

Welcome

Welcome once again to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church, recorded in the building, which continues to be closed during this pandemic. We rejoice in the hopeful signs of vaccine roll-outs and falling case rates, but we acknowledge that as yet much of life is restricted – and we continue to keep our building closed in solidarity with many who must endure the closure of a business or the loss of income – and we seek to mourn with those who mourn and weep with those who weep

Yet still we come to worship – and we hope that all who join us will feel something of the joy of God's presence as we lift our hearts before him and – later – celebrate His presence and proclaim his saving power as we share bread and wine. It's strange, especially in a Baptist church, to partake of communion like this, since for us the shared nature of the Lord's Supper is central – it means much for us to do this together, as we express our belonging together in the body of Christ.

Still, as we will speak in the communion part of the service of the *mystery* of the body and blood of Christ, so we recognise that over all our doings today – recording, reading, praying, singing, listening, breaking and pouring out, the mystery of God is at work – uniting us though we are separated; holding us though we are falling, finding us though, without Him, we are lost..

We pray that will be your experience also – and that you will feel the welcome that is offered here – and we pray that you will join in with our prayer, for each and all, for our own loved ones and friends, for neighbours and workers and citizens of other countries – that all together, in our need, in our struggle, and in our seeking, we will find God.

['As the deer pants for the water'](#)

sung by Kathryn Crossweller

CALL TO WORSHIP

Souls and spirits that long after God; in an empty, hurting world we come seeking, in a dry, barren world we come thirsting, in a cold, joyless world we come hungering –

We come at the call and in the light of the promises of God, who has entered our world in Christ, to bring healing, the water of life, the bread of heaven – and by His Spirit, and in His name, we worship

BPW 306 ['Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning'](#)

virtual choir from Christ Church Bath

Opening Prayer

Lord God, with our hearts uplifted by the vision of the triumphant, ever reigning Saviour, Master, King, we come to worship you. We have known much to bring us down; much of loneliness and isolation, much of pain and suffering; we hear of such things and know of such things still - still, in the light of the power and majesty of the Son of Man; in the promise of the Priestly King enthroned for ever; with the vision of the Suffering Servant who has defeated death lifting our hearts, we worship you –

God forgive us when we have allowed the vision to fade; when we have lived by faith only in what we can see; when we have done no more than what we have wanted, and not done more than we have felt like – forgive us and restore us we pray (silence) –

And still seeking, still thirsting and hungering – and still hoping and trusting and looking to Christ who reigns over all, we offer you this worship.

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

[Proverbs 8:22-31](#)

[John 1:1-14](#)

['In Christ Alone'](#)

International virtual choir

Sermon

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

It's easy to get bogged down at the moment- amid hopeful signs, continued restrictions; variants, vaccines, Brexit shenanigans, turmoil in Myanmar and Russia, and Trumpism outliving Trump himself.

And it's not yet Spring – though I did see some crocuses this week; but there's still snow in the forecast and it's still cold – it's easy to get bogged down.

Add isolation, loneliness, sheer *boredom*, the *can't be bothered* feeling...It's easy to get bogged down

One way to lift your mood would be to have a good belly laugh – thank goodness for all the comedians and cartoonists who've been plying their trade during this time.

A recent cartoon - an elderly couple looking at a screen. The chap says to his wife 'can't you change channels, this is boring'. His wife replies, 'No I can't. This is a Zoom call with your grandkids...'

Made me laugh, anyway. There's lots of other stuff.. Or music -thank goodness for YouTube! Wonderful choirs..videos; organ music..guitar playing (thanks Mike) –

And..on-line orchestras, TV concerts, re-runs of old series – a David Attenborough wildlife film – perhaps a murder mystery.

Or you could get lost in a good book..or...jigsaw puzzles – or.. a snatched conversation with a neighbour, or...the highlight of the week visit, to the supermarket – clear out another cupboard.

Me, I get quite a lot out of walking my dog; he's not the least bit bothered about coronavirus...or mud, for that matter...

The other day we were just starting for home; I'd just put him back on the lead – he saw another dog and before I could stop him he pulled me over flat on my back..nothing hurt but my pride...a bit muddy, though..

It's easy to get bogged down..ATM I like that saying 'all of us are in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars' – I prefer the poem at Blaise '...that kiss on the bridge where nailheads glittered like stars under your feet'

– this ordinary, currently bogged-down life 'shot through with stars' – 'higher visions' – something better, greater, further – glimpsed in a kiss, a good belly-laugh, a lifting piece of music, a walk...

You could say that that's what religion is for – lifting our eyes above this present darkness; though sometimes its visions get lost behind cult-like activity or bound up with impenetrable rituals or diluted by relevance and trendiness.

One of the things I've found myself doing – very occasionally - in these 'groundhog days' is dipping into other services, on Youtube and the like – Some really inspiring stuff, but a lot that's a bit naff; I get a bit irritated when someone chats about God or prays to God and it all sounds a bit glib, over-familiar, too easy –

as if this present darkness hasn't thrown up any difficult questions about God at all..Which it has, don't you think? Old questions that take on fresh force in a time when suffering, in some form, affects just about everybody –

unless you happen to be a billionaire or a so-called 'influencer', carrying on your charmed, sun-kissed existence on a beach in Dubai

You know? Where is God? Why does God allow so much suffering? Why doesn't God *stop* such suffering?

The answers are quite straightforward for some – if God is all powerful he *would* be able to stop such suffering, if God was all-loving he'd *want* to stop it; so either he's *not* all powerful or he's *not* all-loving; so he can't really exist...

But for others of us it's not so straightforward; despite all the suffering it can't just be meaningless, can it, our existence? Just an accident, this life, on this one tiny planet in a small solar system orbiting an unremarkable star in one of *billions* of galaxies of stars

Apparently if you shrank our planet to the size of an atom it would still take more than 70 light years to reach the edge of the known universe – *and* it's expanding...

Mind-boggling..and in such immensity, frankly some of our efforts to lift our mood, to look at the stars, seem to fall a bit flat..

laugh all you like, we're still bogged down ...inspire us with music, books, poetry, films, we're still bogged down – look at stars or waterfalls or cuddly cats – we're still bogged down.

And..you'll know that sometimes the suffering comes very close; it's not appropriate to name anyone right now..still....thoughts and prayers...

So I'm trying to find a way – a *religious* way, if you like, of getting to grips with all this. How about John's gospel – the first, famous line...'in the beginning was the Word' –

See, I have this idea that what we need right now is a kind of – well, not so much comfort or escape or inspiration – not even some nice gooey religious feelings - more, a way of seeing, of thinking, of *being* - *in* this suffering, bogged-down world.

John's first line will do, I think - *in the beginning was the Word..*

Could have gone back to Genesis, I suppose, for a reminder that everything was made by God, but here, in John's gospel, is another way of approaching it –

The idea that at the heart of everything is intelligence, meaning, purpose and direction – not cliché-like answers – not 'God has a plan we just can't see it'; not chess-board theology, you know? God's moving everything around to get us just where he wants us to be –

Something else – *intelligence, meaning, purpose and direction* – that's what the Word is, really; the ancient Greek idea with links back to the OT Jewish faith and on into the wider world; ideas of wisdom (Proverbs); ideas of prophets speaking and philosophers philosophising –

All encompassing, all pervading – every jot and tittle of human knowledge and research and discovery and organisation taken up and overflowing into one, great idea – that at the centre and heart of everything, before, beyond, beneath, in and into, out and above, over and under...the Word God...too holy even to name, according to the Jewish faith – too great even to utter – always one remove from God - the breath of God, the hand of God, the Spirit of God....the Word.

See, I may not be putting this very well, but I'm trying to grasp at something here – not some big bang-like beginning, like you might throw a handful of rice in the air and see where it might fall – quite meaningless and accidental, however spectacular,

but something quite beyond time as we know it – a beginning of everything for always – your beginning, my beginning, every star, every plant, every galaxy, every grain of sand – every success and failure for that matter, every strength and frailty – the whole of existence brought into being by the Word –

Enough of all this cod science and amateur philosophising – not sure John intended much of that, he wrote for ordinary folk who were trying to live by faith; which is all we're trying to do – so that they – and we – might *feel* a sense of meaning, purpose and direction

– at any time; In their mired time, surrounded by persecution, buffeted by the slings and arrows of an outrageous world – thin soil, rampant disease, failed crops, low life expectancy, or *our* time – isolation, loneliness, sheer *boredom*, the *can't be bothered* feeling...illness, coronavirus, restrictions.. In the beginning was the Word – for all time, for everyone, for always..but one more thing. One commentator puts it very well, I think: John 1 *verse 1* isn't enough without *verse 14*

And everything in between, you might say – the whole boiling *begins* with the Word – all our beginnings..just one remove from God...we all are...but John doesn't stay with an abstract philosophical idea of the Word – he hones in on a story – a story for each of us, for always –

'The LORD created me at the beginning' of his work' – Proverbs gets the personal perspective going a long time before, but it's taken on and made much more complete;

So that John can say – all those nailheads, those jokes, jigsaws, songs, vaccines, walks in the park – those stars.. that looking up while still bogged down; those nagging, niggling questions – that life, that cross, that wisdom, that living by faith, that dwelling for a while among us, that *bread and wine* –

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

Words of Offering

Thankful for all we have received, yet still seeking and hungering and thirsting after the things of God's Kingdom, we give of ourselves in these and all our gifts and in this bread and wine, looking in the giving and the continuing to serve, to the transformation of all things.

'Here is bread, here is wine'

Graham Kendrick - Great Malvern's Praise Group

Communion

The table of the Lord is spread, it is for those who will come and see in broken bread and poured out wine – not mere symbols, but the very substance of his life shed for us on the Cross and raised again the third day. The risen Christ is present among his people and it is here that we meet him. The invitation is for all those who are seeking him and who are weary of their sin and doubt to come and share the feast.

Confession

The confession that began near to the beginning of this service, as we gathered with hungry, thirsty, seeking hearts, continues..

Lord our God, we continue to confess our part in a world that cannot see, and does not know how to look, beyond its own pettiness and self-interest.

We confess the church's worldliness, often cowed by the pressure to conform, reluctant to let the word of life go free in a needy world.

We confess our own worldliness, that makes us follow the desires of our own hearts before the promptings of your spirit.

Father forgive us and help us once again to hear the Word of Life; to follow when we hear, to respond when we see, and to give as we have received – we wait on your word:

Jesus said to them 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty' – thanks be to God, Amen.

Institution

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you; the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, take, eat, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me. In the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it in memory of me – for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts, **we lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is not only right it is our duty and our joy at all times and in all place to give you thanks and praise, Holy Father, Heavenly King..Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying

Holy Holy Holy, god of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

God our Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on all your people, that we may have faith, and upon these gifts of bread and wine and this eating and drinking, that this may be for us the mystery of the body and blood of our risen Lord – so that we may receive Christ to ourselves once again, for the strengthening of our faith, the assuring of our hope, and the deepening of our love.

Responses

Leader Here is bread	All	For us to feed on Christ
Leader Here is wine	All	For us to refresh our souls
Leader How shall we eat?	All	Looking to Christ in a broken world
Leader How shall we drink	All	Hoping in Christ in a sinful world
Leader For ourselves & all those who hunger & thirst	All	We raise our glasses and our hearts

Bread & Wine

Prayer after communion

If death no longer has dominion, Lord, bring hope to those who have little; or who wait for hope to break out afresh; in care homes and hospitals and neighbourhoods, in war zones and internment and refugee camps: wherever death makes its false claim – we keep a moment's silence for any known to us who seek to have their hope renewed.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

If sin no longer has power, Lord, bring hope to those who have little, in prison, in drug clinics, in broken homes and places of refuge, wherever sin purports to reign – we keep a moment's silence for any known to us who thirst after forgiveness and restoration

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

If earthly power itself no longer has authority over human life, Lord, bring hope to those whose hope is threatened, the bullied, the abused, the rejected, wherever human power takes itself for granted – we keep a moment's silence for any known to us who hunger for freedom.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

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

'Strengthen for service Lord'

Sarah Dodds

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.

'Sisters and brothers'

John Bell & Graham Maule, sung by the Cantus Firmus Trust'

Blessing

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

Once again thanks to everyone who has made this service possible – Ian recording and processing; Nick & Tina printing and posting; Edward and Lesley reading; Rachel sorting music, Sarah playing – thank you one and all for taking part.

For myself and on behalf of the Officers and Deacons, I wish you all well and, in another week of restriction, assure you of our thoughts and prayers – please continue to pray for and support one another, as we all seek to continue to live by faith and as we seek, hunger and thirst after hopeful signs in the world and the things of God's Kingdom...

We meet to share a 'together though apart' time on Zoom from 11.30 am.