



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on September 10th 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, and Kate is playing the piano for us for the first and last hymns, with Alec playing for the time of praise and worship. Paul W plays all the music!

Alec begins as he welcomes everyone, and reads from Psalm 18, 13-36, with the first 2 verses relating to our theme today.

The Lord thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded.
He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them.
The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, Lord, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.
He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.
He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.
They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support.
He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.
The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.
For I have kept the ways of the Lord; I am not guilty of turning from my God.
All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees.
I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin.
The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd
You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.
You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.
With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.
As for God, his way is perfect: the Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.
For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?
It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.
He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights.
He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way.

Alec then introduced our Opening hymn

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!
Come, all who hear; now to his temple draw near,
join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning;
sheltering you under his wings, and so gently sustaining!
Have you not seen all that is needful has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen sound from his people again;
gladly forever adore him.

Authors: Catherine Winkworth, Joachim Neander, words amended (Jubilate) CCLI SONG # 43073 Copyright, Music and original words
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Tony was invited to share our Notices: the service today will be followed by a shared lunch, next Sunday the service will be followed by the members AGM so bring a packed lunch, and Sunday September 24th will be our Harvest Sunday, again followed by a shared lunch! Harvest will be led by David Livermore, from the NWBA. Because this sounds very food oriented, Tony reminded all of the day of prayer and fasting on Sept 14th when the church building will be open from 10am till 8pm, emphasising the final hour when all are invited to join together at Bethesda seeking the way forward. Ladies afternoon will meet this coming Tuesday, and Tiddlywinks restarts on Weds 13th.

Alec announced a time of Praise and Worship; playing 3 songs:

How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure,
that He should give His only Son To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss, the Father turns His face away
as wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders,
ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life, I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom,
but I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer,
but this I know with all my heart, His wounds have paid my ransom.

Author: Stuart Townend CCLI SONG # 1558110 Copyright © 1995 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

Majesty, worship His Majesty: unto Jesus be all glory, honour, and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority, flow from His throne unto His own, His anthems raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus. Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.

Majesty, worship His Majesty, Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all Kings.

Author: Jack Hayford CCLI SONG #1527 Copyrights@ 1981 New Spring (Admin. by / Small Stone Media BV, Holland (Admin. in the UK/ Eire by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org))CCL No 5664

**We really want to thank You Lord, we really want to bless Your name,
Hallelujah! Jesus is our King.**

**We really want to thank You Lord, we really want to bless Your name,
Hallelujah! Jesus is our King.**

We thank You Lord for Your gifts to us, Your life so rich beyond compare;
the gift of Your body here on earth of which we sing and share.

We really want to thank You Lord, we really want to bless Your name....

We thank You, Lord, for our lives together, to live and move in the love of Christ;
tenderness which sets us free, to serve you with our lives.

We really want to thank You Lord, we really want to bless Your name....

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below,
praise Him above ye heavenly hosts, praise Him for His Word divine.

We really want to thank You Lord, we really want to bless Your name....

Author::Edward Baggett CCLI SONG # 150904 Copyrights 1974, 1975 Celebration CCL No 5664

Our Prayers were led by Shirley

"Loving God, we join together in your house to worship you. We come once more reminded of all you are and all you have done, of the love with which you surround us, the grace you have shown us through Jesus Christ, and the purpose you have for our lives.

We come to offer you our praise, to declare again your mighty acts, to marvel at your greatness, and to commit ourselves to your service.

We come to give thanks, to rejoice in all you have given us, to respond to your goodness, and to offer our love in return.

We come to make our confession, to admit our faults and failings, to recognise our weakness, and to ask your forgiveness.

We come to pray for ourselves, to seek your guidance to discover your will, and to find the strength we need to live our lives as your people.

We come to pray for others, our loved ones with all their joys and sorrows, our world with all its suffering and your church, as it seeks to express your compassion in action.

We come to make our offering, to bring our time, our money, our talents, our service, ourselves.

Loving God, we come to worship you in the conviction that you are here with us now, that you are by our side, always, that you hold all things and all people in your hands. As we reach out to you, reach out to us, we pray, and fill every moment of every day with the light of your love and the peace of your presence, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Dear Father, we have so much to thank you for: the beauty of the Earth captured by the natural eye or through the gift of TV which makes us gasp in wonder at the joy of your creation. The love and care of family and friends. The blessing of an unexpected gift from family or friends. The warmth of knowing we are appreciated and the knowledge that we too can show our appreciation. The thankfulness that you give us for shelter, food and the ability to share with others. The knowledge that we know you hear our prayers, sometimes desperate ones, and act upon them, even though they do not always have the answers we

would like, but still knowing that your will, and purpose is always best for us. Loving God, we bless you from the bottom of our hearts.

Even as we rejoice in all your goodness to us, dear Lord, we are conscious of those who are struggling with life in all its complexities. The homeless, those gravely ill in mind and body. Those experiencing loss of family, friends, and homes through wildfires, floods, and all the results of climate change. We pray dear Lord, not just for our government, but for all world leaders that they will seek to do what is right for their countries and people and not for greed or worldly recognition. We pray too that wars may cease and that your kingdom will come here on Earth.

We think, particularly at this time of Ukraine and our dear sister Adelina, who is visiting her daughter. Protect her and her family dear Father, and may she come safely back to us. We also pray at this time for wisdom for world leaders at the G20 conference in Delhi, that relationships between the countries will be amicable and that possible trade agreements will be made.

Closer to home we think of RAAC, the crumbling concrete that has been found to be in many buildings, causing danger, particularly in schools and hospitals, Give wisdom and the ability to our government to deal with this speedily and successfully.

And now to our family here at BBC. We thank you, Lord for answered prayer and for the faithfulness of Alec our pastor and the leaders, few though they may be at this time, and all who give of precious time and service in the running of our fellowship.

And now in the quietness of our hearts we remember before you all those who need your healing touch at this time. As we continue to let go and let you dear Lord as we look to what you would have us do in the future, we think of our prayer and fasting day on Thursday. Help us to fast as we are able whether from food, TV, et cetera, and endeavour to spend some time here at open church,

Finally as we look forward to our AGM next Sunday we pray:

Gracious God we come together today recognising once again that you have called us to fellowship, that each of us has a place, a role, a ministry within the body of Christ, all with something to offer to one another and something to receive. Guide us therefore as we now:

Open our hearts to you and our minds to one another.

Give us the ability to hear your voice and discern your will to recognise the gifts you have given us and to show our appreciation of all the work undertaken over this last year,

Open our hearts to you and our minds to one another.

Give us insight into your will, inspiration through your Holy Spirit and instruction through your Word.

Open our hear hearts to you and our minds to one another.

Give us wisdom to see the opportunities before us, courage to grasp them and perseverance to see them through to fulfilment.

Open our hearts to you and our minds to one another.

Gracious God, we thank you for all that has been accomplished in and through this church, for all who have contributed to what it is today, and we pray you will enable us in our different ways to build together for the future, open to the prompting of your Spirit, guided by the love of Christ and working for your glory.

Open our hearts to you and our minds to one another, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The Bible reading today, Acts 10: 9-26 was read by Jane:

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.'

'Surely not, Lord!' Peter replied. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.'

The voice spoke to him a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.'

This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.

They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'

Peter went down and said to the men, 'I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?'

The men replied, 'We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.' Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along.

The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. 'Stand up,' he said, 'I am only a man myself.'

Alec's Message "BUILD UP"

We are continuing on the journey we were on last week. You may remember we were in Caesarea with the centurion Cornelius who told us of his encounter with an angel. Wow! You will perhaps recall that he was told by God to send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon called Peter. So that is what he did.

Let's go with these men the 32 miles from Caesarea southwards along the coast to Joppa and see how they got on. By the way Joppa is now part of Tel Aviv.

But wait a minute. Our tour group leader, our guide, has gone before us...as He always does. He has prepared the way for us. He will open the door for us and show us what happens next and what we have to do.

He is already speaking to Peter, one of His servants. According to the guide book, Peter has been in Joppa for some time. We find out about this in Acts 9:32-43. Peter's travel log says he travelled around the country and went to visit the believers in Jesus in Lydda.

Then he met a man called Aeneas, a paralysed man who had been stuck in bed for 8 years. "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat," and immediately Aeneas got up.

Now this had the effect that ALL those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas and turned to the Lord. All of those who saw him; all of them; they all turned to the Lord. They did what? Their eyes were open, they saw what Peter had done in the Name of Jesus, they saw the power of God in Jesus Christ transforming a paralysed man into one who could walk and they believed. They turned to the Lord.

So like for Lydda and Sharon we substitute the words Galligreaves and Wensleyfold; that the people here will see what we are all doing in the Name of Jesus, will see the power of God and believe.

When the disciples of Jesus in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda they sent two men to him, urging him to please come at once. Why did they do that?

They did that because in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha who was always doing good and helping the poor. But around this time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Joppa was near Lydda where Peter was.

So what did Peter do? Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Tabitha had made while she was still with them.

And then Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." Would you want to do that? She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

When God acts things happen. When God acts people believe in the Lord.

So like there is Peter in Joppa and we are on the way to him accompanying Cornelius` two servants and one of his soldiers who was a devout man, and God is already speaking to Peter about them. Isn't that wonderful! Isn't that amazing! God prepares the way. God`s timing is perfect. God`s authority is immense. He is all powerful. He heals, He speaks, He gives visions, He sends angels, He transforms the hearts of men and women, adults and children. People turn to the Lord when they see before their eyes the power of God at work; in a caring and forgiving community of people who love Him and follow His commands.

So we are like just approaching the city of Joppa having travelled almost 32 miles. It is about 12 noon midday. We don't know it yet; we haven't heard about it yet; we haven't seen it yet; we haven't fully experienced it yet but God is at work in this situation, revealing more than just the way ahead for His servants but the way ahead for all mankind, for men and women everywhere.

Cornelius sent the group we are travelling with to Joppa knowing only that God said he should send them to bring back Peter. He did not know the details of what God was planning but what he knew he had to do he did obediently; and the same things should be true of us for God is at work in our church situation.

We are about to see more evidence, more examples of our God`s perfect timing, of his unlimited authority and of his assurance and provision for the way ahead.

We departed from Caesarea with these messengers sometime after 3:00 p.m. About noon on the day following the angel appearing in a vision to Cornelius we are approaching the city of Joppa where we have been told Peter will be found.

We don't know it yet, but exactly at this time Peter is going up on to the roof of the house where he is staying to pray. Peter was in the home of Simon the tanner whose house was by the sea possibly because a lot of water is needed for tanneries. Peter was on the housetop praying. This was a housetop and not an upper room. Many homes in Palestine had an outdoor flight of steps to a flat roof. The flat roofs were commonly used as places to pray and for other purposes. Well I think we have had this experience as well when we pray because Peter feels hungry. He becomes hungry and wants something to eat and a meal is being prepared. And then he sees a trance. We can't see this because we have just entered the city where he is living and haven't reached the house yet.

While a meal is being prepared he falls into a trance (ekstasis) and sees a vision. Peter sees the sky opened up and an object like a great sheet coming down. It is lowered by the four corners to the

ground. God is about to ask Peter to do what he normally would not do. To reach the Gentiles, he must overcome some of his past views. He was very familiar with the Jewish laws about clean and unclean animals. These laws are presented in Leviticus 11:1-47.

Now some people say this is kind of all made-up. They say that what Peter was really seeing in his hunger-induced trance was not a sheet but the sails of a boat passing by on the sea; which might make some sense because the word *othone* used here could be translated sail-cloth. It has also been suggested that if there was an awning over the roof of the house to shield people from the sun, this may have helped to create in Peter's mind the image of a large sheet that was being lowered down from the sky by four ropes. Be that as it may we know Peter was on the roof to pray and that when we come to God in prayer we are in a position and in a condition to hear God speaking to us which is what happened now to Peter as we are entering the city with the messengers. This was not a coincidence; it was part of God's perfect plan to open up the church to non-Jews, to all people in line with his promise to Abraham that through him ALL the nations of the earth would be blessed.

The main point of Peter's vision was not the shape or the size of the weight or the colour or whatever of the sheet itself, but what the sheet contained. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air-whatever walks, crawls or flies. It was evidently a mixture of clean and unclean creatures calculated to disgust any orthodox Jew. Yet having seen this vision, Peter now heard a voice which issued the shocking order; "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

We see Peter's response in the tour guide for our journey from verse 14, (read Acts 10:14-16). The vision left Peter confused. But while he was wondering about it and inwardly perplexed the delegation sent by Cornelius with which we are travelling finds out where Simon's house is and stops at the gate.

God's sense of timing, indeed his timing itself is perfect.

In his uncertainty over the vision that he had seen, in his confusion over the meaning of the vision he had been given, exactly then Peter hears our group calling out and asking whether Simon known as Peter was staying there.

God's timing, God's provision and God's assurance now work together, now complement each other and combine together as we read in verses 19-20:

"While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

God has got this sorted to a tee: it fits exactly, perfectly, completely. Only God can do things like that, in this way, with so much forethought, planning and careful execution. First of all exactly when our travel group arrived at the gates of the city Peter went up on to the roof to pray and saw the vision. Then when we arrived at the gate of the house where he was staying he was spoken to with words of assurance by the Holy Spirit guiding him and leading him saying exactly the right words, in the right way and at the right time.

"While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

God reassures Peter that He is behind all this.

Peter does not yet really know the meaning of what he is experiencing but he knows his God and that his God is leading him and showing him the way step-by-step. But he is obedient. He moves forward, he goes ahead in faith. He goes down and says to the men. "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

When God asks us to do something which we would not normally do how do we respond? Are we anxious? Are we worried? Are we annoyed or offended and behave in a bad-tempered or short-

tempered way? Are we very concerned? Are we confused or uncertain? Do we ask legitimate questions?

It is not THAT God speaks to us or HOW he speaks to us but WHAT he says to us that counts. He does speak to us and in various ways. There is no doubt about that. But are we listening and willing to follow? That is a very challenging question.

Our travel companions explain why we have come and Peter invites the men into the house as his guests. It would be no problem in traditional orthodox Jewish thinking to allow non-Jews to enter your house and eat at your table, but Jews wouldn't visit the houses of non-Jews or eat there.

This is an amazing true story, or indeed many amazing historically accurate accounts, of God speaking to men through angels, through visions and through His Spirit and of man's response.

All this is not what we might call good "event management". All this is not hyped-up religion. There are not over-exaggerated promises, backed up with financial guarantees or containing on the other hand financial pressure. There is no coercion, group pressure or political trickery or any kind of manipulation here. Peter is seeking God and God is speaking to him. Peter is available to God and God is directing and using him; not for his own benefit although he will benefit, but for the building up of the church of God. It is not even primarily for the sake of the church, although the church will grow massively world-wide over 2000 years and more through what God is doing here, but for the glory of God, to the honour of God and for the sake of His Name and His Kingdom.

Have we got it? Have we grasped this?

These dramatic events are a part of the process of opening a door of faith to the Gentiles. The door had been opened at Pentecost in Jerusalem to the Jews; a short while later it had been opened to those throughout Judea and Samaria; now on our journey we are experiencing how God opened the door to all people.

What does the Lord Jesus say to His disciples? Jesus comes to us and says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Are we willing to do here what God wants? He will be with us always, to the very end of the age.

We closed with an (offertory) hymn:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.

Perfect communion, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight.

Angels descending bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

This is my story, this is my song...

Perfect submission, all is at rest. I in my Saviour am happy and bless'd,

watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

This is my story, this is my song...

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Alec closed in prayer then all said 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.

