

Welcome

On behalf of Tyndale Baptist Church may I welcome you to its worship this morning, whether this is a regular experience, completely new to you, or something you've come across occasionally before – whatever – you are very welcome.

It feels a little odd saying welcome 'online' – normally the welcome would be expressed with a handshake and a smile, and maybe with a shared conversation over coffee after; it's a shame that such simple things aren't possible for a time, but please God they will be again, even if a little changed –

but in any case it's not so much *our* welcome, as *God's* welcome that we're seeking to express here – God's welcome to us each one – that's part of what lies behind the 'running theme' of these next few weeks, as we explore aspects of the new world, in the light of God's new kingdom – into which we are all invited, and where, whoever you are, you will find the welcome of God's love.

CG60 'I waited patiently for God'

Sung by Mike Garnier

Call to Worship

In such times as these, dangerous and filled with change, uncertain and filled with questions, the witness of the song is to the constant, faithful nature of the God in whom we believe – before whom we come, in quiet trust, in trembling and in hope. His constancy and faithfulness is shown to us in Christ dying, living Saviour – in His name we worship

'Faithful One'

Brian Doerksen

Opening Prayer

O Lord our rock and our salvation, God of the ages, Ancient of days, slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love, who was & is & is to come, the First & Last – such are the some of the time-honoured descriptions & and such are the things that inspire our worship, of you, Lord.

Who has been made known to us in Christ – we worship you because of him also – who has taken the things of God and brought them into our world, brought them close to us – love, peace, service, forgiveness – the things that leach out of our world in times such as these, while hatreds and fears spread and conflict and enmity are all around, yet that remain eternally, endlessly true, trust for all time and in all ways and for all places – true for us – we worship you –

And as, this day, we look once more to the things of your Kingdom - look to see love, peace, service, forgiveness, justice, welcome, healing, truth – so many good things, in the teachings of Jesus and through the life of Jesus, we ask you to help us, to learn of these things

And to confess that we have allowed our lives and the life of the world, to drift away from them; allowed hatreds, and fears, and enmity to grow; taken part in them, neglected to resist them – Lord forgive us – we wait on your word

Jesus' words on the Cross – *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do* – we take them to ourselves – thanks be to God

and we commit once more to live for things such as justice and peace in God's world – to live for Christ, indeed – and as we look, so we worship, in Christ's name.

'Before the world began'

John Bell

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Readings

[Matthew 13:24-35](#)

[Isaiah 6:8-13](#)

The Grace is said:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

'The Power of your Love'

Hillsong

Address

Prayer

Lord, we give you this time – may what is spoken ring with truth, may what is heard and understood be touched by your Spirit, and may what is decided lead us on towards your Kingdom, in Christ's name, amen.

We're starting to think about the new world. Much talk of opening up – shops, zoos, leisure parks, schools.. I went to a DIY store recently; there was a one way system; you had to take a trolley, even if you only wanted a couple of bits, the checkout operators were behind perspex screens – long queues; no toilets – it's a new world, and it's not very convenient, I must say..

We're starting to think about how the new world might look at Tyndale – so much to think about – signs, layouts, cleaning, differing requirements – religious buildings *can* open for individual prayer, but that's not prominent in our tradition – while individual prayer is virtually unknown in Islam – it's complicated in the new world.

Lots of things are changing. Some businesses (lots are closing altogether; terrible for many) think that changes forced on them by home working, such as video conferencing, might become a good part of the 'new norm' – .

Changes in the public realm as well – long buried frustrations are rising to the surface after the terrible death of George Floyd – and many other injustices meted out to black people in the US, over here, and elsewhere –

Frustrations spilling out into street protests, many aimed at statues that tell one part of a complicated historical story but give no expression to the revulsion arising from other parts.

In the 'new world' will such imbalances be redressed? The new world – it's the subject of our reflection in worship over the next few weeks, *inspired* by Jesus' teaching about the 'new world' of God's Kingdom, by the 'breaking in' of God's Kingdom after the resurrection of Jesus, by faith in the coming of God's Kingdom of Christians the world over ever since – who have come to know in Jesus the *reality* of God's Kingdom, the *signs* of His Kingdom in the world and the *hope* of His Kingdom promised in all its fulness when Christ returns.

Some years ago I listened to a speaker talking with great enthusiasm about how the success of his church was evidence of God's Kingdom. Another much-experienced pastor and theologian who'd worked for years in difficult situations and taught in a college, interrupted and said, 'but the Kingdom's not come yet..'

That's the tension we have to live with, I think. Crisis brings opportunity. All sorts of good things might emerge after this pandemic in the 'new world' but there'll be other, not-so-good things as well; there'll be signs of God's Kingdom, but the Kingdom won't come yet – it still waits to be completed in God's own time..

Our reflections are all about that tension and most of all we must reflect on *what* is of God's Kingdom and *how* we must live by faith in the new world – just as we were living by faith in the old world – can you remember? Before the lockdown...

When Jesus spoke about the Kingdom he often spoke in parables. We heard some in Matthew; the parable of weeds among the wheat, the mustard seed, the yeast - there are many others – parables & stories about seeds, birds, pearls, banquets...

And – did you notice? – the *why* of Parables – Jesus quoting a Psalm usually attributed to a prophet - I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.'

And - did you notice in Isaiah? - The *why* of his speaking - Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand."

As if the very act of speaking is fraught with difficulty – as if what you say might not be understood; as if what you want people to understand might be missed – as if folk hear what they want to hear -

Isn't that our common experience? When we try to say what we mean people don't always get what we're on about? What I meant to say was...

Isn't that the point about parables, stories? They might reveal what's hidden..or they might not...their point might be made, or might not

That was part of the Jesus enigma; lots of people began with great enthusiasm because they liked what he said, but later, when some people decided they didn't like what he meant at all – they harassed him all the way to a Cross.

Understanding, not understanding, making it clear, not making it clear - following the science to prove what you did was right, but when the science is nuanced, or multi-sided, when scientists have different opinions, what then?

This week, in the aftermath of the Colston statue affair, some call for getting rid of names like Whiteladies Road and Blackboy hill – because they smack of racism, don't they? But what if they were named after pubs? What if Blackboy was a common nickname for Charles II? What if they had nothing to do with black and white racism at all?

Isaiah knew that speaking for God meant, likely, that he wouldn't be understood, or, more likely, that folk wouldn't listen to what he had to say..

Jesus knew that his parables might reveal some truths that had remained hidden for years – but they might not, or they might be misunderstood, or only speak to some, but not others..

It was ever thus, with speaking..it always is, always will be..

So, I think, it will be with God's Kingdom. As Jesus said on another occasion, speaking of himself - if anyone says to you, "Look! Here is the Messiah!" or "There he is!"—do not believe it.

Here is the Kingdom...there is the Kingdom – same thing, really – it will be like that in the new world – still we will have to look for signs of God's Kingdom

Which is what it means to live by faith, at this or any time: to be patient, to keep looking & trying to understand – & meanwhile to live with the conundrum

Reinhold Niebhr, the US theologian/preacher who in the 70 years ago had the ear of Presidents in the US..(could do with him now..) put it like this:

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love.

No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.

Patience, see, and faith – like a mustard seed, like wheat among weeds, like lost pearls and like yeast working its way through the dough –

Patient, long-suffering, forgiving, waiting, confessing, trying to understand, listening, looking for the things that make for peace –

that's the language of God's Kingdom because, by God's grace that's the way the Kingdom comes..

Prayers

As people turn their attention to the new world, we pray

For scientists, advisers, medics, politicians – and journalists – who must use their knowledge and expertise, must discuss and decide and announce and *scrutinise* – *that the way to a new world might be plotted, explained and pursued, for the sake of us all.*

May they be guided by your Spirit of wisdom and pursue values of peace,

Lord Hear our prayer

For teachers, business owners, religious leaders, medical personnel, workers of all kinds – who must make decisions and make arrangements and take risks, for the sake of us all

May they be guided by your Spirit of courage and pursue common sense and healing

Lord Hear our prayer

For protestors, those suffering injustice, those responsible for memorials and telling stories

May they be guided by your Spirit of truth, justice and freedom

Lord Hear our prayer

For ourselves and those we love, who crave the simple things of touch and togetherness (we pause in quiet)

Lord Hear our prayer

May they be comforted by your Spirit of welcome and filled with the hope of your coming Kingdom

Offering

So, with grateful hearts, we give – gratitude is going to be needed ever more in the new world – for what we've got, for what we've had and for what yet we might receive..

Lord we give of ourselves in these and all our gifts – and in the giving and continuing to serve we look to the coming of your Kingdom

'By faith, we see the hand of God'

S Townend K & K Getty, sung by K & K Getty

Blessing

Thank you for being a part of this service – thanks to Ians Holyer and Waddington, Rachel Molyneux, Mike Garnier and Elisabeth and Peter Webb