

Blackburn Baptist Church Virtual Service, 17 May 2020



Welcome

Good morning and welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church and to our virtual service for Sunday 17 May. May the Lord bless you richly as you share with us today in this service.

Song: *I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace*

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

I know not why God's wondrous grace
To me he has made known
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love
Redeemed me for his own

Chorus:

But 'I know whom I have believed
And am persuaded that he is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto him against that day'

I know not how this saving faith
To me he did impart
Nor how believing in his word
Wrought peace within my heart

Chorus

I know not how the Spirit moves
Convincing men of sin
Revealing Jesus through the Word
Creating faith in him

Chorus

I know not what of good or ill
May be reserved for me
Of weary ways or golden days
Before his face I see

Chorus

I know not when my Lord may come
At night or noon-day fair
Nor if I'll walk the vale with him
Or meet him in the air

Chorus

Opening Prayer

Lord, we can't understand why you are so gracious and kind to us, but we thank you and praise you for saving us through Jesus, for restoring us to peace with yourself, and for keeping us through all our days. We praise you too that we have hope even beyond this life - of a wonderful future that you have prepared for us, that is beyond our imaginings. Thank you that you are the God who has done all this.

In the light of that, let's join in the Lord's prayer together.

Meditation

Beryl Fish would like to share with us once more from her reading, 'Jesus Calling'.

"I AM A MIGHTY GOD. Nothing is too difficult for me. I have chosen to use weak ones like you to accomplish my purposes - your weakness is designed to open you up to my power. Therefore, do not fear your limitations or measure the day's demands against your strength. What I require of you is to stay connected to me, living in trusting dependence on my limitless resources. When you face unexpected demands, there is no need to panic. Remember that I am with you. Talk with me

and listen while I talk with you through each challenging situation. I am not a careless God. When I allow difficulties to come into your life, I equip you fully to handle them. Relax in my presence, trusting in my strength.”

For nothing is impossible with God. (*Luke 1:37*)

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (*Deuteronomy 31:8*)

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. (*2 Corinthians 12:9*)

Birthdays: We do have a special birthday in the fellowship this coming week, but we’ll hold off celebrating it for now so we can join with another special birthday next week!

Song: *King of Kings*

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

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope without light
Till from heaven you came running
There was mercy in your eyes
To fulfil the Law and Prophets
To a virgin came the Word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

Chorus:

Praise the Father
Praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake you died

Chorus

And the morning that you rose
All of heaven held its breath
Till that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who’d come
To the Father are restored
And the Church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel shall not faint
By his blood and in his name
In his freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me!

Chorus

“King of Kings” words & music by Brooke Ligertwood, Jason Ingram & Scott Ligertwood
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Bible Reading: *Luke 7:11-23*

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out - the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” Then he went up and touched the bier

they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’” At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

Song: *Jesus is Alive*

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

There is now a hope
That lasts beyond our days
For the one that once was buried lives again
Now the tomb is bare and empty
And the stone is rolled away
Praise the risen one
Who overcame the grave

All you broken hearted
All you worn and weak
Come find living water, everlasting streams
To the wandering spirit, lost and searching
Wanting something more
Find the risen king
Who overcomes the world

Chorus:

Let there be dancing in the darkness
And let our song break through the night
Lift your voice and sing that Christ is King
For Jesus is alive

No more condemnation
No more doubt and fear
For our sin and shame
They have no power here
In his resurrection
Perfect love has set the captives free
Praise the risen king who stands in victory

Chorus

Hallelujah, death is undone
Hallelujah, Jesus has won
Hallelujah, we overcome
Oh in Jesus, oh in Jesus

Chorus

“Jesus is Alive” words & music by James Tealy, Jaywan Maxwell, Jesse Reeves, Michael Farren, Niki Shepherd & Tiarne Tranter
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Message: *New Life the Dead Receive*

We have arrived at the fourth of our five planned sermons on the miracles of Jesus and are considering this morning the resurrection miracles.

In the Old Testament, with which many of us will be familiar, we get to know the widow of Zarephath’s son in 1 Kings 17, who became ill and finally stopped

breathing. Elijah makes his first appearance in the Bible in this chapter, praying to God, who brings the dead boy back to life. In 2 Kings 4 we read that Elisha prayed to the LORD for a dead boy, for the son of a Shunammite woman, who then came back to life. We read in 2 Kings 13 that Elisha died and was buried and that once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly seeing a band of raiders they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.

In the New Testament, we read in Luke 7 the historical account of the widow of Nain's son dying and being raised by Jesus to life again. We find in Matthew 9, Mark 5 and Luke 8 the account of Jairus' daughter being brought back to life from death by Jesus. In John 11 we read of Lazarus dying and he also is brought back to life by Jesus.

Jesus Christ himself died and rose again, as is written in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20. There is nothing odd about that, they are all even numbers!

What are we to make of all this? What are we supposed to understand from these happenings? Is there any connection between these historical events and our daily lives? Or are we hoping against hope that there is a future before and a future after the grave? We humans have such wonderful ideas. We sometimes think we are the bees' knees. We know all the answers. Whatever lies before us we can do it, we can solve it, we can manage it. Even death. We create horror and fantasy stories of zombies, fictional undead being created through the reanimation of a human corpse. We indulge in cryonics, the low-temperature freezing (usually at $-196\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$) of a human corpse or severed head, with the speculative hope that resurrection may be possible in the future.

And then there are the advocates of, or should I say, believers in technological resurrection. Nikolai Fyodorov advocated resurrection of the dead using scientific methods. He tried to plan research on the possibility of restoring life and making it infinite. He said that even if a soul is destroyed after death, man will learn to restore it whole by mastering the forces of decay and fragmentation. In his 1994 book *The Physics of Immortality*, physicist Frank Tipler, presented his Omega Point Theory which outlines how a resurrection of the dead could take place at the end of the cosmos after humans have evolved into robots. David Deutsch, British physicist and pioneer in the field of quantum computing, agrees with the idea of resurrecting deceased people with the help of quantum computers. Italian physicist and computer scientist Giulio Prisco presents the idea of *quantum archaeology*: reconstructing the life, thoughts, memories, and feelings of any person in the past, up to any desired level of detail, and thus resurrecting the original person via 'copying to the future'. Ray Kurzweil, American inventor and futurist, believes it will be possible to resurrect the dead by digital recreation. In their science fiction novel 'The Light of Other

Days', Sir Arthur Clarke and Stephen Baxter imagine a future civilization resurrecting the dead of past ages by reaching into the past, through micro wormholes and with nanorobots, to download full snapshots of brain states and memories.

Oh yes, it's interesting. Oh yes, it's fascinating, thoughtful, creative. Maybe even mind-blowing. But they do not take into account one thing. Just one thing. They do not reckon with Jesus Christ. They do not recognise who he is. Creator and sustainer of the universe, Light of the world, who said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" and "I am the Resurrection and the Life". And he proved it. He demonstrated the reality of what he said in what he did.

So we come back to our first point at a town called Nain. Nain is about 48 km southwest of Capernaum at 213 m above sea level, thus requiring an arduous, uphill climb to reach it. In order to walk from Capernaum to Nain, it would have taken at least one or two days. It is 14 km south of Nazareth. Nain means beauty and pleasantness. But that is not how it would have felt on that morning as the widow of Nain got up for the funeral of her only son.

Jesus entered Nain on his way from healing the servant of a centurion at a distance. But that's another story. He is accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd of people. Approaching the town gate, he sees a dead person being carried out. There was another large crowd from the town there too. Well Jesus would have known that the woman had now lost her son in addition to having previously lost her husband. What a desperate situation. What would you have done? What would you have said, if anything?

Then there is this beautiful sentence. Look at verse 13. What is this teaching us? What is this showing us? What is this teaching us and showing us about who Jesus is? You might say it is no surprise that Jesus approached her. Jesus approaching a woman? Jesus approaching a widow? Jesus approaching an unknown bereaved lady? On the day of the funeral? During the funeral procession? You might think, "Well of course he will speak with her and offer his condolences." But saying to a bereaved person, "Don't cry."? I would, if asked, maybe have said, "It's OK to cry. Don't worry about that. Don't think about that. Don't feel guilty about that. It's OK to cry and to keep on crying. And I will cry with you. This is so sad. This is really terribly sad. I'm really sorry." But during the funeral procession I think I would stay quiet. But there is something about Jesus, isn't there? His compassion, his love, his understanding, his humanity... and his deity. His heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." And we know why he said it, don't we?

In Revelation 21:4 we read: 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' Jesus is here pointing the way ahead. 'Therefore, if anyone is

in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!' (2 Cor. 5:17). Doesn't your heart beat with my heart when we hear this? No more death or mourning or crying or pain. The old has gone, the new is here! How this town needs to hear and to respond to Jesus' message. The church in Nain today has a wonderful name. It is called Church of the Resurrection of the Widow's Son.

Of course he has the power. The power to give and renew life. The power to resurrect from the dead. He is God. He made and sustains the universe. But his compassion... isn't that just amazing! "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her." Right in the middle of the funeral procession. Directly intervening in a tragedy of unforetold horror. The loss of the only son of a lady who was already a widow. Her security, her future, her beloved son all gone. Everything in tatters, her life shattered, her heart broken. Sadness, emptiness, loneliness. The end of the family line. And then Jesus comes on the scene. Jesus, who says to his disciples, who says to you and to me, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." (Matthew 10:8)

Is not Jesus' compassion one key to what our church life should be like? To what our church life is about? Church is neither a building nor a technological digital structure. Neither is it a form without an inner reality. Church is a body of believers; of people whose lives are hid with Christ in God; of people who live according to his Word and in the power of his Holy Spirit. Of people who know and share the compassion of Jesus Christ to the world in which they live. Do we have a heart of self-preoccupation or a heart of compassion? Are our hearts warm and open to share the love of Jesus Christ? Or are we hard-hearted, living more in dead orthodoxy?

Who is our neighbour? Do we think it is OK to be compassionate as long as it is within our framework of the way we think? Do we say we will be compassionate as long as it fits, as long as it is in the box? Or have we given up our insider / outsider distinctions? Do we say, "Yes, we will go to people where they are, we will meet them wherever they come from, we will go to them whatever they believe?" In his ministry of mercy and reconciliation, Jesus transcends the barriers and the frameworks in the minds of those who are unbelievers and in the minds of those who are exponents of religious orthodoxy. Jesus' power is revealed and his compassion is shown extending beyond man-made boundaries of race and respectability. Jesus makes a striking impact on a community through what he does, through the people he touches and through the way he does things. He said, "I am the light of the world." He comes to us in our darkness demonstrating his compassion.

The widow of Nain was a target for Jesus' love. Jesus sees what others miss. Jesus sees those whom we tend to disregard. He's not out there just for the

intelligentsia, not just for those who can cope, not just for those who take responsibility for their own lives. Not only for those who have a life full of achievements and successes or who are appearing or wanting to go in that direction. And I wonder if he is there at all for those who just want to make an add-on out of his presence in their lives. Jesus is not a convenient add-on. If so, he may turn out to be a very uncomfortable add-on. He is not someone to be updated or deleted as appropriate. He is God and Lord of all. And as Sangster said, "If he is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all."

Value Added-Ons, (cf. VAT) Matthew 6:25-24 (especially 6:33). Jesus knows what you need. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free," (Luke 4:18, citing Isaiah 61:1)

We sing today what Charles Wesley wrote: 'The mournful, broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.' Jesus didn't say to himself I shouldn't interfere in this procession. I should let them get on with their own lives. What a mockery of the truth that would have been. Because the widow's son wasn't alive anymore. She needed him. He didn't wait for his PPE. We would have understood it if he had. No, he went up to the coffin and touched it. Oh yes those carrying it stood still. They must have wondered what was going on. How should they react? How should they respond? What do we think? What do we do? How do we react and respond when Jesus comes into our lives?

When Paul was in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him he preached the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. In Acts 17 we read: 'When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.' Some rejected the message, some used delaying tactics and some believed. In which group are you this morning? Mocking and rejecting? Delaying? Believing? Don't wait.

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13). That's what Jesus did for us. His greatest act of compassion. "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:7-8) "Christ Jesus, has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. 2:10).

And here we see it. Jesus speaks to the dead young man in the coffin. Amazing! In one sense truly unbelievable and unthinkable. But this is the

Author of Life, of whom Peter says in Acts 3:15: “You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.” Jesus speaks and says, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk. As Wesley wrote and we have sung: ‘He speaks, and, listening to his voice, new life the dead receive.’ Don’t mock. Don’t reject Jesus. Don’t wait. It may be too late if you wait. Now is the day to give your life back to your creator. “God has come to help his people.” (Luke 7:16)

According to Philip Melancthon, Martin Luther posted his 95 theses in 1517 on the door of the Schloßkirche, the castle church, in Wittenberg in Sachsen-Anhalt in eastern Germany. This was basically the start act of the Protestant Reformation. About half a century later, in 1569, an altar panel by Lukas Cranach the Younger was hung in the Stadtkirche, the town church, in exactly the same place.



Lucas Cranach the Younger, *Resurrection of the Widow's son at Nain*, c. 1569.
Altar Panel, Stadtkirche, Wittenberg

Why do I mention this now, at this point, in this context, in this way? Because this is the central feature of our faith. This is the basis of our belief. 'If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive... The last enemy to be destroyed is death... We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed... then the saying that is written [in Isaiah 25:8] will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory. (extracts of 1 Corinthians 15:13-54)

Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58). Amen.

Song: *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

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

O for a thousand tongues to sing	His blood can make the foulest clean
My great Redeemer's praise	His blood availed for me
The glories of my God and King	He speaks, and, listening to his voice
The triumphs of his grace	New life the dead receive
Jesus! The name that charms our fears	The mournful, broken hearts rejoice
That bids our sorrows cease	The humble poor believe
'Tis music in the sinner's ears	Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb
'Tis life, and health, and peace	Your loosened tongues employ
See all your sins on Jesus laid	Ye blind, behold your Saviour come
The Lamb of God was slain	And leap ye lame for joy!
His soul was once an offering made	My gracious master and my God
For every soul of man	Assist me to proclaim
He breaks the power of cancelled sin	To spread through all the earth abroad
He sets the prisoner free	The honours of thy name

Prayers for Others

Come to the Lord with your own prayers for the things that are on your heart today.

Song: *The UK Blessing*

At this unique and challenging time in the UK, over 65 churches and movements, representing hundreds of others, have come together online to sing a blessing over our land. Standing together as one, our desire is that this song will fill you with hope and encourage you. But the church is not simply

singing a blessing, each day we're looking to practically be a blessing. Many of the churches included in this song have assisted with supplying over 400,000 meals to the most vulnerable and isolated in our nation since Covid-19 lockdown began - this alongside phone calls to the isolated, pharmacy delivery drops and hot meals to the NHS frontline hospital staff.

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

The Lord bless you
And keep you
Make his face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn his face toward you
And give you peace

Chorus:

Amen, amen, amen

May his favour be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May his presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you
All around you, and within you
He is with you, he is with you

In the morning, in the evening
In your coming and your going
In your weeping and rejoicing
He is for you, he is for you.

Chorus

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The Grace

Now let's join together in the words of the Grace: 'May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and forever more. Amen.'