

Welcome

Welcome to the morning worship of Tyndale Baptist Church, to the last in a series of services that have had as their theme 'the new world'. Today we draw it all together with the idea that God reconciles all things. These are difficult times; there are many examples around the world of terrible things happening, and in our own lives not all is as it should be. This could lead us to despair, and mental health problems are everywhere on the rise.

But the purpose of this service – of all Christian worship – is to proclaim, revel in, and reflect on the Christian message of hope, that's known and experienced 'partially' in the world of today through the presence of God in Christ, and promised fully in the world of tomorrow – God's Kingdom; when, through Christ, all things are reconciled to God

We start from where we are; we discover God there, and we journey with God to where he wants us all to be.. and in worship we dare to believe that it all comes together, by the reconciling power of Christ

CG140 'Well begun'

Sung by a Tyndale virtual singing group

Call to Worship

This is where we begin; in our frailty, pain and loneliness - in our darkness - and this is where we discover God, in Christ the Light of the world – and from where we are he calls us and our world to rejoice, to confess and serve, to wait and hope; to look for and see the things that make for peace – and to worship..

BPW 130 ['O Lord of every shining constellation'](#)

BBC Radio 4 Daily Service Singers

Opening Prayer

The distances are vast and you are beyond and we worship you; the time is endless and you are before and after and we worship you; the light is brighter than a million stars and you are brighter still and we worship you; the matter is darker than the darkest depth and you are beneath and we worship you – and yet you are here – and we worship you; and yet you are close; and we worship you; and yet you care for each tiny one for you made all that has been made and we worship you

For you are in Christ, and Christ is One of us; he feels what we feel, he sees what we see; he knows what we know – and we worship you

But we have not always worshipped you; often we have worshipped created things; sometimes we have worshipped what we have made; more often than we would like we have allowed such worship to vanquish love and we have neglected to serve, failed to care – and sometimes, God help us; we have actively pursued wrong and selfish things in the name of security or prosperity – Lord, forgive us and restore us, we pray – we wait on your word

No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Thanks be to God. Now Lord, with renewed, thankful hearts we turn to you again; to worship you once more, to rejoice in your promised presence, and again to look beyond the frailties of our lives and the fractures of our world, to where you dwell in marvellous light and where you have come close to us in Christ.. And in His name, and by His Spirit, we worship you

['Because he lives'](#)

The Harvest Virtual Choir

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

[2 Corinthians 5:11-21](#)

[Isaiah 11:1-9](#)

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.

CG1 ['A touching place'](#)

John Bell & Graham Maule sung by Joanne Hogg with the Choir Of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

Address

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 all on toward your Kingdom, amen.

I heard someone on the Radio this week from the Uighur Muslim community in Xinjiang province in China – who used to teach in one of the internment camps where, evidence is building, thousands - *millions* – of Uighur people, young and old, are being held for holding views antithetical to the Chinese authorities and forcibly re-educated. She is no longer in China so felt free to speak. She described, in graphic detail, some of the terrible conditions she had seen – people crowded into small cells, forced to sleep standing – and the punishments, meted out in a so-called Dark Room, too graphic to describe.

International attention is being focussed increasingly on the plight of the Uighur people; maybe, in time, the Chinese government will be pressured to end its denials and end what various human rights investigators have called genocide.

I tried, not very successfully, to imagine what it might be like to be taken into the Dark Room; the fear, the lack of hope, the pain. It was easier to hear the pain in the voice of the young Uighur woman talking the other day from her home in Turkey after discovering that her parents and siblings had been sentenced to more than a decade in one of the camps – she has not spoken with any of them for more than three years.

There are lots of examples of such darkness around the world – in Myanmar and Bangladesh; in Syria and Yemen, in parts of Africa – as well as the ‘ordinary darkness’ experienced by millions of people all around the world & close to here – as the coronavirus continues its devastation – the darkness of isolation and loneliness; the darkness of illness and grief; the darkness of frustration – ‘when will this end?’

I reflected on such things as I began to put together a service of Christian worship in which words such as presence, hope, peace are used. Also I came across a recorded service in which participants were encouraged to ‘stay in the moment’ and ‘ask God to fill you’.

Such things can’t easily be reconciled. The world is filled with pain, injustice, poverty, dis-ease; for some this means that any sign of God’s presence, hope, peace – there is *no* sign.

In a dark room in a Xinjiang prison, the pain would be confounded by notions about the presence of God, of ‘staying in the moment’. Such extremes of human experience – torture and deprivation on the one hand, religious fantasising on the other – cannot be reconciled.

And yet. 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...the reconciliation of all things – If there is ever to *be* a new world, everything will have to be reconciled.

Paul talks in Corinthians about the ‘ministry of reconciliation’. It is a profound idea and it comes as Paul is speaking to a church that, by all accounts, was full of conflict and division –

a church where some followed Paul, others Appollos, in which the Lord’s Supper had descended into gluttony; in which sexual licentiousness was rife, in which believers took out lawsuits against one another etc, etc..

In other words, where the whole gamut of human frailty was on display – where the instincts of the ‘will to power’ of the Chinese authorities were mixed with the wishful thinking of so much religion – and it wasn’t that *in that place* great evil was manifest, but that the conundrum of human life was manifest;

The line between good and bad cuts right through the heart of each one of us and it leads, ultimately, to Xinjiang province, to Syrian enclaves, to the Killing Fields of Cambodia and to the divided fractious communities that are as likely to be churches as anything else.

And the only thing, Christianity proposes, that can change any of this, is the reconciling work of Christ, spread abroad through the ministry of reconciliation.

I like to think that's what Christian worship is all about really; *seeing* an unjust world racked with pain and *believing* in the presence of God-in-the-world; *acknowledging* that in no current circumstance can they ever be reconciled..
And yet... speaking of the presence of God, rejoicing in the presence of God, proclaiming the presence of God – *believing* in the presence of God in such a world

And yet... serving such a world, that the new world might be seen in which God in Christ reconciles all things.

But it's more, even, than that. It's more than just being nice people and wincing when we hear about the Uighurs and hoping the world might be a bit better tomorrow..

Paul writes 'we are therefore Christ's ambassadors' – on behalf of Christ we serve'. When the Chinese ambassador was asked about the Uighurs last week he reiterated the Beijing line –

It was perfectly clear he was saying what his masters wanted him to say – in effect he was *representing* them – it was as though Beijing was in the room.

It's a kind of mirror-image of how it is with those who serve the cause of Christ in the world.

Leave aside for a moment the long, complex history of Christian leadership (apostles, bishops, presbyters, ministers. 'On behalf of Christ we serve' is the motto of Bristol Baptist College) –

It's a Baptist understanding that the ambassadorship of Christ is not just for a few ordained individuals, It's for *all* of us - *representing* Christ in the world – his work of reconciliation is *our* ministry of reconciliation. We are called to *represent* the reconciliation of Christ:

as though God was making his appeal *through us* (Paul) – as though God was in the room..

As though God was in the world when *we* are in the world – as though the Church of God – it's people – through the way it lives, the communities it creates, the things it says, the injustices it overcomes, the initiatives it supports and the things to which it draws attention – God only knows it's not just a few Christians who are going to change the world –

As though the Church of God represents the *reconciliation of all things* -

It's a mistake simply to think of the new world as some new tomorrow – a better world if we just try a bit harder - it is, I think, to be seen today.

As we said last week it may be that the new world after coronavirus won't be so very different to this world, apart from a few masks and a respectable social distance.

But if God's people – Christ's ambassadors – you and me – live in this world *as though God in Christ was in the room*

Maybe then people will begin to see what the reconciliation of all things might actually be like

And it's tough, where the Uighurs are concerned; it's challenging, when the blandishments of religion are all around; how can we expect to be 'filled with God'? In Xinjaing province being filled with God means, surely, being filled with justice, and peace, and freedom

And it's costly – what did Jesus say? 'if anyone would follow me...' but it's hopeful and peaceful and *real* also in this divided, conflicted, unjust world: it's prayer and action till the whole world is filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

And it's only possible if we believe, as Paul says

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

See, not so much 'filled with God' more., in the poetry of Isaiah, that 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.'

['God will make a way'](#)

Virtual Choir with singers from Zimbabwe, South Africa and The United Kingdom.

Prayers

We pray for those who, in this current world, know great darkness – Uighur and Rohingya Muslims; Syrian and Yemeni families; the sick and grieving and mentally disturbed from Covid 19 or a thousand illnesses; the increasing numbers of people caught up in domestic violence.

That the light of the World might shine in their darkness and the reconciling power of Christ be made known in their world. We pause in quiet

Lord **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who, in this world, work for peace and reconciliation and an end to oppression – in campaigning groups, in the political world, in new kinds of community.

That the light of the World might inspire them and the reconciling power of Christ give them strength and vision. We pause in quiet

Lord **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are actively planning and working to make new things happen - in finance, risk management, building and manufacturing - and for those who are researching and testing to make a new world possible.

That the light of the World might shine on them and the reconciling power of Christ be at work amongst them. We pause in quiet

Lord **Hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves and those we love.

That we might be inspired by the light of the World and that the reconciling power of Christ will do its work in us. We pause in quiet

Lord **Hear our prayer**

Offering

The practicalities of giving mingle with the gesture such giving represents; a sign of peace and reconciliation in a divided world.

'Lord, we give you these and all our gifts and in the giving and the continuing to serve we work for the day when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord'

BPW381 ['I cannot tell'](#)

Blessing

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

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

I wish you well for the forthcoming week and would encourage you to continue to support one another, and to pray for those who are continuing to work hard to make all the arrangements for re-opening Tyndale on 6th September

That's the date we're working towards, though it will depend on circumstances of course; a letter will be sent round to everyone nearer the time detailing all the arrangements.

A 'together though apart' time follows at 11.30 am