

Worship led by Revd Michael Docker

Good Morning,

Good Morning, and welcome to Tyndale on this third Sunday of May.

Our worship is being conducted by our minister Michael Docker. I would like to thank him in person 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 called "Wish you were here". Please come along to join us.

Our Annual General Meeting took place on Tuesday evening and I am almost pleased to announce that Denise Lewis and myself have been duly re-elected for a further two years as Joint Church Secretaries.

Rachel our Community Minister is making steady progress following her surgery and our thoughts remain with her.

Thank you.

Welcome

Welcome to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church on this 'Ascension Sunday' – or, if you prefer, the Sunday after Ascension – the festival when, traditionally, we have our eyes lifted above this earth towards the 'heavenly realm' where, again according to the traditional way of looking at things, Jesus dwells in marvellous light at the right hand of the Father..

But in today's world the old ideas of up and down, heaven and earth, 'God above, humanity below' have, largely gone. Now we know too much about the solar system, the galaxies, the universe – and, indeed, about the earth, to settle any longer for – you know those medieval carvings of the disciples looking up at Jesus with his feet sticking out of a cloud – that kind of thing (unless you happen to be a 'flat earth' believer I suppose...)

Still, as the poet said 'this world is too much with us' – today's suffering world – and how many have suffered over this past year and more – needs a wider perspective - a higher perspective, you might say – not, perhaps, 'up and down' 'God above, humanity below', but here, in this world *and beyond* – the realm of God – in this world but not *of* this world – that's the perspective; that's the point of our faith; that's the purpose of worship..

'Because the Lord is my shepherd' (LP 243)

Christopher Walker
Eileen, Rachel, Nick & Tina

Call to Worship

We are called 'out of this world' whilst we are still *in this world*; the God whose world this is yet whose life is *beyond* this world calls us – and we come, and in the name of Jesus who is lifted up out of this world and who is One of us in this world, we worship..

BPW 374 ['God is love: let heaven adore him'](#)

Victoria Methodist Church

Opening Prayer

Lord God, this is a day for shining hope; as our hearts are lifted and our lives transformed by a vision of your heart; in which Jesus takes his rightful place; bearing with Him all that we are as He has shared all that you are with us; so, Lord, we worship you; hidden only by the splendour of light; far beyond yet ever near; greater than we can imagine yet gracious and humble and peaceful in ways we see in and through Jesus; we worship you and we rejoice at today's grand vision – the culmination of your eternal plan to save us, made clear to us and shining with hope - Lord, we believe; this world is not all there is; Lord, we trust; our lives are not limited by earthly things; Lord, we worship; your ways are not our ways, but your way of love has brought us love beyond deserving; take us this day; lead us on, lift our hearts and open our eyes once again; forgive us when we have lost sight of you and make us ready once again to go in service – even to the very ends of the earth;

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

[John 17.6-19](#)

[Isaiah 61:1-11](#)

BPW 383 'Immortal invisible'

Tune: Sarah Dodds

Sermon

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

We had thought that we might arrange for today's service to 'Zoom in' to the broadcast service of the Baptist Assembly, which takes place this morning.

The whole Assembly, since last Thursday, has been 'live streamed'; session by session – including today's service

But..Technical complications! And I'm not sure we'd have wanted to sit through all 1 ½ hours. I naively thought we could perhaps just Zoom in to the highlights but that would have *multiplied* the technical complications.

Still the whole thing will be available on Youtube after so it will be possible to catch up...

In particular I'd hoped that we might have been able to tune in for the sermon - *address* – by the keynote speaker, Shane Clayborne.

Shane Clayborne is a voice of today's church – he'd have been worth hearing;

Shane worked with Mother Teresa; He heads up an organisation called Red Letter Christians, whose members are committed to living 'as if Jesus meant the things he said'.

Shane is a 'champion for grace'; he has been to jail advocating for the homeless; to Iraq & Afghanistan to stand against war. He's also written books & spoken all around the world

A voice for today....I wonder – I shall find out soon enough (I'll be surprised if he doesn't) if Shane Clayborn will mention Israel & Jerusalem.

Amongst the occasional pages that appear on my daily news feeds

this week there was one with a world map with a red circle drawn on it centred on Jerusalem & encompassing much of that part of the ME; espec. Israel, Egypt, Syria

It was quite a small circle; the caption read 'every action of God in the Bible, the Quran and the Torah happened inside this tiny circle' –

Oh, it could be disputed, of course; Judaism, Christianity and Islam have spread far and wide down the centuries; the God they point to is the God of the whole world,

Still, you get the point – in that tiny circle much of the way billions of folk all around the world have come to think about the actions of God was formed

And in that tiny circle, still passionate Jewish, Christian and Islamic believers vie and clash and strive and struggle.

In that tiny circle – Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, Mohammed...

In that tiny circle European empires fought crusades; made declarations and divvied up land; in that tiny circle the tragedy of the Holocaust still plays out in the politics of today

And in that tiny circle, still Palestinians and Israelis are locked in endless division - as I write this there is talk of a slide towards all-out war; a warning against civil war –

please God by the time we meet on Sunday some UN intervention or an outbreak of peace-making on one or both sides will have brought them back from the brink –

The BBC Middle East correspondent Jeremy Bowen has described it as 'an open wound in the heart of the Middle East'

An open wound in the heart of the Middle East – right in the centre of that tiny circle, right where, so long ago, John records Jesus' final farewell to his disciples –

Long before all the tragedies of history: Jesus, speaking to his disciples, in Jerusalem:

"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it".

At which point I'm going to take sides, a bit. Most commentators on the Middle East are careful to avoid taking sides; though plenty of Christians side with Israel and plenty of others side with the Palestinians

And so do I, but my reasons (I'm sure I'm not unique) are to do with Jesus's farewell words. We can't go back, I know; still we have to remind ourselves that the Christian cause began amongst a handful of frail individuals who followed the way of Christ – who believed that Jesus meant the things he said.. And all the centuries of Christian empire-building and power-mongering since risk losing sight of that one insight – “they are not of the world even as I am not of it.”

And in a sense, all the compromises, mediocrities and side-taking of the Christian centuries have come about because Christianity has become too much ‘of the world, and not sufficiently ‘not of the world. It has fought battles, blessed armies, commemorated victories, built institutions and supported empires everywhere from Russia to England to Spain and a dozen other places –

And come to be one of the three great ‘God-botherers’ in that tiny circle – just one more religion. But really, it's not – or rather, it shouldn't be; Christianity's side is with the powerless and the poor and the oppressed in every place – and in Jerusalem it's pretty obvious which side that is, but it's true in Gaza as well, where Hamas rule with a heavy hand -

Wherever the powerful oppress the powerless; wherever the rich mistreat the poor, wherever injustice thrives – And if the cost of that, for Christianity, is to give up it's place in that tiny circle, then so be it, I say – how about that, if Christianity was to pull out of Jerusalem altogether – after all, Jesus isn't there, is He? He's risen, and ascended – and everywhere

“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

Jesus clearly understood that he had been sent into the world to sacrifice himself – why should his followers ever think it should be any different for them?

I'm sure Shane Clayborne would agree. One time he wrote, ‘if your theology doesn't lead you to love, give up your theology’ and he leads a movement of Christians who are committed to live ‘as if Jesus meant the things he said’

That's the challenge to us all, especially, after Ascension Day, to live as if Jesus meant what he said – and didn't he say, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of (the world)”

Offering prayer & the grace

Lord, we come to you once more, as those who would take you at your word; and who believe that you – and your words – have the power to transform lives and to change the world – so we come, and give of ourselves in these and all our gifts, trusting that you would change us and that your power at work in all those who believe, will transform *our* world – changing injustice to justice; war to peace, hate to love

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

['Lo, I am with you to the end of the world'](#)

John Bell - sung by John Bell & the Wild Goose Worship Group

Prayers

We pray about the tragedy unfolding in Israel & Palestine;

First we confess; we confess our part in a religion that has often compounded divisions and sided with the powerful and taken little notice of the command to ‘love your enemies’ – Lord forgive us, we pray; a moment of silence...

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Then we lament; the loss of many lives, the destruction of many communities; the continuation of ancient tragedies and past mistakes; the quick resort to violence; the spread of anger and fear – Lord hear us, we pray; a moment of silence...

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Next we pray for peace - for truthful words and brave deeds; for an end to violence and an outbreak of reconciliation; for truth-telling journalism and boundary-crossing politics and brave initiatives in diplomacy – Lord bring your wisdom to bear, we pray; a moment of silence...

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Lastly we pray for justice – for those with power to lay it down, for those with influence to use it wisely; for those whose words mean much to speak clearly and bravely – Lord, send your Holy Spirit, we pray; a moment of silence...

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Finally we pray with humility; we recognise the inadequacy of our words; we know that there are other places such as Syria and Afghanistan where similar tragedies are taking place; we admit that our days of peace are far from the hours of fear and the nights of terror that stalk the lives of so many; yet still we pray – Lord, that you will change us again and transform our world; a moment of silence...

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer
BPW 271 ['Come and see the shining hope'](#)

All Souls Choir and Orchestra

Benediction

Thanks to everyone who has made today's service possible – Ian recording and processing; Nick & Tina printing and posting; Brian and Eileen reading; Rachel sorting music and playing; *Tyndale's singers Eileen and Nick and Tina singing*; the Stewarding Team preparing, watching over us, and cleaning up after – thanks everyone for taking part.

As we make our way towards Pentecost and our hearts turn the earthly life of Jesus towards the continuing encounter with the life-giving Spirit of God we will continue to support & pray for one another, 'til we meet again'..

['My song is love unknown'](#)

Virtually Keswick Convention