

**Tyndale July 18<sup>th</sup> 2021**

## **Notices**

*Denise:* 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.

This morning I am very pleased to welcome back Rachel Haig our Community Minister who is taking our service today. Rachel, it is really good to see you feeling better and back with us, and we thank you for leading our worship, and look forward to sharing this time together.

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.

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.

*Bruce:* Good Morning.

As you are all aware all legal restrictions are lifted in England as of tomorrow the 19<sup>th</sup> of July. The Church Opening-up Committee met on Thursday evening and reviewed both the Government and Baptist Union guidelines going forward. In the light of this the Committee would like to encourage you that, as of next Sunday, the following expectations and recommendations are followed to keep us all safe:

That masks are worn when entering, exiting and moving around the building but can be removed whilst you are seated.

We would request that all attendees use the hand sanitiser.

Singing is allowed but we would request that the congregation remain seated whilst doing so.

The toilets at the rear of the building are now back in use.

We are acutely aware that every individual has been affected differently by this pandemic and would ask you to respect each other's space.

## **Welcome**

**Song: Be still and know that I am God and there is none beside me                      Group**

### **Call to worship**

Be still, and know that God is with us, present to this moment, to shower us with love and accept our praise, to fill us with strength and peace and listen to the longing of our hearts. In the stillness, together, we listen, as the light of Christ brings hope and help in believing. We are God's own in this moment and so we worship with thankfulness and openness, as we wait for challenge and choice.

**Hymn BPW 308:            God is our strength and refuge    Group**

### **Opening Prayer**

Living God, today we recognise you as the one who is here, present and able to speak to us in ways that we can understand. You are the maker of heaven and earth. We give you thanks for the blessings of our lives and we offer you again the struggles of our lives. You know us. It says in your word that you know each thought, every word before we utter them. You remind us so often that you are the one who sees our hearts. You don't judge us on appearances you see both our good and our bad, our light and our shade, and you love us the same. More than that, yours is the power to transform our living every day. You set the foundations in place for life itself to grow and we know that you love what you created. Just as we know you hate the evil that mars and spoils what was good and that hurts your children. Forgive us again for the times we turn our eyes from you and fail to listen to you. Forgive us for the times when we care more about self that we do about others. Forgive us when we make poor choices or take for granted those we share our lives with. Forgive us for all those things which we do that are the opposite of trusting you. We thank you for the hope of the cross where the burden of our lives rolls into your caring arms, stretched wide in love. We thank you that you overcame even death to open up a way for us to live both now and for eternity. No matter how bad things seem, no matter how well we are doing, you are present with us. And we give you thanks that you are trustworthy and faithful, seeking our good and calling us onwards into your love and life. Send your Spirit here to make us new once more and we will sing of your love and speak of your goodness and humbly wait before you, in our words and in our silence,

because there is none beside you. You have the words of eternal life and we come to receive from you. In the name of Jesus, Saviour and Lord who taught us to pray:

**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*

**Song The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want (And I will trust in you alone) Group**

**Words of Offering**

We pause in this moment to recognise the gifts we each bring to our common life, for our money, time and talents offered for the building of God's Kingdom through Tyndale and beyond.

**So we share the grace with each other:**

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

**Reading [John 1: 1-14](#)**

**Song: [I am not alone](#)**

**Video**

**Reading [Psalm 46](#)**

**Sermon Focusing in**

When I was a child I was sent along most Friday nights to a thing called Christian Endeavour. It was a meeting that was led by kids for the other kids. Evenings were split up into the different parts of things like Leader, Opening Prayer, Bible Readings, Talk, Songs, and there was a sign up sheet for you to put your name down for participating. A different person put their name down to do each of the items. It's where I learned about speaking in front of others and putting together meetings and about the importance of participating to make things happen.

Every so often we had special events or joined up with other groups. Like the Annual Bible Quiz evening with, or should I say, against Cleveleys Baptist. It was very competitive.

One of the things that Christian Endeavour encouraged us to do was to learn scripture. Part of the quiz night was to have memorised some verses and be able to recite them in front of everyone. One of the passages I had to do was the story of the Lost Sheep. And another one was Psalm 46.

Over the last few months, I have been very grateful that those who were part of my formative faith experience encouraged me to learn verses of scripture. I have found myself remembering many of them again during these past few months and especially as I went through hospital tests and then the operation and a long slow process of recovery.

Some experiences in life focus the mind onto the small things of every day. And the experience of the last 6 months certainly focussed my mind onto the simple trust in the God who has been my friend and guide for as long as I can remember. It's also a well-used spiritual practice to take a piece of scripture, often a small piece, even a verse, and hunker down with it. Unpick it, repeat it, almost like a fine piece of steak or...butternut squash, and chew it well, let it sit on your tongue, savour it. Suck every bit of meaning from it and let it speak, or let God speak.

Amongst the verses that have held me fast are this one today **God is our refuge and strength a very present help in times of trouble.** A small verse which needs a lot of unpicking. A verse to mine for its treasure and to repeat for the strength and courage it offers. So I'm inviting you to journey through it with me. You may like to repeat the different parts of it as we build it up and explore the words. Just say it quietly.

First, **God.**

A small word to describe the otherness of one we call the maker of heaven and earth. Others have called God by other names. But the idea of God, the search to connect with something that is beyond us is one that human beings have embraced since the beginning of time. Out of the unknown, way back when the understanding of the earth was mostly what you could see from where you stood, people have worshipped, given thanks, prayed, reached out into the unknown for that which they had no words for. God is not a scientific fact, nor is God quantifiable. In many senses, God is unknowable. But through human experience

and stories passed from generation to generation this search for God has not lessened or disappeared. Instead, new stories are lived and passed on and they bring us here to today, right now, this moment and all that is going on in our lives.

**God is.** A statement of faith. A peculiarly individual one. No one can force another into belief, no one can make anyone believe in God. When we say God is, alongside it are moments of encounter, where we chose to believe, words spoke, ideas imparted, experiences that moved us, that brought us to a realisation of faith. God is. It's a declaration that the foundation of life rests on the being of God. God is more than simply an idea. God is – In the beginning, God. I am who I am was to be enough said about God for Pharaoh to set God's people free from slavery. All kinds of words and languages have been employed to say God is. But essentially its not words that embody God. It's us. It's the earth. It's the physical that expresses the personhood of God and makes real this statement God is. That's really important because our bodies are so integral to our own being and we are never more aware of that than when they go wrong or we are faced with changes in our bodies. It's why the idea of incarnation, that God was here amongst people like us, not just with us but like us, God in Jesus became our fragile flesh and blood. We will return to that in a while.

**God is our** So when we say '**God is our**', it's not about possession of God, we do not and never can own God, and too many have made God in their own image. Still do. Notice it doesn't say 'my' but our. Its plural. The writer is cautious about individualism and is finding words to express something for all who will call on God. Always be wary of those who say they Know God, or God has told them. Perhaps they have words from God, but be wary. Even so, there is a sense in which God is our maker, friend, brother, Saviour. And so much of what we know was passed on to us through others and not least through the scriptures. In that sense God has made God known to us because of the relationship of love which God calls each of us into. Here are just some of the names for God which emerge through the scriptures, Old and New Testament. Testament is of course a word that is all about signs and evidence about the one true God, maker of all, and the experience and encounter that people have had. So God is ours in the sense that all of life is caught up in the life of God. God isn't remote, detached, uninvolved, uncaring of our lives and what's happening to us. God is here with us. We don't own God individually, and yet there is still a sense in which God is mine to hold onto when all else fails. Can you think of a time when you have felt so alone that the only thing you could do was reach out from within and cry out your fears or your anger or your worries about the future? In those moments God is ours to hold onto. That's why the song we listened to, I am not alone was so meaningful for me. Because there are things we go through that feel very lonely. And I have found that God comes close in those times. There is a relationship with a living God that I am also giving witness to today.

**God is our Refuge** - the dictionary definition is of a shelter or protection from danger, trouble; to take **refuge** from a storm · a place of shelter, protection, or safety. Refuges are places where people flee to when they are at their most vulnerable. These days we understand that they are places where people flee from violence in their homes, to escape, to hide. A quick look online shows that there aren't enough refuges for the numbers of people who need to find safety. By nature, a refuge is a place where our vulnerabilities are held and cared for. Its about running towards help, running towards hope. From the place of refuge new beginnings start, sometimes very slowly, but still, until we find refuge we won't find peace. When the Psalmist says God is our refuge, they're talking about the place where fear can begin to be let go of. And we have many fears, don't we? Even if the very earth under our feet shakes, and that can be physically or emotionally or psychologically, they're giving a good description of a tsunami sized event from which to run towards God.

**God is our Refuge and strength** – and not just refuge but in order to get to it, so much strength is needed to face what is happening to us, to face our fears. To walk through, taking one step at a time, sometimes one breath at a time. 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow I will fear no evil, for you are with me.' It can make you feel almost childlike again. Imagine the child with arms stretched up wanting a carry. Needing to be held in loving arms and comforted. All around us is a tumult of noisy storm from pandemic to racism, to the inequality in the world and the desperation to find shelter. Grieving people, lonely people, hurting people, bewildered people, angry people, fearful people, disappointed people. People waiting for news, or operations, or freedom or help or a yes. Who need to know where it is going to come from. Who will offer them hope, love, acceptance, care? I lift my eyes to the hills, from where does my help come from? It comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, so another of the Psalmist gives testament to. We each have our own story to tell of both our fears and where help came from.

**God is our refuge and strength a very present help** – presence is everything and the 'very' reinforces that God is with us. To be present to one another and to God, is an essential part of relationship. Presence

is to not be alone. Where can I go from your spirit? Nowhere. Where can I feel from your presence? Impossible. In the beginning God, and at the end, God! The 'very' relates to the strength of God's desire to be with us. A desire that took on flesh and walked the dusty roads of Galilee and Jerusalem, the desert paths by Jordan and the hill to the cross. All to be present and through Jesus to be very present so that all who call on Jesus name will find help. And the call to us still is to be the very present help that others need, in the name of Jesus, for the sake of God's love.

### **God is our refuge and strength a very present help in times of trouble**

If ever there was a time when the nations are in uproar and kingdoms tottering it's as much now as at any other time. So much trouble on every level it seems. So much so that the idea of celebrating freedom, to my mind, misses the mark. Being glad, yes. Anticipating being safe and freer, yes. Enjoying being with those we love again, oh definitely. Knowing that after the clouds sunshine will appear. After a major op, feeling more like yourself again. Thank you God. After all the clamour of disaster and fear, the Psalmist boils it back down to this: Be still, be still and know that I am God. I am still with you. To the ends of the age.

**Song: In Christ alone, my hope is found**

**Group**

**Intercessions during which we sing:**

**Nothing can trouble**

**Group**

#### **Let's pray:**

God, grant us the grace to see the needs of your kingdom and respond with wholeheartedness, kindness, generosity and hopefulness.

May our prayers create space for you to work in the dim places where human need is at its greatest and where human greed, love of power and selfishness cause deep chaos to abound. Nothing can trouble or frighten:

*Nothing can trouble,*

*Nothing can frighten -*

*Those who seek God shall never go wanting.*

*Nothing can trouble,*

*Nothing can frighten -*

*God alone fills us.*

*Words & Music: Taize Community*

We remember before you, those we are called to love: our parents, our children, our sisters and brothers, family near and far, our friends, and neighbours, our Tyndale family, past and present, and those whom God brings to our minds today... particularly we pray for Barbara Hill's family and friends as they make their farewells this week... *Nothing can trouble...*

We remember before you, those you call us to walk alongside: those who are grieving, those who are scared, those who are waiting, those who feel hopeless, those who are celebrating, those who need to know they are not alone, the broken, the victims of crime, the addicted, the poor, the homeless, those who are working tirelessly in schools and hospitals, pharmacies, care homes and shops, our brothers and sisters in Christ from Redland Park, Victoria Methodist, St Pauls' and Cotham Parish...and those we work together with in the Nightshelter... *Nothing can trouble...*

We remember before you those you call us to challenge, who hold power over others' lives and have responsibility for our communities common purse, whose decisions from afar affect the poorest and most vulnerable and can be life affirming or life destroying. We pray for compassion and wisdom and words with meaning, as well as a desire to build a more fair, just, safe community for all... *Nothing can trouble...*

We remember those making decisions about how to safely respond to opening up Tyndale over the coming months. We ask for your wisdom and guidance, as well as for patience, kindness and sensitivity to one another as we seek to live out being your people here offering good news to our community around and making your presence real... *Nothing can trouble...*

May our prayers create space for you to work in the dim places where human need is at its greatest and where human greed, love of power and selfishness cause deep chaos to abound.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer **Amen**

**Hymn: [Crown him with many Crowns](#)**

**Video**

#### **Blessing**

The blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit we with you now and remain with you always. Amen