



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on October 3rd 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 service today is led by Alec, continuing our "Encounters with Jesus" series, and includes Communion.

Alec welcomes us all, and we begin by reading together Psalm 69, verses 29-32 from the Contemporary English Version;

I am mistreated and in pain.

Protect me, God, and keep me safe!

I will praise the Lord God

with a song and a thankful heart.

This will please the Lord better than offering an ox or a full-grown bull.

When those in need see this, they will be happy,
and the Lord's worshippers will be encouraged.

Our opening hymn is O worship the King, all glorious above, which Trevor plays on the piano.

O worship the King all glorious above,
and gratefully sing his power and his love:
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

O tell of his might and sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth, with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your power has founded of old;
established it fast, by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.

We children of dust are feeble and frail -
in you do we trust, for you never fail;
your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end!
our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend.

O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
whom angels delight to worship above!
Your ransomed creation, with glory ablaze,
in true adoration shall sing to your praise!

Robert Grant (1779-1838) after William Kethe (ca. 1559-1594)

As these words have only been slightly updated there is no Jubilate copyright - the words are public domain.CCL No 5664

Alec shares the Notices for this week:

Refreshments will be served after the service today
Coffee Morning – Tuesday @ 10-12, including Ladies Bible Study at 10.45am, and also an offer of guitar lessons from Graham.

Fellowship Meeting – Thursday @ 7.30pm

Keswick in East Lancashire – 8/9 October meeting in Great Harwood and Padiham

RISE Praise evening – 19 October at Beacon / Zoom

Praying for each other – updated copies available

Morag will be organising Operation Christmas Child again, further details coming soon.

The Ladies Afternoon Fellowship will restart on October 12th at 2.15pm, and will meet every fortnight after that, alternating with the morning Ladies Bible Study.

Colin would welcome help in cleaning the chapel on the first Thursday of every month, meeting at 10am.

Our Prayers today are led by Becky

“Dear Heavenly Father,

We gather here again this morning to give you praise for all the blessings you bestow on us. We want to thank you for your unconditional love and protection over us all. We thank you for our mothers and fathers, for our siblings and for our own precious children. We thank you for our church and for our church families. Most of all we thank you that whatever else happens in our life, we can be absolutely certain that your love towards us will never change. It is a constant love. A love that only wants the best for each of us.

We can be our true selves, even letting out our doubts and anxieties to you dear Father, without embarrassment or shame. We can tell you our shortcomings, you know them anyway. Undeliberately we let you down time after time but your love never changes, you don't bear grudges. How very blessed are we then? To have a friend, a Saviour like you. An absolute example of love for each and everyone of us.

Lord we pray for all the very lost souls who have not come to know you yet. They are not so lucky as we are. Please in your wisdom help us to help loved ones dear to us, to get to know and love you. We pray for our church to grow and our activities to attract the people that live in this area to want to come in and have fellowship with us. We lift any of our church members up to you, Lord God, who are feeling a little discouraged at this time, be it about getting back into a routine or being nervous still about Corona. We pray for each other. We ask for comfort for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, and for those who are nursing a loved one. We pray for people who feel unloved and suffer abuse and cruelty. Please reveal yourself to these broken people and help them to find peace.

We continue to pray Heavenly Father for the world situations. We beg for help for the countries who have very little food and water. Countries who have makeshift hospitals, poor in sanitation and hygiene. Help us to help them. Give wisdom to the government. We pray for the situation in Afghanistan, we pray that there will be no more killing and cruelty. There are so many disasters all over the world, some natural disasters, others man-made, through greed and power seekers. We read about these happenings and see pictures on the news. Every day we seem to hear about some monstrosity or other, some wicked act that is heart breaking Father. Even still, during this sadness though, there are all the kind and wonderful things that take place. We have the fundraisers and aid workers who get money and supplies to these war-torn countries. They work tirelessly to get supplies to the people in need. Thank you Lord for them. We thank you for our NHS, and yes, we have all had a moan about the delay to treatments, which we can't deny, but we do have a hospital and dedicated nursing staff. Give us your wisdom again Lord to show patience and know that this backlog of waiting will pass.

There are concerns about food shortages, we have more than enough food. We need to think again about the people who really do have no food. Petrol shortages, please Lord, get inside the hearts of the scaremongers and the greedy, there is enough for everyone, please Lord stop all this anger. There are so many more serious things to worry about. All this pent up anger won't help anyone.

Lord you created such a beautiful world for us to live in, what are we doing to it? You gave us trees and flowers, birds and fish and animals. You made seasons, hot and cold,

moon and sun and rain, sky, land and sea, night and day. You then gave us the most precious gift of all, your son Jesus Christ. Your precious son came to live here on Earth with his people. Jesus lived a perfect life showing us true love and teaching us forgiveness. Through peoples own disobedience and selfishness people didn't listen then and our precious saviour went to the chorus and died for us.

Jesus still loves us just the same and still we often don't listen. Still Jesus loves us and wants the very best for us.

I personally promise I will try to be the person God wants me to be. I can only be better if I succeed and God thinks I can do it, he has faith in me. I just need to have that faith in myself. We are all God's children, he loves us and never gives up on us. He is always with us, we are never alone. How wonderful is that? Amen"

Alec invites us to join in sharing Communion together, beginning by singing the first three verses of: The Servant King (Graham Kendrick)

From heaven you came helpless babe, enter'd our world Your Glory veil'd;
not to be served but to serve and give Your life that we might live:

This is our God, the Servant King - He calls us now to follow Him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the Servant King.

There in the garden of tears my heavy load He chose to bear,
His heart with sorrow was torn yet 'Not my will but Yours', He said.

This is our God, the Servant King....

Come see His hands and His feet - the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space to cruel nails surrendered.

This is our God, the Servant King....

Alec reminded us that last week Tim chose a hymn sung to Beethovens 9th Symphony, on the day of the German elections, and today is a holiday in Germany in honour of unity, but what matters to us is not unity and citizenship between nations on earth but in heaven, thereby inviting those who are in fellowship with him and others to join together around this table. "We were without hope but God has given us hope."

Colin and Janet distribute the bread, symbol of the broken body Jesus Christ, Alec says : "lets be thankful and prayerful as we share in this together."

Victor leads us in Prayer:

Lord Jesus, no greater love can anyone than this, that will lay down his life for his friends, and you called us your friends and you laid your life down for us, and that somehow when you were broken, we have the opportunity to become whole, thank you for your great sacrifice for us, thank you for the love you have for us, we take this in faith and remind ourselves that by believing in you, we can find wholeness and forgiveness, we pray this in your name, Amen.

Alec reads words from 1 Corinthians 11:23-24.

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

After eating the bread, Colin and Janet distribute the wine.

Victor again leads in prayer:

Jesus, your blood was shed for us, it should have been mine, it should have been us that deserve what you received on the cross, but by your blood, we can be washed clean, thank you for your sacrifice for us, thank you for the preciousness of your blood that your grace is greater than all of our sins, we look forward till the time that we will share this in heaven. We pray this in your name, Amen.

Alec continues, reading from 1 Corinthians 11:25-26.

25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We drink together.

We join in singing the final verse of our communion hymn:

So let us learn how to serve and in our lives enthrone Him;
each other's needs to prefer for it is Christ we're serving.
This is our God, the Servant King....

Graham Kendrick Copyright ©1983 Makeway Music
CCL no 5664

Graham now reads from John's Gospel 7:53-8:11 (NIV)

Then they all went home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered round him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'

'No one, sir,' she said.

'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'

Before Alec shares his Message, we watch, listen or read the words: Here I am to worship/Call upon the Name of the Lord

Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness,
opened my eyes, let me see beauty that made this heart adore you,
hope of a life spent with you.

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God.

You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days, so highly exalted, glorious in heaven above;
humbly you came to the earth you created,
all for love's sake became poor.

Here I am to worship....

I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross...
I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross...

Here I am to worship....

Call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

Tim Hughes, Chris Tomlin

Copyright©2000 Kingsway Music CCL no 5664

(Hillsong) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSOjaBf_rpU

Alec shares his message:

"Encounters with Jesus no. 4 today Jesus meets you.

He meets your need of acceptance, your need for forgiveness, your need to be listened to, to be treated as a created human being like every other individual on the planet whom he has ever made or will make.

More than anything else He meets your need to know the truth which will set you free, to experience His love which will empower you to love even when you are mistreated, His grace which will be like a living stream flowing through the drudgery of your daily life and His mercy which will command your obedience for He is the Lord Jesus.

I am speaking today from God`s Word, from the Bible. People gave and give their lives to translate this book. Many copies of this book land in second-hand bookshops, collect dust on our bookshelves, lie around somewhere in our homes, prevent doors creating drafts, level up tables and other pieces of furniture on an uneven surface so we can get on better with OUR daily lives, many copies of this are piled up in a box at the right rear side of the sanctuary. Well we can always google whatever we need to read.

CS Lewis who wrote amongst many brilliant books the Narnia stories said, isn`t it strange that the more versions we have of the Bible the less we read from any of them.

You see if we read John`s Gospel from the beginning to the point at which Graham helpfully began today at chapter 7:53 we see Jesus coming into the world, being recognised and identified by John the Baptist as THE Son of God, making disciples, performing miracles, talking about Himself and especially about His Father, healing people, pointing people to the truth and their need of forgiveness for the mess they have created in their lives through going their own way instead of God`s Way, listening to them to find out where it`s at in their lives although of course He already knows, giving them time to be themselves and open up before Him and giving them a free choice of moving forward with Him or of losing their lives for ever.

Well you would think everybody that ever came into contact with Him would be excited; you might anticipate all who met Him would be thrilled.

But the reality is the religious people didn`t go with this Jesus being God`s Son thing. They themselves felt threatened. They themselves could see and feel their power base being taken away from right under their feet. Many people, even Samaritans, even foreigners had turned to Jesus as Lord. Because you see Jesus is the Lord and He doesn`t stop at the church door to lock it from the inside.

There is a lovely story from a church in Glasgow where the evening service used to start at 6 pm which tells of the preacher speaking to the stewards and the congregation to make sure when they shut the door at the beginning of the service that they haven`t left God outside.

Two weeks ago while I was in Germany a wonderful Christian lady, the German wife of a British friend of mine who has been working together with him in church planting ministry in Guatemala for around the last 25 years went to be with the Lord after catching Covid. One week ago an American friend of mine in the state of Georgia who was a massive man of prayer, a great counsellor, prophet and encourager, went to be with the Lord.

These two people are both now with the Lord. They have met up with Him in Glory. But they had one more thing in common; they both prayed for people in this church.

And so we come now in this very church for which they prayed to what you may have been patiently waiting for and that is the encounters with Jesus in our bible passage for today. For you see Jesus wants to meet you and me; He wants to meet every one of us today, right now and every day and to be one day with Him forever in Glory like my friends in Guatemala and in Georgia. Are we really open to meeting Him? Do we really want that? Or are we just maybe play-acting church?

It is a massive understatement to say that this passage in John 7:53 -8:11 is a little bit unusual. It is not found in most of the original manuscripts. From a textual point of view it is probably the most difficult part of the New Testament. If you are interested in discussing

some of the more complicated elements of this text, like what did Jesus write on the first and the second occasion on the ground? Where is the man involved with this woman and so on and so forth, we can do that on another occasion. Right now God just wants you to meet His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This bible passage is as I said missing from most original manuscripts but God through the Holy Spirit made absolutely sure that it didn't get left out. So here it is.

It describes something which we might find very threatening or rather uncomfortable. In this situation there is Jesus, there are loads of religious people and there is this one woman who is by no account an angel.

The context following on from John chapter 7 is Jesus' visit to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles, the possibility of his arrest and debate as to whether he is the Messiah.

John 7 details how Jesus walked through Galilee. He did not want to go to Judea during this time because many Jews wanted to kill him. His brothers told him to head up to Judea as he would not be known if he kept doing things in secret. Jesus responded that it was not yet his time to go directly to Judea but Jesus told them to go ahead. Jesus followed after them in secret. The people at the feast were talking and wondering where Jesus was. Some believed that he was a good man while others thought that he deceived the people but no-one wanted to speak openly about him. While disguised in Judaea, Jesus preached at the temple which caused trouble among the chief priests. When asked about who he was, Jesus responded that he had authority directly from God to preach at the temple. He also said that the same people accusing him tried to have him killed for healing a man on the Sabbath.

During the last day of the feast, Jesus compared himself to living water. He said that anyone who was thirsty could come to him. Are you thirsty this morning? Hearing this, many people started to believe that he was the Messiah. There was a conflict in opinion and many other people wanted to seize him, however no one laid a hand on Jesus. The religious authorities were unhappy with Jesus and commanded their officers to arrest him, but the officers stood in awe of Jesus and claimed to have never heard anyone preach like him. Therefore they did not want to arrest him.

From 7:53 we read: "Then they all went home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts; where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.

And in verse 3 we read: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were those who wrote, interpreted and applied the law. They were characterised by their zeal, by their enthusiasm, by their commitment to the law. They knew that it said in Exodus 20:14, "You shall not commit adultery." That was a no-brainer to them. They were genuine religious orthodox leaders. But to be honest with you they were less interested in the observance of the law than in trapping the Lord Jesus who was seen by them to threaten their power and existence.

So they organised a set-up, a frame-up. It was quite probably a double trap for the woman and more significantly for the Lord; for they knew that according to the law multiple witnesses had to be actually physically present and visually able to detect adultery.

Where the man had come from, where the man had gone we do not know. They just presented the woman to Jesus with their charge, knowing that either Jesus would need to decide to break the Law of Moses or uphold it in which case he would find himself acting against Roman law.

The behaviour of the religious leaders was characterised by brutality and by hypocrisy. They did not care about the woman, exposing her publicly probably lightly-clad with her eyes downcast with a despairing, frightened, maybe hopeless facial expression. She is given no name. There is no talk of her real being, of her personality; she is just being used and misused by the religious leaders in the attempt to destroy Jesus and protect their own power and existence.

The religion of the religious leaders was devoid of mercy and devoid of reality

Religious orthodoxy doesn't free us from sin. Religion has its systems, its theories, its guidelines, its practices but no reality, no love. Paul tells Timothy "Stay away from people like that! They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly."

I don't always, maybe I don't often, reach the goal of being real and being merciful myself but that is my heart's aim with God's help.

So we come to the woman who now encounters Jesus like He wants us to encounter Him today.

The woman represents tragedy at a time of a major religious festival. She had decided her desires and needs mattered more than what God's Word said.

It is a shocking scene, an awful scene. Abuse of women is so commonplace in all societies. Do not ask me about violent and other crime against women in this borough. Do not ask me about refuge homes in Lancashire. But answer me just this question: Where are the real men who will stand up and love their wives like Christ loves the church?

Do not say to me that victims of our society are not welcome in our church. That would be a contradiction in terms. They are not only welcome. They are warmly welcome. As the Lord Jesus has been and is merciful to us so will we be merciful to others. Who do we think we are if we reject those whom God accepts?

Jesus neither condoned nor condemned the woman's behaviour.

He neither made light of her sin nor set aside the Mosaic Law.

"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

He says OK. That's what it says in Dt. 17. That's what the law says let's do it. If you are without sin get on with it. Stone her.

Well, all of a sudden, we hear "Thud, "then another "thud," "thud, thud, thud, thud," as all the people around are dropping rocks and walking away, until no one is left but Jesus and the woman. No-one is left but Jesus and me, Jesus and you.

By the way just in case you are wondering, Jesus could not carry out the sentence of stoning because he was not a witness to the event and was only one witness.

The Pharisees had all decided that it was their job to punish the sinner, the one who was just found at fault. They were ready as ever to throw rocks at her until she was dead. But once they were reminded that not one of them was perfect, they quickly dropped their weapons. They dropped their weapons.

Before you and I even think about condemning anyone else, look at yourself and then drop your weapon.

The woman did not say very much. She is 1 to 1 with Jesus, a vulnerable person alone with Jesus? What would our safeguarding laws and regulations say about that? Or maybe we think she would not reasonably be classified as a vulnerable person?

Jesus says: "Go away and sin no more." The Lord Jesus doesn't abandon judgement but gives the woman the chance of a fresh start.

In a world where rejection is the majority, let's reverse the standard and offer an atmosphere of acceptance. Let's accept people for who they are, not what they look like. Let's look beyond the outside and attempt to get to know the inside. And even if the inside isn't what you like, accept others regardless of their flaws and mistakes. Open Up. Be merciful even as Jesus shows you mercy.

How do we make war with sin without being vindictive, brutal and hypocritical? By first of all putting the searchlight on our own evil hearts and asking God in Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

This passage in John 8 is in my opinion the most beautiful passage in the New Testament in that it shows the wonder of the breadth and the depth and the everything of the mercy of Jesus in the face of the deep abyss, the deep valley of human wrong.

What we have here is a clear and graphic portrayal of the depths to which men and women can sink in their sin and at the same time a wonderful indication of the breadth of the mercy of God able to reach down to men and women in their sin.

We sung repeatedly many times before this message, "I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross."

When the Lord Jesus says to the woman, when he says to me and to you, "Go away and sin no more" He is Himself on the way to that Cross.

Come to Jesus. Show Him who you are, He knows you through and through anyway. Let Him be merciful to you and go and sin no more.

Call upon the name of the Lord and be saved."

As we bring our worship to a close, we join in singing a hymn written by Martin Luther, and today sung to a tune we may recognise (for many years we have sung it at Baptismal services - I'm not ashamed to own my Lord). Trevor plays it on the piano:

Lord, from the depths I call to you; Lord, hear me from on high
and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry.

Lord in your presence who can stand, if you our sins record?
But yet forgiveness is with you, that we may fear you, Lord.

I wait - my soul waits - for the Lord; my hope is in his word.
More than the watchman waits for dawn my soul waits for the Lord.

Oh Israel put your hope in God, for mercy is with him
and full Redemption from their sins; his people he will redeem.

Words: Martin Luther (1523) Tune: Martyrdom
Public domain, CCL No 5664

Alec encourages us to share together in 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.