

Notices

Good morning and a very warm welcome to our worship here at Tyndale. If you are watching from home or indeed here with us, a regular attendee, or a visitor, we hope you will feel at home with us as we worship together.

Michael, our minister is having the next 2 Sundays off and so this morning our service is being taken by David Bell, who is a member and Deacon here at Tyndale. We thank him very much for leading our worship and look forward to sharing this time together with him.

On Tuesday at 11am, our usual zoom coffee shop will take place. Do join us if you are free, to catch up with one another, the joining details can be found on the website.

On Tuesday evening, we have our monthly Church Members meeting at 7.30pm. Church members will be sent an agenda and the zoom joining details.

Also, as usual, we have our zoom coffee shop after this morning's service at 11.30 for those that are able to make it. Thank you.

Welcome

Good Morning! Welcome to each and every one of you. You may be part of the Tyndale community, or seeing us for the first time; it makes no difference, the same warm welcome to you! Here may you find forgiveness for your shortcomings, food for your soul, friends for the future.

Song: "To be in your presence"

Call to Worship

"Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the spiritual blessings that Christ has brought us from heaven!"

BPW 517 "Lord of all hopefulness"

Opening Prayer

Lord God Almighty, giver of all good things, this morning.....

we come to give You thanks for all we have: a roof over our head, water in the tap, food in the fridge, clothes to wear, a bed to sleep in; for what we are, with a beating heart, a conscious mind, a unique personality, an awareness of You and a knowledge of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.....

we come to be honest with You about our shortcomings, ask Your forgiveness; help us learn from our mistakes; we marvel that You can give us a new start when we mess things up; that You can heal rifts, quell fear, and help us face hardship.....

we come to be inspired by Jesus Christ, to live and serve others as he did; fill us with his nature and fashion us in his likeness; may others be able to see him in us; may we continually offer his love and understanding to a world in need.....

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 for ever. Amen

Song: "Beloved and Blessed"

Offering Prayer

We offer our money; we dedicate our time; we use our talents in Your service, O Lord **Amen**

The Grace

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

Song: "There he goes again" (words & music: Dave Bell)

Readings:

Our preaching plan has been following 2 Corinthians, but today we begin to look at St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Ephesus was one of the great cities of the world at that time... a port on the Aegean Sea... a thriving centre of commerce and trade. On his missionary travels, Paul once lived there for a period of three years. But before Ephesians, we hear a few words from the Gospel of John.

[John 8, vv 31, 32](#)

[Ephesians 1, vv 3– 14](#)

Our next hymn "The King of love my shepherd is" is a paraphrase of the 23rd Psalm. I've chosen the tune 'St Columba' as this year is the 1,500th anniversary of the Celtic saint's birth. Columba sailed from Ireland in the year 563 with 12 companions, and established the monastic community of Iona on the west coast of Scotland. From there began the evangelisation of the whole of the north of Britain.

BPW 394 "The King of love my shepherd is"

Sermon

'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!'

July 19th? 'Freedom Day' ??

the final words of Baptist minister and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr's 1963 speech 'I have a dream', when a quarter-of-a-million Americans marched on Washington 'for Jobs and Freedom'. But 100 years before, during the American Civil War, president Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, stating slaves in the rebel southern States "*shall be thenceforward, and forever free*".

But the 100 years between saw vicious discrimination against black people in the southern states. The March on Washington was to mark that centennial. Later that day King and president John F Kennedy talked of civil rights legislation...3 months later Kennedy was assassinated; Martin Luther King too four years on...now nearly 60 years on... with many more African Americans murdered, the death of George Floyd last year, and the Black Lives Matter campaign....

Slavery and racism have been around since time immemorial. The Graeco-Roman world saw it as a basic of society. Escape from slavery in Egypt is the seminal historical experience of the Jews. Neither Moses nor Martin Luther King 'made it' to the 'Promised Land', but both gave their lives so their people might be free.

So, to Ephesians....called the 'Queen of the Epistles' because it hits the heights of Paul's thinking...it's like no other letter he wrote...it contains no personal greetings it's language is different, and it's thought-forms are on a higher plane...not surprising, as Paul go into new territory. Two important things have changed for him....he is no longer on the road, on his missionary journeys, firing off letters to churches 'on the hoof'....he is in prison in Rome awaiting trial, with plenty of time. Also, he sees the hub of the vast Roman empire for the first time, and thinks of the scale of Christ reconciling all things in heaven and earth!

The key thought in Ephesians is the gathering together of all things in Christ: the first half of the letter portrays Christ as the 'all in all', delivering reconciliation between people and God; the second is Christ's means of doing this – the Church, the 'Body of Christ'. It's Big Picture stuff. It's Paul thinking bigger than ever. It's his last letter, finally rounding off his thinking, and it may be a circular letter to all the churches in Asia Minor, not just Ephesus.

Again, the gist of our reading: because of the lovingkindness of God to us, Christ brings us spiritual blessings....our sins are forgiven because Christ gave his life's blood to set us free....Christ also brought us the truth, the good news about how we can be saved....He has revealed God's own mysterious ways for us....and will eventually bring to completion God's plan bringing together everything in heaven and earth. Big Stuff! Kingdom stuff!

Paul writes of people finding freedom in Christ, yet he himself is writing as 'a prisoner for Christ' in chap 3 and in chap 6 an 'ambassador in chains'. It's a wonderful example of one person's captivity set against someone else's liberation!

With freedom comes responsibility, limiting oneself in order to benefit another...ask any parent, teacher, health professional, and many others who reflect Christ's sacrificial love...this vocational

model is one that releases potential, develops talent, and fulfils our needs as a person. Free from what we were, we have a new freedom of knowing more and more truth about ourselves, allowing us to grow and flourish, becoming better and wiser, and more like the person God has given us the potential to be. This comes, not by holding to a belief, reciting a creed, or performing an action, but rather by entering into a living relationship with the One who is the Truth, Jesus Christ himself. This is the kind of truth that can lead us to a life radically transformed. If we know and accept Christ as our source of Truth, we are no longer strangers to God, no longer like to slaves to things we want to shake off, and become his beloved disciple and friend, invited in to God's family to enjoy his living presence now and for ever. It's summed up in that wonderful and favourite expression of Paul, 'in Christ'....

Christ brings 'Spiritual blessings' like the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5.....love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.... these can seem remote, theoretical, but they help to focus on the needs of others, and lead to other more practical, everyday blessings.

God's model for his work in the world is very clear from the Gospels and the life of Jesus – the dirt of the stable, the sweat of the workshop, being misunderstood, meeting opposition, being deserted, tortured....laying down our earthly lives in service and sacrifice, to rise to the blessings of eternal life.

God's love is coined here on Earth in loving deeds, with a burning desire to break the shackles of captives, unable to 'live life to the full' as God wishes.....

like our young people: meagre mental health provision...lacking data skills....15% youth unemployment.....short of technology devices...the pressure of social media...

the fiasco of foodbanks...the disgrace of Grenfell...the debacle of the cut to Development Aid, which the UN Population Fund says may mean millions of children dying due to unintended pregnancies..... the politics of pragmatism, not principle, to win votes...

Masses are shackled by poverty, shackled by factors outside their control, at the mercy of the Market...and others are prisoners of their own prejudice, imprisoned in ignorance and at the mercy of fake news or radical elements....we live in an age of much factual knowledge, but how much wisdom?

Hard-won freedoms of the past are being whittled away: freedom of speech, of assembly, freedom of the press, workers' rights...one protest placard I saw recently said 'The freedoms you surrender today are the freedoms our grand-children will never know existed'.

Do the oppressed matter to God? Of course...they are denied freedom to live life to the full. Is God concerned about these issues? I am sure he is, but remember it's we who need to determine what it is right to do....and put it into action....

Each of us, though, is also captive to restrictions in our own lives...maybe a small annoyance....maybe something monstrous, dominating waking hours, or interfering with sleep....and none of us is physically perfect (Paul had his 'thorn in the flesh')....and none can claim to be mentally or emotionally 100%!

How we will cope with daily life in the days to come is anyone's guess. Last week I listened to a health expert saying to 'remove freedom now means setting ourselves up for a significant rise (in Covid) in the autumn', while an MP disagreed and said that wearing a face-mask was 'an infringement of civil liberty'! Does not Jesus have something to say about care for others?! Many issues like Covid, global warming can only be resolved by co-operation....we are going to have to learn to work together. We cannot continue to live our lives at the expense, or expenditure, of the lives of others. My extravagance means someone else misses out somewhere, largely unheard and unseen. Until all are free to live life to the full as God intended, none of us is free. To quote Martin Luther King 'I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be'.

There will be positives to take from our recent experience which may change the nature of Church life....and we are beginning to plan for September.....! I look at this space and picture it in 1940, fiercely ablaze at the height of the bombing – all through the raid and into the days following the Tyndale clock continued to chime the hours, ringing out as if to say 'We're still here. You may do your worst, but we will be free!'

Song: "The truth that sets us free"

(written by John Bell of the Iona Community)

Prayers

Sovereign God, we pray for all who are denied freedom –
freedom to worship,
to express their opinions,
to vote,
to determine their own affairs. (*silent prayer*)
Help them to make their voice heard
and to secure the justice they seek.

Set at liberty, Lord, those held captive,
and may the oppressed go free.

We pray for all denied the opportunity to live life to the full –
the mentally and physically disabled,
victims of accidents and illness,
the depressed and broken-hearted. (*silent prayer*)
Help each to conquer that which can so easily enslave them.

Set at liberty, Lord, those held captive,
and may the oppressed go free.

We pray for those whose freedom has been justly taken away from them –
those who have knowingly broken the law,
who have caused injury and hurt to others,
who are a danger to themselves and society. (*silent prayer*)
May your love help them to find new life in Christ,
and deliverance from their past ways.

Set at liberty, Lord, those held captive,
and may the oppressed go free.

We pray for those whose spirits are held captive –
poisoned by greed, envy, pride and selfishness,
trapped in a vicious circle of hatred and bitterness,
crushed by fear and anxiety,
led astray by empty hopes and vain ambitions,
false gods and superstitions. (*silent prayer*)
May they find in Jesus the way, the truth and the life.

Set at liberty, Lord, those held captive,
and may the oppressed go free.

Sovereign God,
break through everything that denies your love and frustrates your will.
Reach out to your world in which so many are held hostage to fortune,
and, by the inspiration of your Spirit, and action by concerned people,
grant release from all that imprisons.

Set at liberty, Lord, those held captive,
and may the oppressed go free.

In your mercy and lovingkindness, Lord, hear our prayers –
and where possible, help us to be your agents in making them come true.

And the people said, **Amen**

BPW 544 “Through all the changing scenes of life”

Benediction

And as we ask God’s blessing on us until we meet again, we use the words of the oldest known blessing of all: ***The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you Peace.***