

Good Morning, and welcome to our on-line service on this third Sunday in March.

Our worship is being conducted by our minister Michael Docker. I would like to thank him for leading us, and look forward to hearing God's message through his teaching and preaching.

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

On Thursday evening at 7.30pm, again on Zoom, we will be holding another of Tyndale's fun evenings when we will be playing the 'Yes/No' game. Please come along to either join in or to just watch.

For your information Tyndale will re-open for morning services from the 18th April, assuming that the current road map out of lockdown has not changed.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with Rachel our Community Minister as she continues her recovery at home.

This service is followed by a time together but apart. Please join us if you are free. Thank you.

Welcome

Welcome to the worship service of Tyndale Baptist Church on this 'Passion Sunday' as we continue to follow the story of Jesus through Lent – into the final stages; the last weeks before Good Friday, before arriving at the glories of Easter.

It is the most profound part of the Christian year and, with its themes of loss, sacrifice and suffering, perhaps the most appropriate part for this difficult time, in which so many are experiencing such things in their own lives, and among those whom they love.

Religion often gets criticised for *denying* the realities of life or for cloaking those realities with blandishments, wishful thinking and other-worldly consolation, but the themes that come into focus during Lent remind us that at the heart of the Christian message is just those very realities.

So the welcome is extended to any who are struggling to make sense of the realities of this harsh world – severe illness, insecurity, grief and loss. We're not glorifying such things here, certainly not – in that much-used phrase today – *weaponizing* them – as if somehow religion could control or explain them away.

It can't and we certainly won't try to point to God as if that was a way of answering every question – indeed the welcome is really to anyone who *is* questioning. You are welcome to join us because we're questioning also.

But more than that – worship is not merely a dry, cerebral exercise; it provides a way of expressing our sense of grief or loss or fear in a 'safe space' of trust and acceptance. Frankly, there are few other such places in this world - perhaps no other places where we can trust that what we're going through and how we feel is held, and lifted, by a promise of grace and love *more* than sufficient for each and everyone of us..

BPW 219 ['It Is A Thing Most Wonderful'](#)

music written sung by Peter J Wheeler.

CALL TO WORSHIP

That grace and love and forgiveness and freedom should surround us and weave their way into our lives and the world is wonderful, and mysterious; beyond imagination, yet rich with promise and surety – before the God who brings such things through His Son we can do no more than worship..

BPW 339 ['How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds'](#)

Victoria Methodist Church

Opening Prayer

Sweetness to take away the bitterness of the world; wholeness to mend our wounded spirits; a rock, shepherd, brother, friend to steady us, guide us, hold us and stay with us through the darkest days – Lord God, for this Jesus and all he means and all he has done and all he shows us of you we worship and praise your name. Lord, there is none other; there is none greater; there is none like Jesus; he knows our weakness, coldness, emptiness; he sees the mess of the world; he speaks from age to age; he keeps us; he changes us; he leads us on;

We come to you through Him alone; we look to follow His way only; we confess that we are weak but we will rejoice in strength through weakness, we know that we neglect to love but we will revel in love through

service and sacrifice; we acknowledge that we are surrounded by suffering but we will not be defeated by a suffering, failing world;

In a moment of quiet we confess and acknowledge what we know to be true; we are weak and in constant need of God's mercy and help. We wait on His Word.

In John's gospel Jesus says, '*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*' He has drawn us and we rejoice..

So we will pray and do what is right and wait, Lord, on you alone – and we will always worship and praise you, holy and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, 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

'How Deep The Father's Love'

by Stuart Townend sung by Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church._

Readings

[Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)

[John 12:20-33](#)

Sermon

We spent some time on Wednesday evening, having been urged to watch the 'I am Greta' documentary, which follows Greta Thunberg as she travelled to climate change conferences and the United Nations during 2018 and 19, considering if this slight, then 15 year old girl, who suffers from Asperger's syndrome, could properly be called a prophet.

You'll recognise the Christian problem straight away, I think. For us, traditionally, a prophet is – perhaps someone like Jeremiah, whose words we've just heard – an old, venerable *man* – probably with a beard; known for his pithy sayings, like 'thus says the Lord' and 'the days are surely coming'; someone, we imagine, steely of gaze and firm of posture with a stern gaze, banging on about destruction and restoration.

There's plenty of contemporary Christian versions to turn to – a whole industry of 'prophetic ministries' so-called; railing against perceived moral failings in the West and claiming to be able to read the signs of the times and predict the end of the world and the return of Christ.

Greta Thunberg doesn't measure up to any of that, right? Small, and female – and child-like (there were scenes of her giggling, dancing in her socks and looking bored on long train journeys) and *nervous* before meeting, say, the Pope or the Director General of the United Nations.

And, frankly, this isn't a discussion of any of the things she said, about climate change and so on. We'll no doubt each have opinions about aspects of all that. The picture the film painted contrasted simplicity and complication, innocence and world-weariness, straight-talking and obfuscation. There's lots more to be said about those things..

But..a prophet? A prophetic voice? Truth-to-power, yes; religious, no. Reading the signs of the times yes, using 'holy language' no. Attracting opposition yes, invoking the name of God, no.

Some Greeks came to see Jesus. John's gospel turns on this. We might have expected it – from the very beginning Jesus in John's gospel is the Word; the holy one of God sent to the world – not just some minor upstart country preacher in Israel.

Imagine it like this – once, in that far off time, a human being came along, walked among us, did amazing things within the traditions of one, small, unimportant religion and in so doing brought hope and change to the whole world. It's been a challenge ever since, to try and convince people – to try and convince ourselves – that this Jesus of Nazareth, this Galilean, is more than what he first appears –

That Jesus the teacher is the Light of Life; that Jesus the carpenter's son is the Bread of heaven; that Jesus the baby of Bethlehem, the boy of Nazareth, the man of Galilee, the friend of fishermen and farmers, the worker with words and water and wine and women and waves is the Word..

That's who some Greeks came to see. We don't know anything about those Greeks. We don't hear about them again. It looks likely that John, writing years later for the Gentile Christians, the non-Jewish believers who had come to take a full part in the faith that originated in the Jewish world just wanted to make sure that they understood that Jesus was *for them* as much as he was for Israel.

John the Baptist stands aside – old Israel personified gives way -now there's someone who looked like a prophet if anyone ever did! – The woman of Samaria recognises Jesus as more than just a prophet of Israel; Nicodemus sneaks out at night probably because he saw in Jesus that all the old ways were coming to an end – and all the way through the Pharisees fulminate and later on the Romans can't handle him And John, from his wider-than-Israel perspective, makes sure that we know that Jesus is *for us all* – 'And I, when I am lifted up will draw *all people* to myself.

The idea gets firmly lodged in the NT – Gentiles and Jews together – Paul going to the wall for the principle of non-Jewish belief; Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians – and on...Revelation –

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,

And on – into the Christian centuries – as the Church makes it way all around the world; as the exclusive, narrow, only-for-the-chosen strain gets pushed out in every generation – in favour of the gospel to all peoples, to everyone, everywhere.

Trouble is, when you let it go like that – when the Word of Life in John's gospel is preached to all nations – when 'the whole world has gone after him' – you can't control it; you can't stop people making of it what they will –

You can't keep Jesus inside the walls of the Church any longer; you can't shackle him to a few doctrines and words on a page – oh, you'd better make sure that the Jesus people hear about is true to the Bible's Jesus – that people know that he's cross and resurrection rolled into one; that he's not just birds and seeds and prodigal-son-niceness; that he's brood-of-vipers firmness and cross-carrying commitment as well..

But He's not ours – He's the world's – 'And I, when I am lifted up, will draw all people to myself'

And he's for now, as well – when all people are maundering under the restrictions of a pandemic and suffering and grieving their losses and worrying about their security – their very livelihood – and trying to make a go of things post-Brexit over here and clinging on for dear life in Syria and Yemen and struggling to cope with climate change in Bangla Desh or the Arctic or somewhere.

And if a prophet should rise amongst us in Sweden, so what? And if a laboratory should discover a vaccine somewhere, rejoice...and if a thinktank should propose a piece of legislation, and if a charity should launch a campaign and if a religions should speak of peace or hand out free food - thank God for the minds and lives and ideas and commitments and relationships and education and politics and rebellions that drive the whole world..

The whole world...hear the frustration and the wonder in the voice of the Pharisees in John..'the world has gone after him...'

You do wonder if Jeremiah could even begin to comprehend what might happen if ever his words were to come true - *No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,*

See, on this Passion Sunday, as we begin the final stages of the journey of following Jesus, inevitably it's going to get narrowed down – we will hear of betrayal and bewilderment and of disciples falling away and, at the last, of Jesus dying alone

And we'll come to Good Friday and we'll look on as Jesus hangs on a Cross – and they'll walk past on the Whiteladies Road, at least they would do if this was a normal year, while we stand around a makeshift cross and mumble a few religious words

And they probably won't realise but it's our job to believe and tell them – this is a death for the world; this is a death full of hope; this is a death for each and everyone of us;

This is a death to end all death, to overcome every loss and grief in the world; this is a death with the potential to make prophets and followers and discoverers and disciples and believers and servants of us all..

This is the glory of God – and I when I am lifted up, will draw all people to myself...

Offering

Lord, of all the people in the world we come to you; like them we are weak and in need; like them we are full of hopes and dreams; like them we have known suffering and loss and yet we come before you – maybe we might even dare to believe that we do so in part on their behalf – we come before you looking for forgiveness, looking for good and true things to flourish in the world – and as we come so we give of ourselves in these and all our gifts; in the hope and expectation of the coming of your glorious Kingdom

['Such love'](#)

Graham Kendrick performed by Elevation Music

Intercessions

The generosity and openness of the Christian Church are well expressed in this ancient Byzantine prayer that still sounds so contemporary – used occasionally amongst us; as it is prayed we cannot fail to have places such as Yemen and Syria in mind, as well as issues such as climate change and of course, the terrible suffering and loss of this pandemic

After: 'Let us pray to the Lord,' the response: **'Lord, have mercy'**

For the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect & forbearance may grow among nations and peoples, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the holy Church of God, that it may be filled with truth & love & be found without fault at the day of your coming, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those in positions of public trust, that they may serve justice and promote the dignity and freedom of all people, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For a blessing upon the labours of all, and for the right use of the riches of creation, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all who are in danger, that they may be relieved and protected, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this community; for those who are present, and for those who are absent, that we may be delivered from hardness of heart and show forth your glory in all that we do, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For our enemies and those who wish us harm; and for all whom we have injured or offended, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who have died in the faith of Christ, that, with all the saints, they may have rest in that place where there is no pain or grief, but life eternal, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Ancient Byzantine Litany

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.

['The power of the cross'](#)

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

Benediction

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

Thanks to everyone who has made today's service possible – Ian recording and processing; Nick & Tina printing and posting; Lesley & Colin reading; Rachel sorting music – thank you one and all for taking part.

As we journey on through Lent we are reminded once more of our belonging together in the body of Christ – and its full expression in the church of which we are a part. We share the wishes and prayers of everyone with each other as we commit once more to the life of faith and the joy of fellowship.

['Until we sing again'](#)

Musician's Blessing by Joseph Martin
Music in the Valley virtual choir