

Notices

Good Morning, and welcome to our on-line service on this final Sunday in February.

Our worship today is being conducted by our minister Michael Docker. I would like to thank him for leading us, and look to a greater understanding of God's message for us.

Our Zoom coffee shop will take place as usual on Tuesday morning at 11.00 with the sign in details being able to be obtained through the Tyndale web site.

On Wednesday evening at 7.30, again on Zoom, there will be a discussion led by Keith Clements entitled "What would Bonhoeffer do and say to the church in lockdown"

Please join us if you are free....

The Annual Election of Deacons' will take place in March. The nominations for this closed on Tuesday night, and I am pleased to say we have received three nominations. They are David Bell, Graham Lewis and Ian Waddington.

That is the easy part. Now for the voting.

There will be an electronic vote available on the night as demonstrated at our last church meeting, but to avoid excluding anybody unable to vote in this way there will also be a postal vote. This can be done by contacting me by either [email](#) or by telephone and requesting a ballot paper. This will then be either emailed or delivered to you by hand, and will tell you what you have to do with it. All postal votes will need to be returned by next Sunday 7th March to Ian Holyer who has been appointed as the scrutineer.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with Rachel our Community Minister following her surgery on Thursday.

This service is followed by a time together but apart. Please join us unless you are watching this on catch up which would mean you were neither together nor a part. Thank you.

Welcome

Welcome to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church as we continue to journey through Lent; it's a journey of faith, of course; but really, everyone's on a journey at the moment - please God it's a journey whose destination is...greater freedom, inoculation, hugs and kisses - please God.

But in the meantime, on this 'waypost' on the journey, welcome - one and all - fellow travellers, casual observers - all who are on this or some other journey through the rigours of this life towards - whatever destination your faith has for you. As a comedian used to say, 'may your God go with you'

God is here, we believe - but not *our* God, as if somehow God belonged to us, or could be and should be only described or approached through *our* way of doing things - God is here, the God of the universe, God who is everywhere, not so much *our* God; more - *your* God - the God before, beneath, through and over all things, for all time, in all places, for each and everyone -

For you and me; of course we hope you will feel welcome, but really, it is *God's* welcome we're seeking to express, for, we believe, God welcomes us all, each one - and calls us to follow Him in Christ, and invites us in Christ to look to His Kingdom - and to worship.

['Behold, I make all things new'](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

In a dry, empty, barren world - we look to God to make all things new - and we come at his call; and we commit to following him in Christ - and in Christ, snake, and by his power, we worship.,

CG 1 'A touching place'

Tyndale virtual singers

Opening Prayer

Lord God come & claim your rightful place. Come & touch us with your love; Lord, we have set aside this place & time to draw into your presence; but it only means anything because of your promise to be with those who gather in the name of your Son; & it only means anything because you are worth the worship we offer – & more beside, without let, without measure; above & beyond all that we can ever offer, yet gracious beyond telling; before the first heart-beat of the universe; in every pulse of every star & every atom, through all the changing scenes of the world you have made; & ready, always ready to reach out to where we are, with a love beyond words & a peace beyond understanding & a grace beyond imagination -

Lord forgive us our limited vision and our stunted efforts in service and our failed attempts to love with even the merest shadow of the love you have shown us; forgive us and take us to yourselves once again in Christ, we pray – as we wait on your Word to us -

Xt says 'I do not call you servants any longer, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father' - And we have heard that God is love – thanks be to God.

Lord, now hear us as we worship and receive what we have to offer, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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

[Genesis 17:15-17 & 18:10-15](#)

['God Has Made Laughter'](#)

[Mark 8:31-38](#)

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 all on towards your Kingdom..Amen

Not a time for laughter, Lent, surely - a somber time, for serious reflection, a bit of penance, self-denial; a time for contemplating the hard, sacrificial way of Jesus, that led him to a cross.

Not a time for laughter at all. Not much time for laughter in the Bible, you might say; only a few mentions of laughter - usually mocking laughter - or, as in the Abraham, Sarah and Isaac story, the kind of dry, hollow laughter born of bitterness, in the face of impossibility.

Mind you, there *is* humour in the Bible - Dr Helen Paynter, Tutor in Biblical Studies at the Baptist College, is a specialist - of the books of Kings in the OT she wrote:

Here, bizarre things happen. Ravens may bring you food, bears may attack unexpectedly, lions may seek you out and kill you. Here, axes float, and fires break out all over the place. Here, violent death is common and may take any number of forms. You might be sacrificed by your father, beheaded with your brothers, eaten by your mother, stoned on the orders of a queen, suffocated by your servant, or eaten by dogs. You *can* be sure there will be a great deal of blood.

This upside-down world is not a world of marble floors and ivory thrones, it is a world filled with the common stuff of everyday life -

In other words *life* happens & where life happens, often there is laughter - like when you listen to a news item & you can't help but laugh at the folly, like when a comedian pokes fun at the pomposity of the world - like.....

<https://youtu.be/LjlcAqMOMWA>

(Matt Lucas as Boris Johnson) **Good evening, let's get straight to it..**

If you must bake in a tent, bake in a tent...but don't bake in a tent

Is it scone or scon?

(Pru Leith) **Scone...**

(Paul Hollywood) **Scon..**

(Matt Lucas as Boris Johnson) **Right, well I hope that clears things up...**

The fact is we'd struggle to get through life if it wasn't for laughter - what is it they say, 'You've got to laugh or you'll cry..'

I wonder if that was how it was when (Abraham first, and then..) Sarah, heard the promise of God - told to her by those three strangers - mysterious strangers, standing, in the story, for the very mystery of God

They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'Oh yes, you did laugh.'

Oh yes, you did laugh -

Of course you laughed, Sarah..Of course you laughed - at the impossibility of the promise of God in such a world as this, barren, dry, unfair, unrelenting - of course you laughed..

You have to laugh, don't you? Otherwise you'll cry - when every day they announce the number of people who've died 'within 28 days of receiving a positive coronavirus test' - and we hardly notice anymore, do we?

If a couple of 747 planes fell out of the sky every day we'd notice - but we hardly stop, anymore, to think about all those deaths - ticked up on the nightly news like some kind of score sheet - world beating, at some point -

When they get an outbreak of two or three in other parts of the world, they lock everything down tight - over here we spend hours debating when to ease the restrictions a bit, and who should next be vaccinated, and when we can expect things to get better - March? April? August?

A great British summer, someone said recently - what's a great British summer all about then? Cream teas? Cricket? Wasps? Rolled up trousers and handkerchiefs on heads on deckchairs on Bournemouth beach? A daily case rate of less than a thousand, ten thousand - what?

You have to laugh, or you'll cry.. Sarah Laughed..(Abraham laughed) - no way, Jose - we're old. 'It has ceased to be for me in the manner of women'...and the land is dry and the camels are thirsty and the sheep are fractious and the rains haven't come as expected and Abraham's too busy sitting by the door and chatting to strangers and I've got to make cakes - talk about 'if I knew you were coming I'd have baked a cake' -

You've got to laugh or you'll cry - and you're telling me I'm going to have a child - the child of the promise? And Sarah laughed..

And do you know what's really funny? The child of the promise, when he came, was named Izaak, which means 'laughter' - but he didn't live up to his name, by all accounts - he bought his wife with a few trinkets, and tried to pass her off as his sister - and in the end was fooled by her and her favourite son Jacob.

You've got to laugh, or you'll cry..see it's real world, all this Bible stuff, all this religion - oh, I know, we're often thought of as fantasists and our faith is written off as so much gobbledygook and I know that the Church often comes over as all worthy and serious and devout (while failing to tackle child abuse in its own backyard)..

But at heart it's really all about the messy, mucky, unproductive, often barren business of real life -

And those disciples of Jesus - they set out to follow some amazing wandering preacher - they left everything behind - jobs, livelihoods, families - imagine what Mrs Peter or Mrs James had to say about it...'what am I supposed to do while you're going walkabout with that hippy?...who's going to mend the nets, sail the boats, bring in the catch - *put food on the table??*

It's alright for you, sitting around on a hillside sucking on a straw, listening to him banging on about seeds and loaves and fishes; it's alright dreaming about a new Kingdom...what about *me...*? What about *here* and *now....?*

We rarely think about what they left behind, do we? Can't you imagine the gossip down by the sea..'Where's your Peter, then?

'Gone walkabout I hear, with that weirdo Jesus character..How're you managing...?

You've got to laugh, or you'll cry

And Peter, James, John, the rest, seeing amazing things, having their eyes opened, getting more and more wrapped up in the miracles and the exorcisms, more and more excited, until Peter blurts out 'you're the Messiah' - in a great splurge of religious ecstasy - like an average Sunday at Tyndale....!!

And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

That's exactly it, isn't it? That's why Sarah laughed; that's why Peter said to Jesus 'don't be daft! T'ain't going to happen! We've got your back!'

Human things, not divine things - in a barren world, in a coronavirus world; in a world of failed crops and.... - quick, let's roll out the vaccinations before the virus mutates beyond reach...! Human things, not divine things.

See, in this world, you've got to laugh, or you'll cry. 'Hope for the best but prepare for the worst' as they say...'plans don't survive the first contact with the enemy'...'data not dates...'

See, we're only human, we who would follow Jesus, this Lent as any Lent - and it *is* Lent - self-denial, sacrifice, suffering, ending...all the time at the moment, isn't it?

But this is good news...Sarah laughs and Abraham laughs and neither of them show much faith - and God's promise finds a way anyway...not like Mary, all 'let it be to me as you have said' - Sarah laughs... but the good news is that God's promise finds a way anyway - You have given me laughter - Isaac - laughter..

And *this* is good news..*those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.* see, not human things..divine things

And this is good news - Jesus is going to a cross - to lose his life, to save *our lives*..not human things...divine things..

You've got to laugh, or.. - we pray:

Words of Offering

Lord thank you for the world you have made - and for every gift that is ours; thank you that you have given it freely to us and come into that world so as to save it - save us - from ourselves..

Lord we turn to you once more and give of ourselves in these and all our gifts – and as we give we rejoice at the beauty of the world and *revel* in such beauty – even if, sometimes, we laugh at all the absurdity; and we give, so that the ill come to see that the true source of its joy – indeed of its life – is you

BPW 473 ['Servant song'](#)

Intercessions

The spring-like weather, combined with hopeful signs and news, steer our prayers in a positive, thankful direction. In these prayers, after the words, 'Lord of all' please say 'hear our prayer'.

We pray with thankful hearts for all the good signs in the world around – signs of spring and all the glorious awakening in the natural world.

Lord, such signs remind us once again that your world is very good. We thank you that you have given it to us as a gift. We pause in quiet to reflect and give thanks

'Lord of all' **'hear our prayer'**.

We pray with hopeful hearts for all the positive signs around us – the vaccine rollout; new treatments; dedicated, hard working people in laboratories and factories, government offices, schools and colleges.

Lord, such signs remind us once again that human beings are capable of great good. We thank you for your gifts and for all those who have used them for others. We pause in quiet to reflect and give thanks

'Lord of all' **'hear our prayer'**.

We pray with glad hearts for all the joyful signs around us – laughter as people go about their lives; folk walking and animals playing; new ways of making music and drama on-line; time spent learning new skills; health and healing. We pause in quiet to reflect and give thanks

Lord, such signs remind us once again that life consists in more than just money and calculation. We thank you for the richness and diversity of your world

'Lord of all' **'hear our prayer'**.

We pray with faith-filled hearts for all those who still struggle through this time; with mental health, with physical limitations and illness, with financial worries and security

Lord, such things remind us that still all is not well with the world you have made. We ask you to lift all these for whom we have prayed and use us in the answering of these prayers. We pause in quiet to reflect and give thanks and recommit ourselves to the ways of service.

'Lord of all' **'hear our prayer'**.

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 363 ['Will you come and follow me'](#)

Benediction

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; Dave and Debbie reading; Rachel sorting music, Tyndale's singers singing– thank you one and all for taking part.

The Deacons will meet this coming week to review the decision to close Tyndale. In the meantime, on behalf of the Officers and Deacons, I wish you all well and assure you of our thoughts and prayers. Please continue to pray for & support one another, as we all seek to continue to live by faith and to follow the way of sacrificial love through the weeks of Lent.

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

['Peace Is Flowing Like A River'](#)