

Welcome

Welcome once again to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church, whether you're here in the church, watching live at home, watching the later recording or following the script. As we continue in this period of 'forced separation' we would remember that *nothing* can separate us from God's love, and, we are 'united in Christ' – made One in Him – our welcome is extended in the light of that truth and promise.

Again, the reminder for those in church – no standing or singing (apart from under your breath). Thank you for following the COVID 19 rules and layout as you arrived and please follow the one way system & the steward's directions as you leave. Thanks to them for preparing and operating all these procedures; please continue to give them your support.

Todays' service continues to follow the 'lectionary' set readings that are being used widely across the churches in this country – and today is marked as 'Bible Sunday' – we gather, as Christians have always gathered, around the Word.

'My Jesus, my Saviour'

Darlene Zschech

Call to worship

In the beginning was the Word; the Word has come into our world, the Word of life; He calls us here, inspires us, speaks forgiveness, enlightens our lives and leads us and when we are silent before Him, He speaks - "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

CG 39 'Glory to God above'

Tyndale Virtual singing group

Opening Prayer

Our opening prayer is based on a free translation of verses from psalm 119 – a responsive prayer:

Leader	O Lord, how sweet are your words to our taste,
All	sweeter than honey
Leader	Through your precepts we get understanding;
All	therefore we hate every false way.
Leader	Your word is a lamp to our feet
All	and a light to our path.
Leader	Our lives of faith confirm it,
All	And we will observe your commands.
Leader	In this world we are afflicted;
All	O LORD , give us life, according to your word.
Leader	Accept our offerings of praise, O LORD,
All	and teach us your true ways.
Leader	You hold our lives in your hand continually,
All	And we would not forget your word.
Leader	Whatever lies in wait for us
All	We would not stray from what you have revealed.
Leader	We have inherited your Word ;
All	And it is the joy of our hearts.
Leader	We will incline our hearts to do what your Word commands
All	for ever, to the end.

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

'Listen to the Word'

Cantus Firmus Trust

Readings

[Nehemiah 8: 1-3; 8-12](#)

[Matthew 24:30-35](#)

Sermon

Lord, we give you this time. May what is spoken ring with truth, may what is heard & understood be touched by your spirit, and may what is decided lead us on towards your Kingdom. Amen.

Nehemiah tells the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Too much detail to go into, but our reading tells of what happened after they were re-built

'All the people gathered together'. Ezra got the 'Book of the Law' – of Moses (first 5 books, bits, anyway..) & they all listened 'from early morning till noon' while he read it to them.

then a bunch of 12 or 13(!) Levites 'gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading'. Then they all went off, eating, drinking, sharing, having a high old time, and celebrating because they had understood.

Imagine that – a worship service 4 or 5 hours long, comprising of just 1 Bible reading, followed by 12 or 13 sermons (!!?) followed by – not a quick word on the door & a cup of coffee (I wish!) - but some kind of bunfight, where, presumably, everyone rejoiced 'cos they understood the sermon(s)!

Talk about a surfeit of religion! I got castigated once for preaching for less than an hour – imagine 2, 3 hours....x 13! That's after a *long* Bible reading – Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Numbers (or most of it, if it took from early morning till noon)...have you ever tried to read your way through the 1st 5 books of the Bible?

Today is Bible Sunday; we Christians have been called 'people of the book'. I once went to an old Welsh chapel where a deacon who looked like he'd been there since 1870 carried a huge Bible and plonked it down on a lectern and joyously opened it with shining eyes –

The Bible...and Tyndale looks down on us while we speak – and he burnt at the stake so we could have the words in our own language

And we've had two readings this morning (some churches just get by with a few verses) – and now..a 10 or 12-minute long sermon...

Today is Bible Sunday – a day for celebrating the Bible. I looked at some of the free resources on the Bible Society's website for today (decided not to use them!) - they included a video of Bible work around the world...

people are *desperate* for Bibles, it said...clips of families, groups, individuals, fingers following the text, rapt attention to preachers, kids gazing up at Mum or Dad as they read the Bible. Mary Rowe (late of this parish), spent many years smuggling Bibles into China, the USSR, Cuba..

Time for confession. As my ministry reaches its latter stages I realise I haven't done enough with the Bible – haven't read enough about it; haven't *read* it enough –

had to look back through some old commentaries to remind myself of some of Nehemiah so this morning I could – 'give the sense', so that *the people* (you..) could understand the reading. Don't worry! Not for 2 or 3 hours....x 13...!!

Quite a contrast isn't it? Between then (Nehemiah's time), and *then* (19th and 20th century non-conformist chapels – R.S.Thomas described a service:.. *here once on an evening like this, in the darkness that was about his hearers, a preacher caught fire and burned steadily before them with a strange light, so that they saw the splendour of the barren mountains about them and sang their amens fiercely, narrow but saved in a way that men are not now.*)

A contrast between then and now...but the world has changed, hasn't it? Religious life was all back in Nehemiah's time – farming, building, raising children – you name it, there was almost certainly a Bible verse for it – religious life was pretty all-encompassing in the days of the chapels as well – they went down the mines and built the towns and raised their families with the words of the Bible ringing in their ears..not many places other than the chapel to go, not much else other than the Bible to read, not much else but the words of a sermon to make sense of the world..the 50th anniversary of the Aberfan disaster was this week..

No TV; no internet; no smart phones – "I'll just Google it" seems to be the cry of our day (other search engines are available....)...

Bible Sunday..what are we to do? We can't go back to those days..maybe we might support the Bible Society in its efforts to carry on Tyndale's vision, but I imagine in a generation or so people in Africa or South Korea will look back nostalgically to when they'd listen to the Bible at their mother's knee.

And anyway – all that 'sense and meaning' stuff – when Donald Trump held a Bible in front of that boarded-up church in Washington a few weeks back, some supporter (a minister, no less..) was quoted saying, '*I believe this is a president who wears the full armor of God.*' -

You don't have to agree totally with some plumby Anglican bishop, back in Tyndale's day, but you can see what he meant when he said something like 'they may have the words, but who will give them the meaning?'

We can't go back..We can't pretend the Bible gives up its meaning easily either - but maybe we can, this Bible Sunday, still hold on to something that's always been there – the 'creative tension' between the words on the page and the Word of life..

Jesus, in that stressful time, spoke darkly about the end of days – smoke, fire and the powers of heaven shaken – could have mentioned coronavirus...!

You can imagine that those who gathered – his disciples - In Jerusalem, by Nehemiah's walls – that had lasted for 100's of years, that he foretold would be raised to the ground, which they were a few years later – Listened like their lives depended on it. And he quoted the Bible – Isaiah, Joel - *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.*

And he gave *them the sense* , by talking about a fig tree – that's the thing, see; the sense is often to be found by pointing at something else, in everyday experience – and he gave *them the meaning* – not of just a part of the Bible – God help any preacher if they only try to explain parts of the Bible – but by pointing to himself -

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

What words?

This is the Jesus who said, one time, *You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*

This is the Jesus who said one time, '*Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing*'

This is the Jesus who said one time '*Father into your hands I commit my spirit*'

This is the Jesus who died on the cross; this is the Jesus who lives for ever; this is the Jesus whose words will never pass away

In fact, you could say that in Jesus the words on the page *come together* with the Word of life – that's the sense of the whole Bible, really, and there's a lifetime (never mind a few hours) to understand the meaning..

'Everlasting arms'

Lou Fellingham, National Methodist Choir of Great Britain

Prayers

The terrible loss of life when a slag heap slid down a hillside fifty years ago in Aberfan and overwhelmed a primary school; those who still mourn the loss of their children, their siblings, their colleagues; those who still feel the bitterness of the loss; the trauma of being involved in the aftermath; the injustices meted out by industrial and political interests. There is a line connecting that tragedy with Grenfell Tower and the many small tragedies of our time – care home and hospital deaths, isolation and mental illness; lost businesses and livelihoods..

We lament with the Bible - *When shall I come and behold the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, 'Where is your God?'*

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We hope with the Bible - *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.*

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We bow before the judgment of the Bible - *for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.*

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We claim a share in the forgiveness of the Bible - *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake.*

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

For absent friends, for lost loved ones, for difficult times, for hopeful visions, for changed lives, for a suffering yet beautiful world

We turn once more to the Lord who is revealed in the Bible - *Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'*

We put our trust once more in you

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

In Jesus' name we pray, **amen**

Offering

As we prepare to make our offering (leave your gift in the plate on the way out), we pray:

Lord, we are grateful for all we have received. As hardships continue we are humbled and thankful, for the comparatively light Covid 19 burden of this part of the world. And as we offer ourselves in these and all our gifts we ask that others, also, might be both humble and grateful as they receive the gifts of God

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.

BPW 573 'There's a wideness in God's mercy'

New York-based virtual choir

Blessing

The blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us, evermore

Thanks to Rachel M, Sarah D, to the Tyndale Singers to Ruth A for the readings and to Nick and Tina for getting the script in in the post. Thanks again to Ian and Bruce for the technical work and thanks to today's stewards and 'preparers' - and thanks to you all for being here this morning.

A 'together though apart' time follows at 11.30 am