God.

And even the disciples had missed the truth that salvation or entry into God's kingdom is not based on reaching a certain level of goodness. For notice their question: *'Who then can be saved?'* There are no targets or goals to achieve to gain entrance into the kingdom of God. God calls all people to repent. And citizenship of heaven is a gift of the Holy Spirit that comes through repentance, not an award for being good.

Finally, Jesus concluded his encounter with the Young Man with the statement that *'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'* Jesus is referring here to a narrow night-time entry gate into Jerusalem called the Eye of a Needle. A camel could get through it, but it had to be bent down and dragged through, screaming. It was difficult, but not impossible. And yet for a rich person, their wealth will always tend to block their way into heaven. Only through the loss of that wealth do they stand any chance of seeing that life is more than the sum of their material possessions, for wealth can blind a person to the true realities of life, and worse still, *'The love of money is the root of all evil,'* as Paul says in another of his letters. Our bigness can't buy heaven. It's not for sale!

We bring our service to a close as we sing together: In Christ alone.

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.

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We share the Grace together:

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.

(We didn't actually sing the last hymn at Bethesda, as we had a power cut just as Colin finished his message!! Power was restored later in the afternoon!)