

Welcome

Hello, everyone and welcome back to worship at Tyndale. It's been a strange year so far, hasn't it? Much has been lost; our human frailties have been revealed more than for many a long year – still, we have much about which to be grateful – *health* – Covid 19 has touched Tyndale but lightly, and other ailments in this period have been few – and, still, *prosperity* – in this prosperous part of the world little of the desperate circumstances faced by many have been seen – though that's not to down-play the stresses of those in business, the decidedly mixed experience of working from home or the challenges faced by those who work in academic or medical or commercial environments.

As I say, much to be grateful for – and the *beauties of the world* – and *each other* – and, last but not at all least – the *joys of worship*; many of those have continued in new ways through the period of lockdown but there's no substitute for *gathering*, with others, in a place set aside for the purpose, a place and time, we believe, where God is present -
This place, and this time..

'Come, now is the time to worship'

Call to worship

We are glad to be here in this building,
Place of baptisms, funerals and marriages,
Laughter & weeping, silence & prayer, doubt & belief,
Place of urgency and passion, peace and stillness, meeting and encounter and change,

Silence

We gather – called by God, in spirit with all those who have gathered before,
those who are here, those who cannot gather now & those who are yet to come,
looking to be stirred by God's presence & changed by the good news of Christ died and risen
waiting & trusting & hoping,
ready to worship, learn & serve God in Christ..

BPW 327 'All my hope on God is founded',

Opening Prayer

'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house – Solomon's words capture our preposterous faith – this is a small place; this is a small thing we do, this gathering, praying, hoping – but this is God's place, and His time – and He is great and Almighty and He loves all that he has made – He loves us- in our smallness and weakness

So hear us once again, Lord - in the spirit of Solomon's words - *Have regard to your servant's prayer and our plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servants pray to you today;*

For we turn to you. Our faces may be covered but our hearts are open; our ways may be frail but our intention is to walk your way. Our caution is necessary but we meet by faith in the One who is above all and in all and through all –
Christ our Lord.

It is preposterous in this suffering world but true to the world you have made that we should say, and believe, with Solomon: *that your eyes may be open night and day ..that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays towards this place.*

So, Lord, in the ancient spirit of faith by which generations have worshipped you and trusted you for salvation and given themselves to you in service through Christ. *Hear the plea of your servant and of your people... O hear in heaven your dwelling-place; heed, and forgive.*

And lift us up, and change us into your likeness; we worship you in Christ's name.

'There is a hope'

Stuart Townend

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

[Psalm 34:1-10](#)

Responsive reading BPW668 (Psalm 34:11-18)

Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,

Keep your tongue from evil and keep your lips from speaking lies.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;

The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit

[Romans 5:1-11](#)

BPW 601 'Prayer to a heart of lowly love'

Tyndale Virtual Singing Group

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.

Sermon - 'The hope of sharing God's glory'

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. Amen.

'For while we were still weak' – let's begin by confessing our weakness. Covid 19 has exposed human weakness like nothing else. No one is powerful ATM; economies tanking; livelihoods ending; politicians floundering; expert opinions mixing; medics breathing sighs of relief before the next onslaught; the virus rampaging through prosperous and poor countries alike;

the only people prospering through this are con-artists and religious fantasists and – whisper it quietly – the already super-rich.

Yes, it is bleak, but it's where we must begin; yes, we are weak, but it's what we must confess; we can't seek ways through based on human strength alone; we can't do it on our own; we can only, we who would live by faith, put our hope....

Before we get to the where and what of our hope, let's begin where Paul begins—'while we were still weak' – is there still anyone who thinks that we human beings are *not* weak? Can anyone listen to a blustering Lukashenko or a campaigning Trump or Biden or a government spokesperson from anywhere trying to explain away the latest U-turn and hear or see or witness anything but *weakness*?

While we were still weak...we opened schools, pubs, businesses and churches nervously..researched a vaccine desperately. Kept our distance & wore masks *religiously*...

While we were still weak. We have lost much during this lockdown period haven't we? Confidence has waned for some. Activities have stopped for many. Old certainties like travel and freedom of choice have withered and died.

While we were still weak...the novelty soon wore off and the silence soon ended; contrails back in the sky; M5 traffic as heavy as ever; single-use plastic everywhere again; food banks overrun; credit cards maxxed out; asylum seekers making their dangerous way, black lives don't seem to matter; bombs fall in Yemen and bullets fly in Kenosha..

While we were still weak, Paul says; while we were still sinners; still enemies – the Christian faith begins where we are, however we are - begins *here*, as we gather for the first time in months in this place – everything's changed, but really nothing much has changed at all – we're still the same, weak, sinful people we always were. Confess it...

That's the genius of the Christian faith; it's not going to make false promises that we can be more fulfilled for being more religious; it's not going to sell us a fantasy or offer quick-fix solutions; it's not going to set itself up as a kind of perfect community;

It's going to plant itself right where and how it is for us who are human, all of us – everyone – all are welcome in this place, we sing, as if we were doing the world some kind of favour but really all are welcome in this place because this place is everyone's place – it's the place where God has chosen to set up his tent; right in the midst of all the weakness and suffering and sinfulness of our lives and of the world –

While we were still weak, while we were still sinners, enemies. First, my friends, we must confess *where* we are and *who* we are – and only then, do we dare to hope.

This is all about hope, really. I know it's been said 'let's hope it won't be too much longer'; 'hopefully we'll get back to normal soon' – you've seen, you've heard the politicians..it'll all be over by Christmas, 'let's show this virus the door'; 'they're going back to work in huge numbers'; 'it will go away, just stay calm, it will go away'

That's the kind of hope we live on, really; the hope that one day the weaknesses won't hold us back or that the future will be better than the present or that the world is other than it actually is – Land of Hope and Glory, they're going to sing at the Proms after all..

They've been saying a lot lately that it's all about competing narratives in our world; one way of telling the story against another way of telling the story - you pays your money and you takes your choice from any number of competing theories or truths and it doesn't matter as long as what you choose to believe gives you hope – Rule, Britannia, they're going to sing at the Proms after all..

But we didn't ought to be trading in that kind of hope, did we? Not in here, not in this place, not 'while we are still weak, not 'while we are still sinners' – as Paul says again in Romans 'Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?'

I suspect that most of what passes for hope amongst us is like that – not so much hope that is seen, but hope that at least can be imagined – we can imagine a return to normal; a virus-free existence; full offices, nice holidays, hugs and kisses, kids bumping into each other –

But that's not really the *Christian* hope. The Christian hope begins 'while we are still weak'; 'still sinners' – the heart and soul of the Christian message – *the hope of sharing the glory of God..*

Don't let's just dabble in optimism. Of course there'll be glass-half-full and glass-half-empty folk amongst us, but none of that is the business of the Christian faith; the Christian faith begins 'while we are still weak; while we are still sinners'

And here, right smack bang in the middle of our weakness and sinfulness, because of a Cross rooted in the same earth, on which Christ breathes the same air and dies the same death and suffers the same humiliations that come to us all – is the Christian hope – the hope of sharing in the glory of God.

See, there really is nothing new under the Christian sun – it is all of God; he has done everything for us – while we were still weak at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. While we were still sinners Christ died for us. While we were still enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son

Christ died for us! Say it and believe it over and over again. If this lockdown period has done nothing else it's surely brought us back down to basics. Well the basic business of the Christian faith is this – Christ died for us.

That's where our hope lies - the hope of sharing in the glory of God.

So, to paraphrase Paul, boast in your sufferings, know that your suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us,

How could it, ever? It is a mystery, yes – it's beyond our imagination, our *seeing*, - *but it cannot ever disappoint* because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. – It is the hope of glory – of sharing in the glory of God.

Intercessions

First, a prayer of celebration and thanks

Lord, we have much to be thankful for; thank you for bringing us through to this day; thank you for this building, for all that it means to us, for all the work that has gone into it over many years and for all that has been done recently to prepare for today.

Lord of life in all its fulness **Hear our prayer**

Thank you for each other – for all those who have come to be part of this occasion and for all the others who are part of this community; who can't be here for whatever reason – thank you for them.

Lord of life in all its fulness **Hear our prayer**

Thank you for the beauties of the world, many that we have perhaps come to know more completely in recent weeks – grass and trees and wildlife, views from favourite places, blue sky, fresh air – things that we have maybe taken for granted before – thank you for them and for the times of silence and stillness that we have enjoyed

Lord of life in all its fulness **Hear our prayer**

Thank you for our friends and loved ones – absence has indeed made our hearts grow fonder of those who mean much to us; thank you for them and for every opportunity to see them and speak with them and for those who have been present while we, unavoidably, have been absent.

Lord of life in all its fulness **Hear our prayer**

Thank you for research, and technology, and innovation, and enterprise and organisation – and for all those who have put their skills at the world's disposal to make what progress has been made against this pandemic.

We have much to celebrate in a good world; we thank you for it all – and for Christ our Lord, our hope and peace.

Lord of life in all its fulness **Hear our prayer**

Next - a prayer of mourning.

We acknowledge all that has been lost – confidence, income and business and health and freedoms of various kinds. This pandemic has hit many hard all around the world; in a moment of silence we seek to share in the spirit of bewilderment, distress, confusion and regret.

Lord hear us **Lord graciously hear us**

We know that many have lost loved ones to this virus – often in terrible circumstances of isolation and pain; many have had their grief compounded by separation, the absence of touch, by mistakes and obfuscation, by unavoidable delay. In a moment of silence we seek to share in the spirit of grief and bitterness and emptiness.

Lord hear us **Lord graciously hear us**

We understand that many still suffer from this disease, while others dread what might yet happen and levels of anxiety and mental illness are everywhere on the rise. IN a moment of silence we make a prayer for healing and wholeness.

Lord hear us **Lord graciously hear us**

Finally - a prayer of hope and expectation

Many are working for a better world – researching new treatments, campaigning for justice and fairness, organising new schemes for housing and social care, volunteering to help at Food Banks and homeless shelters, starting new businesses. We pray that they will become aware of God's creative Spirit at work amongst them

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Many are hoping for better times ahead – looking for work, changing lifestyles, forming new relationships, thinking and agitating for new political solutions. We pray that they will come to trust in the guiding of God's Spirit.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We are keen to be active again in the whole life of the church – and are seeking to be wise in steering a course between required, recommended, and sensible restrictions on the one hand and desired, requested and allowed freedoms on the other. We pray that we also will be guided and strengthened by God's Spirit.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We offer these and all our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Offering and Prayer

We stand before you, grateful for all we have received, ready to give of ourselves in these and all our gifts, looking to the coming of your Kingdom. amen

BPW 559 ['Love divine all loves excelling'](#)

Blessing

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all this day and remain with us always.

Thank you for being a part of this service; thanks to Ian H and Bruce LI for their technical expertise, Rachel M, Sarah D, Tyndale Singers for the recorded music, to Nick and Tina for getting the service out online and the script in the post, thanks to the stewards today and thanks to you all for being here this morning. This 'new normal' pattern of worship will continue over the coming weeks.

Now please follow the stewards as they direct you out of the church. Although there can be no informal time of fellowship we hope that you have valued being in each other's company and will join us again next week.