

## Blackburn Baptist Church Virtual Service, 19 July 2020



### Welcome

Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church this Sunday. We will be sharing communion together today, so please gather together a little bread and wine or juice before we continue. And please accept a 'virtual hug' - watch [here](#) if online - as it may well be a little while before we can all physically hug each other again. As we come together, we know that God has his arms open wide ready to welcome us, to draw us close to him, and share with us as we meet together this morning. In Luke chapter 15, Jesus paints a picture of a father seeing his lost son in the distance, and how he runs to greet him with open arms. This son had previously turned his back on his father and lost everything he had been given. Jesus tells this story so that everyone may know that whatever we have done with our lives, whatever we are like now, our heavenly Father longs for us to be close to him, at home with him, where we can be loved and share the joy and richness of his life, his way, and be graciously restored into his family. So let's begin together by singing praise to God for this story.

### Song: *Father God I Wonder*

*(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)*

Father God, I wonder  
How I managed to exist  
Without the knowledge  
Of your parenthood  
And your loving care  
But now I am your son  
I am adopted in your family

And I can never be alone  
'Cos Father God you're there beside me  
I will sing your praises  
I will sing your praises  
I will sing your praises  
Forever more.

"Father God I Wonder" words and music by Ian Smale  
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### Opening Prayer

We join together in prayers of adoration and confession. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. We confess that we have lived superficially. We have pushed to the back of our minds the questions that trouble us. We have not found time to face the emotions that disturb us. We have hidden from life behind habit, activity and entertainments. We have avoided you, God, even as you came after us. In our relationships we have given less than our whole selves and we have not received from others what they wished to give us of themselves. We have countered the sharp demands of justice with hardened hearts. We have allowed imagination and sympathy to wither. Routine has been our ally and honesty our dread. Lord God, we have shut ourselves up. Come after us again, knock once more, that we may open up to meet others, rediscover ourselves, know your love, and live again. Amen.

## Birthdays

Lots of BBC birthdays this coming week. Let's wish them all well with our song:

Happy birthday to you  
Happy birthday to you  
Happy birthday dear Nigel, Joan, Lynne  
and Lynette  
Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday to you  
Only one will not do  
Give your heart to the saviour  
And then you'll have two  
Happy birthday to you  
From old friend and new  
May God bless you and keep you  
Happy birthday to you

## Song: *My God*

During our Covid-19 lockdown, Paul's wife Judy has discovered a new man; she shares ten minutes with him every morning in the hope he will keep her young. His name is Joe Wicks. He has her doing all sorts of actions in all sorts of positions Paul has never seen her in before. So this morning we have a song for young and mature alike, where you can move along with the song proclaiming the wonders of our God, so get up and make some space for yourselves. You can make up the actions as you go along! *(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)*

### *Chorus:*

My God is so big  
And so strong and so mighty  
There's nothing my God cannot do

In the beginning God made everything  
God simply spoke  
And the world came to be  
He sent a flood and made everything new  
He parted the sea  
And let his people walk through  
He helped a boy bring a giant right down  
Joshua marched, the walls fell to the ground  
These acts of power are worthy of praise  
But if you want to question  
My God and his ways  
I'll look you in the eyes and say:

### *Chorus*

Though we were sinners  
He still gave us worth  
God sent his son to live here on the earth  
He healed the sick, he made blind men see  
He made the lame walk  
And he set the world free  
He died on a cross

And he rose from the grave  
He conquered sin, he is mighty to save  
He went to heaven and he's coming back  
God's word is true, but if it's attacked  
I'll look you in the eye and say:

### *Chorus*

God the Spirit, God the Father,  
God the Son,  
One plus one plus one equals one  
I want the world to know about my God  
I want to live so the whole world can see  
That my heart has changed  
I'm forgiven and new  
If people need proof may they see it in me  
Let's look the world in the eye  
Let's look them in the eye and say:

### *Chorus*

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## Prayers

Mighty God, heavenly Father, in the quiet joy and longing hope of this service, we remember with thanksgiving all the past has given to bring us to this moment of silence and praise. Thank you for the formative experiences of childhood and youth, for parents whose pleasure lay in our growth, for the intimacy and care of family life, for sins forgiven by human love and God's good grace. Thank you for those who have travelled the faith journey with us; for teachers and ministers who raised signposts to learning, for friends who sustained us in the pilgrimage, for books that opened our eyes to new truths, for silence that deepened our understanding. Above all, thank you for all that you are to us as father and friend; for your over-arching providence, for your unfailing love, and the discipline of your forgiveness. What we are, and what all these things have made us, we bring to this moment with thanksgiving, adoration and praise.

Loving heavenly Father, you know us through and through and love us just the same. Give us your awareness of others, and by your Holy Spirit, make us sensitive to them. Let us hurt when they hurt, even to weep with them, that they may know they are not alone. Let us enter into their joys, to laugh and rejoice with them at those things which set them free. Work through our imaginations enabling us to offer quietly needful help, encouragement or a word in season.

We remember those in our town, who are affected by the new restrictions in place here. We ask that we may all have the interests of others at heart, placing the greater good of the whole above our own personal preferences. We know that there are many in our own fellowship who are finding the situation challenging, and ask for your peace to enter their hearts. We ask for patience as we adapt to a different pace of life, and for some an introduction to previously untried technology and we bring all those with known health needs to you now, asking for your loving hands to be upon them.

Finally we pray for our leadership here, that we may comprehend something of the pressures they face as they seek to balance the needs of the fellowship, and our calling to be light and salt to the world, with the present guidelines, limitations and advice. May they have wisdom and sensitivity and may we, in turn, give them our understanding and support as we all seek to both worship you and share your love for this broken world in new and different ways at this time. All this we ask for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **Song: *Here Is Love***

As we come now to share in communion together, we will sing a song that became known as 'the love song of the Welsh revival'. One of the notable features of this revival was the sense of awe experienced in its congregational worship, often led by anointed soloists, the best known of whom was Annie Davies. When she came to sing this song, a reporter commented, 'This moved almost everyone to tears, many strong experienced persons left the building under deep strong emotion. Scarcely could one control his feelings in order to take a correct impression of the meeting'. This song remains as powerful today, particularly in this version, part sung in the original Welsh and then in English (*If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words*)

Here is love vast as the ocean  
Loving kindness as a flood  
When the prince of life our ransom  
Shed for us his precious blood  
Who his love will not remember  
Who can cease to sing his praise?  
He can never be forgotten  
Throughout heaven's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion  
Fountains opened deep and wide  
Through the floodgates of God's mercy  
Flowed a vast and gracious tide  
Grace and love like mighty rivers  
Flowed incessant from above  
Heaven's peace and perfect justice  
Kissed a guilty world with love

## **Communion**

We come together to share Communion. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Come to this table, not because you must but because you may, not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come, but because you need mercy and help. Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more. Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you. Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his Body. We join together in prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The apostle Paul tells us of the institution of the Lord's Supper: 'For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'

As we eat the bread, we remember that Jesus said, "This is my body which is for you; do this in memory of me". As we take the cup, we drink this and remember that Christ's blood was shed for us and we are thankful.

## **Song: *Be Still My Soul (In You I Rest)***

Let's lift up our voices in song. You may notice, there are some additional words alongside the familiar ones of the traditional hymn (*If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words*)

Be still, my soul, the Lord is on thy side~  
Bear patiently, the cross of grief or pain  
Leave to thy God, to order and provide  
In every change, he faithful will remain  
Be still, my soul, thy best thy heavenly friend  
Through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end

Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as he has the past  
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last  
Be still, my soul, the waves and wind still know  
His voice who ruled them while he dwelt below

*Chorus:*

In you I rest, in you I found my hope  
In you I trust, you never let me go  
I place my life within your hands alone  
Be still, my soul

Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening on  
When we shall be forever with the Lord  
When disappointment  
Grief and fear are gone  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored  
Be still, my soul  
When change and tears are past  
All safe and blessed, we shall meet at last.

*Chorus*

"Be Still My Sou (In You I Rest)" music and additional words by  
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## **Bible Reading: *Galatians 3:26 – 4:7***

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. What I am saying is that as long as an heir is under age, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were under age, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

## **Message**

Last week, my Christian colleague at BBC, Colin, tentatively began his message by making a claim that Blackburn Rovers is the greatest football team in the world. Undoubtedly 'deluded' even for the most ardent BRFC supporter! However, since 1995 in Blackburn, we have had the need to dream of greatness as greatness seems such a long way off these days. Consequently you may have thought to doubt Colin's good judgement on any other claims he was about to make that morning, but, no, thankfully Colin, we can all support your second greatest claim, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the greatest message in the world!

And so we can continue with Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia. If you have a Bible to hand, please turn to chapter 3 verse 26 through to chapter 4 verse 7.

To briefly return to the football analogy, this season VAR (Video Assistant Referees) have not improved correct judgement or implementation of the Laws of the so called

'beautiful game', Sheffield United being rightly aggrieved at a disallowed goal at Aston Villa which could have jeopardised their chance of European football next season. So much for rightly implementing the laws of the game by VAR. Equally so with Paul's letter to the Galatians, he has in effect been saying that you cannot rely on the OT Laws to achieve promotion from this life to a new season in heaven. Before I try to take the analogy too far, we should get back to seeing what today's passage has to say.

You will not need reminding that Paul is specifically writing to the churches he helped to establish, to which other followers of Jesus Christ, with a Jewish background, have come along and tried to 'add to' the gospel he first brought to them. Paul is seeking to make absolutely clear that nothing more and nothing less is required, save faith in the good news of the gospel. Paul is explaining why this faith in Jesus Christ alone should give us confidence. Verse 27 says, 'For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.' Many of the Galatians had been baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. This baptism took place as an act of obedience symbolising the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen saviour. It represented the believer's death to sin and their past, the burial of that old life, and, in coming out of the water, the resurrection to a walk in newness of life with Christ Jesus. These baptisms, mainly held in lakes, riversides and by the sea, were for everyone to witness. They were also a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

So what does Paul mean by 'put on' Christ, or to clothe yourself with Christ? Christ is a person not a garment. Well let me suggest. Sometimes I go to B&Q and if I cannot find what I want, I look for someone, not just anyone, but someone in black trousers, black polo top with a B&Q logo, plus the stand-out company orange apron. These people represent the company and part of their purpose is to help you find what you want. Or if I were to go to a Blackburn Rovers away game, when I had parked the car, and was heading for the ground, how would I know which end of the stadium I should be heading towards? Well it would be clear from the supporters' colours, team strip and the songs they were singing. Equally, the language of 'putting on Christ' suggests taking onto yourself a new life and purpose through being spiritually united to Christ. He is saying that when you see me you should be able to recognise the life and likeness of Christ as clearly as if I was wearing team colours or a company uniform. Therefore it does not matter whether you are male or female, slave or free, Jew or Greek, from now on they are all 'United' (sorry, no pun intended) in Christ Jesus' life, desire and purpose and this should therefore be seen in them and us above everything else.

In verse 29 we read, 'If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise!' Well what does that mean? We need to go back to the first book in the Bible, Genesis, and chapter 12 to see God making a promise to a man who at that time was 5 years older than me! Yes, folks, even at my age, you're never too old to be used by God. This promise was given to a man called Abram at that time, and it was in three parts:

- God said to him, "Leave your country and your people and go to a land I will show you, and I will give you my promised land."
- The second promise was for great descendants who would make him a father of many nations

- The third promise was for an offspring / seed who would bring blessing and redemption to all the people on earth.

Some huge promises! So, at five years my senior, Abram packed up his bags and set off with everything he had, to do what God had asked. However, after some time, he complained that, although God had looked after him, when was he going to 'Do Something' about the other two promises? He still didn't have anyone to pass on his inheritance to except the servants. So God took him outside and showed him the stars, saying, "Don't worry, your descendants will be like these, so many you can't count them." So, it was 24 years after setting off when God spoke to Abram at 99 and his wife Sarah at 89 to say he would now fulfil his promise of a child to them both. Sarah gave birth to her first child (Isaac) at the age of 90 when Abram was 100 and God gave him a new name, Abraham - father of many nations. Some wait and yet some miracle.

And so it was from that time onward that Abraham's descendants became the Jewish nation who were waiting for this third everlasting promise to be fulfilled, the arrival of one who would bring blessing and redemption to all the people on earth. Paul has already made clear in verses 15 and 16 of chapter 3 that the promise made to Abraham has been fulfilled in Christ, who is the 'seed', and, whoever we are, verse 29 says that, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's heirs by faith according to the promise!

In verse 26, Paul says 'you are all sons of God' and in chapter 4 verse 5 and 6 'so that we might receive adoption as sons.' I know there is a saying that, if you are adopted, you are a special child because someone has chosen you to be with them, as opposed to having to put up with whatever comes out of the womb! When I was at school, sadly, adoption was sometimes seen as being second class. Not so in Paul's day. There was no process for adoption in the ancient Jewish culture; if a man died, his brother automatically became head of his household. The word adoption, during Paul's time, referred to the Roman concept of adoption. In Ancient Rome, adoption had a powerful meaning. When a child was born biologically, the parents had the option of disowning the child for a variety of reasons, added to which life expectancy for children was very low. However, succession and family legacy were very important; therefore Romans needed ways of passing down their fortune and name when unable to produce and raise a male heir. Adoption in later years was one of the few ways to guarantee succession. Without a male heir, a Senator's title and estate could be forfeited, so adoption became the norm in high ranking families. In Rome, adopting a child meant that child would be a permanent part of the family; and parents couldn't disown a child they had adopted, in fact they had more security than any other child. Any adopted child received a new identity and any prior commitments, responsibilities and debts were erased. Being adopted made someone an heir to their new father, joint sharers in all his possessions and fully united to him. Therefore, from Paul's perspective, the spirit of adoption essentially doubled up on the power and significance of God's fatherhood. Paul says in Romans 8:17 we are at this time heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, that is we have equal standing with God's son Jesus Christ.

We have talked about the need for being baptised into Christ and Paul has used these images of baptism, being clothed in Christ, being adopted as sons of God and being heirs of the promises given to Abraham through faith, to appeal to the Galatians

to focus on the fundamental truths of the gospel. It is also good for us to challenge ourselves. Most, if not all of us in the Baptist Church will have been baptised by choice as adults, as these Galatians had, but they had lost sight or had been deceived as to why they had responded to the Holy Spirit when Paul first appealed to them to repent.

How many of us are trusting on abiding by the Law to lead a good life now and a hope for a future life in heaven? Today we been reminded (in chapter 4 verse 4 and 5) that God sent his Son to redeem those who were relying on the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons of God. Who would not want to be adopted by God? The joy of being a child alongside Jesus in the family of God is wonderful.

Do not be deluded, the alternative is unthinkable. Bill Shankly may have said that football was much more serious than life or death. Let me assure you, however fanatical you may be in supporting any football team, to have faith in Jesus' side is the only way to everlasting victory. Yes, as Colin said last week - the gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest message in the world! If you don't personally know that truth or would like to know more, we would be more than pleased to help you find your place beside Jesus Christ for yourself. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you can contact us through our website. Amen.

### **Song: *Come Let Us Join Our Cheerful Songs***

*(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)*

Come, let us join our cheerful songs  
With angels round the throne  
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues  
But all their joys are one.

"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry  
"To be exalted thus!"  
"Worthy the Lamb," our hearts reply  
"For he was slain for us!"

Jesus is worthy to receive  
Honour and power divine  
And blessings more than we can give  
Be, Lord, forever thine

Let all that dwell above the sky  
And air, and earth, and seas  
Conspire to lift thy glories high  
And speak thine endless praise!

The whole creation join in one  
To bless the sacred Name  
Of him who sits upon the throne  
And to adore the Lamb

### **Blessing**

As we close, we share an Irish blessing. For the first time in history over 300 churches and Christian organisations from every county on the island of Ireland have joined together to sing an ancient Irish blessing: 'Be thou my vision'. No matter where we are in life, the Lord is our light and our strength. He watches over us and stands by our side. The powerful lyrics of 'Be Thou My Vision' are the perfect reminder of his love and presence. This 8th century Irish hymn is still relevant today and the story behind the song is absolutely amazing. What a beautiful hymn to lift our voices and sing praises to his name. There are some beautiful pictures of the country and all those taking part, so if you unable to see them, read the words, use your imagination and be blessed. *(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen to the video)*

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart  
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night  
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord  
Thou my great Father and I thy true son  
Thou in me dwelling and I with thee one

Be thou my battle shield, sword for the fight  
Be thou my dignity, thou my delight  
Thou my soul's shelter

Christ be with you, Christ be near you  
Christ behind you, Christ before you  
Christ beside you, Christ to win you  
Christ to comfort and restore you  
Christ beneath you, Christ above you  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger  
Christ in hearts of all that love you  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Amen

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen

And thou my high tower  
Raise thou me heavenward  
O power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise  
Thou mine inheritance, through all my days  
Thou and thou only the first in my heart  
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won  
May I reach heaven's joys, O brightest sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall  
Still be my vision, O ruler of all.