

Welcome

Once again, welcome to Tyndale's 'on-line' worship service. The format has become well-established now and will continue to play a part as, hopefully in not many weeks, the building is opened again for worship. We recognise that not everyone will be anxious to return soon so that, for a time at least, our worship will be *both 'live' and 'virtual'*.

But in fact it's not a real distinction. Some of us inhabit the on-line world as frequently – and naturally – as the real, physical one. That can be a problem, if it encourages us to be more insular, besides, not everyone *can* access it, and not everyone finds the virtual very helpful. But it can also be a joyful experience – certainly we have discovered great joy in virtual singing, in virtual choirs and virtual images. And, arguably, the on-line world makes it possible for many more people to participate in services than would ever have come to a building.

So, whether you're watching this *eager* to get back to meeting in person, or *glad*, for the present, to access this kind of service - one of many opportunities for Christian worship – you are welcome and, we hope, you will feel drawn into the atmosphere of faith, and lifted to encounter the God who has promised to come close to those who turn to him.

CG 26 'Come to me'

Tyndale Virtual Singing Group

Call to Worship

From the depths of our experiences – of isolation; of illness and grief, of tragedy or just of the mix of human things – we cry out to God; in the confidence that we are heard, loved, enlightened and – indeed – saved..and called – called to come, called to turn away from darkness, called to worship – in the name of Jesus

['Love divine all loves excelling'](#)

Opening Prayer

Deeper than the deepest darkness; brighter than the brightest light – we soon run out of words to describe you, Lord, you are far beyond our sight; far beyond our saying so; laying so much store by what we can see and say, we easily and lazily drift away from acknowledging who you are, substituting lesser things by far –

Lord, beyond all compare; still we see you here, where all that we have known gives out and all you have shown wins out and we stand in awe: you were before, you are now and you always will be – the how is beyond us and the why amazes us and the when – the always – comforts us and holds us;

There is no place, no time, no experience, no darkness, no light, that can ever come between what we are and what you are; you have made us and set us on our way and come alongside us today and every day – the light of Jesus and the way of Jesus and the spirit of Jesus shines and guides and empowers our every moment – as if you have poured all the love by which you made the universe into him and he has directed it all towards us each one; to hold and save and forgive and restore; to promise and give and serve and go before us and our world –

To go where we have to go; to know what we have to know; to do what we can never do alone – these are just words to try and frame the faith that burns in our hearts; but words are all we have – and acts of service and love - Lord, we worship you in Christ again – and commit ourselves through him to love and serve your world. Amen.

['Faithful One'](#)

Brian Doerksen

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

[Micah 3:1-7](#)

[Ephesians 2:11-22](#)

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.

Address The new world VII – peace

From the poem 'to an unknown citizen' by W H Auden

Our researchers into Public Opinion are content

That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;

When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.

The poem is a memorial to an unknown citizen of some unnamed state who behaved throughout his life exactly as was expected and as was dictated by the state authorities; did everything that was needed to ensure the smooth running of the country; did nothing that would cause any disruption – not to the industrial world, the political world, the social world.

It's a vision of a kind of peace – and it's close to Micah's nightmare vision as he rails against the religious and political leaders of the day,

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry 'Peace' when they have something to eat, but declare war against those who put nothing into their mouths.

And it paints a picture of what our world settles for in the name of peace – peace is what you have when no one steps out of line; peace is what happens when leaders give people only what they want; peace is what comes from control, closed borders, from a subservient population, from everybody moving in the same single direction, towards endless prosperity; power over the many by the few; all dissent crushed; all opposition silenced; all weaker powers vanquished

You can see this vision of peace at work all around – as China moves to suppress opposition in Hong Kong; as White House officials seek to discredit one of the US's most trusted medical voices – who happens to disagree with Donald Trump –

As the Assad regime in Syria makes a desert of its land and bombs its rebels into submission. As Putin in Russia contrives to cement his grip on power for, maybe, two more six-year terms.

As Bolsonaro in Brazil, Orban in Hungary, now Duda in Poland, Erdogan in Turkey, each in their own way work to create a single, state-sanctioned lifestyle; religious in some parts; anti-LGBTQ in others, supported by military muscle and populist rhetoric everywhere.

Here? Perhaps the bulldog British spirit of independence, strong democratic institutions, policing by consent, and so on will keep us safe from such a vision of 'peace'

But the instinct for control, for silencing opposition voices, the rise of so-called 'cancel culture' and a general preference for privacy are every bit as strong here as elsewhere - the Grenfell Tower tragedy; the recent Black Lives Matter protests; the MeToo movement; the Climate Crisis – these and many others show that not everything or everybody feels themselves to be at peace.

And in the current coronavirus crisis? Denial, lack of preparedness; lack of transparency, the massaging of statistics – these are universal aspects of the old, deep-rooted human trait of sinfulness shackled to a love of power–

These are things that make us cry, as Jeremiah accused the false prophets of his day of crying, 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace'

The brutal fact is that in the old, pre-coronavirus world there was not much peace at all – not as the Bible understands it – not peace-as-wholeness, not peace for everyone; not peace as Micah goes on to describe it, in a passage shortly after our reading – arguably one of the most famous passages of all in the Old Testament -

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid;

There was not much peace like that at all in the old world, nor, indeed, in the coronavirus world as we continue to reflect on what might be part of the new world, part of the 'new normal' after all this, as we emerge into a different changed world -

That 'wholeness' vision of peace needs to be seen afresh

Imagine it for a moment; a world in which Uighur Muslims in China are set free, Rohingya Muslims can return in safety to their Myanmar home;

In which migrants no longer need to cross the English channel in leaky boats; a world in which black lives everywhere matter just as much as white lives;

A world in which folk can live much as they want without fear of being oppressed for their colour or race or lifestyle or opinion – in which, as Micah says, 'none shall make them afraid'

But let's not pretend that a few weeks of lockdown, during which one or two benefits of a less frantic, less polluted, less money-orientated world, were discovered afresh, is enough to guarantee another era of peace.

Already it's business-as-usual on clogged motorways; already piles of rubbish build up on the Downs and on Dorset beaches. Rates of domestic violence soar in the 'stay-at-home' world; conflicts continue in Yemen and Syria, threaten to break out in the South China Sea and on the Chinese/Indian border.

It should be no surprise. Human beings continue to be as conflicted and selfish and fear-driven and tribal as ever they were before coronavirus or during the crisis.

The new world *could* be little different to the old world apart from a few face masks and social distancing signs.

But it doesn't have to be like that. Christianity proclaims that 'wholeness peace' is possible – not easy, certainly, but possible

Because, *first*, peace has been set in the earth by Christ. Paul writes, just before our reading from Ephesians - *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God*

And then goes on to say what needed to be said about one of the most intractable and hostile divides of the day – between Jew and Gentile;
But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross,

See? It begins by proclaiming the peace between human beings and God – and goes on to proclaim peace between different human beings.

I think that the new world can never come about without both those things –

The fact is that much of the strife – the lack-of-peace – in the world, comes from the strife – the lack-of-peace-in the human heart.

We are, naturally, not at peace within ourselves – no human beings are – we want one thing and do another, we struggle against our worst instincts, we contend with those whose difference to us shows us up for the selfish, self-centred people we are

The Christian vision for finding that peace comes from the recognition that, first of all, God has made peace with us, *for us*, in Christ. It's not the only vision – lots of religions offer ways to peace, via meditation or self-denial; lots of self-help gurus offer ways to peace, via cleansing rituals or exercise regimes or routes back-to-nature –

Christianity proclaims that *first... by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God*

It is the gift of God; it seems to me that we can only work towards a new world if we have faith in that gift – it is *for us*; it is *God's gift*; it is *not our own doing*;

And in light of this, peace in the world is possible – not easy, but possible.

he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us –

that's the vision that alone is capable of driving us towards a new 'wholeness peace' world

Because a new world is going to require 'new people' – who are prepared to live in freedom, prepared to accept one another, prepared to say what needs to be said, prepared to stand up for the oppressed, prepared to overcome divisions,

Prepared, indeed, to stand against the forces that would promote the limited, partial kind of peace that is everywhere seen.

Auden ends his poem – it's written as if it's being spoken by some anonymous one in some authoritarian state -

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard

Some are speaking now of 'surveillance capitalism' – a world in which money can be made and states organised around the needs and desires of citizens that will be discovered by accessing their 'data' – by surveillance. The nightmare world of Auden's poem – of Micah's prophecy, is coming true.

The Bible's vision is of people who are set free to live, free of fear and unique to themselves because they have put their faith not in earthly systems and mechanisms and states, but in God, who already knows the secrets of our hearts and *loves us anyway*. Free, happy people who believe in peace and live in peace and promote 'wholeness peace' for everywhere and for everyone and for always.

Please God may such people shape a new world that will be as peaceable – as whole - as God's Kingdom.

'Put peace into each other's hands'

Prayers

In our prayers after the word 'Lord' please say together 'hear our prayer'

We pray for those who, this very day, live in fear of what might happen to them, at the hands of others, or at the behest of an oppressive state. Uighurs and Rohingya; Hong Kong Chinese; LGBTQ folk in Russia, Hungary and Poland, many countries in Africa; black people in the US and over here, Roma in the Balkans

May the peace of God touch their hearts and may those who put their faith in such peace change their world. We pause in quiet

Lord **Hear our prayer .**

We pray for those who, this very day, seek peace for themselves and deny it to others – world leaders from South America to Asia; racial purists in the US and Europe; religious zealots near and far.

May the peace of God touch their hearts and may those who trust in the vision of God's peace challenge their power. We pause in quiet

Lord **Hear our prayer .**

We pray for those known to us whose inner peace is disturbed by anxiety, whose physical health is undermined by viruses and other conditions, whose way of life is subject to the hatred and prejudice of others.

May the peace of God touch their hearts and may we who believe in a peace that is wholeness share it with all those we know and love. We pause in quiet

Lord **Hear our prayer .**

We pray for ourselves, recognising that for all our fine words we have not always trusted in the peace in which we believe –

May the peace of God in Christ touch us once more and may we once again believe and trust in the peace that passes all understanding. We pause in quiet

Lord, **Hear our prayer**

Offering

Our offering is practical of course, to ensure that the things to which we are committed can continue, but it is also symbolic – a sign of commitment to wholeness in the new world

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

['The Lord's my shepherd'](#)

Stuart Townend

Blessing

So may the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us always, Amen.

[BPW 634 'Make me a channel of your peace'](#) sung by BBC Radio 2 Young Choristers of the Year

Thank you for being a part of this service; thanks to Ians Holyer & Waddington, Rachel Molyneux, a singing group from Tyndale (with Sarah Dodds) and Sue Bowers.

A 'together though apart' coffee time follows at 11.30