

## Notices

Good morning and welcome to our service at Tyndale today. Whether you are at home watching, or here with us, a visitor or a regular attendee, we give you a very warm welcome and hope you feel at home with us as we worship together.

This morning our service is being led by our Minister, Michael Docker. Michael it is good to see you back in fine voice and taking our service today. We look forward to sharing this time together.

Following yesterdays Social Lunch on the forecourt, it is very good news that two of our activities are resuming this week, after many months of not being able to happen. On Tuesday, our doors will be open for Coffee Shop, which will run from 10am until 12 noon as usual in the sanctuary, where a warm welcome will await everyone.

On Wednesday evening, Time@tyndale is returning, which will be a Communion Service led by Michael. The evening starts at 7.30pm, with the Communion taking place at 8pm.

A lot of work has gone into the planning of re-opening both the Coffee Shop and Time@tyndale. Thinking through all the logistics and how to open up in the safest manner possible. My thanks go to all those involved in the organising and the volunteers who will make it happen, it is much appreciated. So do join us, either on Tuesday or Wednesday, where it will be good to continue getting back together and welcoming the local community, once again, into Tyndale during the week.

For those of you wondering about whether we will continue with a coffee shop via zoom. It was felt important that we continue to meet in this manner, to ensure everyone is able to meet going forward whether on the premises or over a computer screen. The zoom coffee shop therefore, will now take place on Thursday mornings at 11am as usual. The joining details are on the website.

Lastly, if anyone has any items to go into the next addition of the Link, please could you get the information to Nick today.

Thank you.

## Welcome

Welcome once again to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church on this second Sunday of September – whether you're here in the church, joining in on-line, watching the later recording or following the script. We were pleased to welcome some of Tyndale's people yesterday at the outdoor social event and would like to carry that atmosphere of welcome and hopefulness forward as the 'new normal' begins – with a number of Tyndale's mid-week core activities starting up and several user groups coming onto the premises. We trust that the welcome here will be all of a piece with the spirit of welcome we are able to display over the coming days, but for now, we are here to worship.

## CG 48 'Santo, Santo, santo'

### Call to Worship

Holy, holy, holy – the great and ancient threefold proclamation that is the unique genius of the Christian approach to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We gather as we are called into in God's presence; we trust that the Spirit will fill us and pray for us as we seek after the things of God and we worship in Jesus' name.

## BPW 593 Guide me O thou great redeemer

### Opening Prayer

Lord we're glad to be here, and glad to acclaim that you're here with us in a world where it is often difficult to discern your presence and your ways– so we worship you for we believe you are present everywhere and in every way to make, re-make, renew and save the world and our lives – all this we see lived out for us in and through Jesus Christ – we worship you for him most of all, and as we worship you in song and prayer and thinking together we ask you to lift our eyes to see beyond here, even beyond seeing your presence here where it's easy, to see you at work in the world, and to look there and everywhere for signs of your Kingdom.

### 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 for us'

Stuart Townend

## Old Testament Reading [Exodus 14.19-31](#)

## 'Such love'

Graham Kendrick

### Sermon

*Lord in 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 on towards your Kingdom*

How are we going to believe, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? I've spoken in recent weeks about the unreality of believing that God is active among a few believers in a few churches,

While all around the world burns and it's much harder to talk about God being active there.

I've been wrestling with this in various ways all my preaching life. After the Dunblane massacre in the 90s, some Christian leader said *on national television* that God was active among the local youths who left knives outside the school gates afterwards –

showing that God was bringing good out of something seemingly so evil. I remember being incensed by the – insensitive - idea that Dunblane's grieving parents & shocked residents (& many others) would be comforted that God inspired a few youngsters to make a memorial.

Where was God when Thomas Hamilton set out to shoot up a school-full of children? Why didn't God stop him? Why didn't God lead and guide him away from the classrooms?

Not my questions – questions asked by folk who didn't think much of the stock Christian answer. Same with 9/11 – the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary yesterday.

What was God doing in the middle of all the destruction?

And the ensuing 'War on terror', with all its misery & continued injustices – some 39 men still held at Guantanamo Bay, most without charge; others down the years subject to who-knows-what rendition & torture - & we've seen the shameful end to the Afghanistan years..

Where is God in all this?

As I say, not my questions, but the questions of many outside of formal religion, who maybe have given up on it altogether; who've heard of its hypocrisies & compromises; who rage quietly against special privilege, boundless wealth, cover-up of abuse..

Where is God?

See, I think (I hope it's obvious after all this time) the questions belong in here every bit as much as they do out there.

I reckon most of the people who look at Dunblane, 9/11; Grenfell Tower; their own suffering and losses (so many through this pandemic) – maybe they ask the questions & conclude there're no answers really & get on with life, enjoying themselves, following their dreams, having fun, looking out for their family and friends...and don't bother much anymore..

Whereas we who gather in churches each week; we're *stuck* with them. Each week we come here and speak of God's presence; maybe we experience something –

in some churches spiritual experience is at the centre (though not so much in here, you may notice regretfully); in any case, in hymns, songs, prayers, sermons, we use 'God language'

And we, the called-of-God, can't ever stop asking the questions, can we? In some ways, these days, I think, faith comes down to this –

Where is God, you who name His name ? What is God doing – you who call on Him ? Not just in the church, but in the world – who is God – you who dare to speak God-language?

Maybe stories like the crossing of the Red Sea make it harder, not easier. To modern, irreligious ears it all sounds a bit fantastical, God leading his people by a pillar of cloud; parting the Red Sea; throwing the Egyptians - horses, riders, chariots and all – into the sea.

Hard, isn't it? We don't expect to see God leading us by physical signs, like clouds, do we?

We don't find it easy to believe, do we, that the natural elements can be subject to the *supernatural* activity of God..?

We don't want to believe, do we, in a God who saves some people by destroying some others – Egyptian charioteers had families waiting for them, I expect; just as last week we probably wanted to choke at the thought of a God who goes around killing the first-born..

It *is* hard. As Ken said; probably best not to settle for slick answers. I think that's what many of the commentaries do – they gloss over the difficulties in a kind-of 'The Bible is true and the Bible says this' kind of way – as if that's enough, but it all sounds, to me, a bit hollow

Mind you I'm not quite convinced by the alternatives – various attempts at finding a natural explanation – a shallow sea; a boggy stretch of land, powerful winds, and so on .. As if any would do; as if we could ever settle for a natural explanation for this *supernatural* story

That's why it is always so hard. If we are going to speak the language of God at all – Exodus..hymns & prayers – *anything* – we're going to have to cope with the hard questions –

If God parted the sea, bested the Egyptians, what about Dunblane, 9/11, Grenfell Tower, Covid 19 sufferers? Where was God then? What was God doing (or not doing), then?

Hard questions that the Church's thinkers have been wrestling with for centuries, though as one put it, 'we might find a reason why such-&-such happened, but we'll never find a good reason - A God reason, I may say...

I've preached on this before...God's purpose has a wider plan than we can ever know....*really?* It's all a mystery...*really?*

We could ditch stories like the parting of the Red Sea story to make it easier but could we, really? Could we do away with God-language – altogether?

Or, maybe, stories like the Red Sea story make it easier. We could rationalise it: 'whatever happened whoever wrote it *believed* that God parted the sea, destroyed the Egyptians.'

As if, these days, we've got past such primitive ideas, but we shouldn't lose sight of this: the Bible writers – Genesis all the way down to Malachi – and on into the New Testament, saw God's hand in everything – the parting of the sea, the sending of plagues, the flooding of the world, the killing of the first-born, the voices of the prophets –

They saw God's hand in everything. There was no part - nothing that happened, that wasn't under the control and the purpose of God.

Our questions would be meaningless to those writers, *believers* – of course God was active in Dunblane, 9/11, Grenfell Tower & every grief & sorrow that wrings the human heart – of course...how could anyone think *otherwise??*

Our dualistic world – this is good, so must be of God – that is bad, so can't be of God – was quite unknown back then – and probably for centuries since -

If God is God then God must be in control of everything that happens – and if, later, in a Psalm – my God, why have you forsaken me? – or in a book like Ecclesiastes – 'meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless'

Suffering began to raise questions about where God was and what he was doing... Not so much an answer, as a *trust* – 'the Lord gives & the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord'

A trust. I don't think, in the modern world, we can ever stop asking questions and wrestling with what stories like the parting of the Red Sea story *mean*

But in the end, it's not about questions and answers – as I say, I'm not sure any answer will do – it's not about questions and answers; it is about *trust*...

The parable of the unforgiving servant is about trust as well – the God-figure is harsh and inscrutable – A god for a harsh, inscrutable world, you may say – but somewhere in the middle is...forgiveness – & the harsh lesson to the followers of Jesus to put forgiveness centre stage in their lives..

Which requires, I think, trust – trust like you've never seen – trust in a God who is in control of everything – trust in a God who has revealed himself – allowed himself to become powerless -

He who commands the wind & waves to obey him, who has set the boundaries for the seas & led his people by pillars of cloud – has given up all that power *to take the form of a servant & die on a cross*

That's trust, d'you think? To hang there & utter 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' – that's trust; to hang there in the face of darkness – enough to say 'My God why have you forsaken me' – that's trust, wouldn't you say?

And to believe, finally, that not even the darkness of the Cross could overcome the God who controls everything, 'Father into your hands I commit my Spirit' – that's trust, like you've never seen - - or maybe you have: '*& when the cup you give is filled to brimming with bitter suffering, hard to understand, we take it gladly, trusting, though with trembling, out of so good and so beloved a hand* & all the questions at the suffering, injustices & griefs of the world find in the Cross not so much an answer, as a sign of hope that endures for ever – & we who would believe, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while so many have given up believing, questioning & using God-language, can do none-other than to trust in Him who said *for I was dead, but now I am alive for evermore*'

### Offering prayer

Lord, we come to you, and trust that you hear us and receive us and look on us with kindness and forgive our weaknesses and failures and, indeed, love us – not just so that we might feel better, but so that we might find a way of living in this often harsh and difficult world – and that we might be able to serve and that we might be able to witness, humbly and truly, to the things of your Kingdom.

So please accept all that we have to offer, in these and all our gifts, and lead us to follow, and to proclaim, Christ our Lord, the Saviour of the World

### 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.

## **BPW 84 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind'**

### **Prayers**

Lord, forgive our foolish ways – terrorism like on 9/11; revenge that just begets more revenge, like the war on terror that followed; tough-sounding policy-making that never seems to solve the problems; easy answers to everything that only succeed in blaming and victimising.

Lord, we human beings can be very foolish – forgive us, please – we wait in silence.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Lord, lead us into simple trust, by which good things happen in the world – aid and development work, Christian mission, hospital, health care and social care provision, neighbourliness, welcome to foreigners and strangers – we wait in silence

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Lord, remind us of the great, quiet – indeed silent – joys of eternity; by which as weak human beings we are able to live in hope and seek the welfare of the world – all those involved in planning for continuing homelessness relief in Bristol and elsewhere; those building good provision for students; those literally building – homes, especially – we wait in silence

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Lord, we live in a stressful world, in which many strive for more and many more strain just to survive – take these things away and bring peace – an end to poverty and hunger; justice to replace injustice; freedom wherever there is repression and persecution – we wait in silence

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

So, Lord, may we receive from your immense love and let it speak to us in a frantic, conflicted world; wherever earthquakes of destruction rampage, winds of insecurity blow and fires of grief burn may we hear again your still small voice of calm – and witness to it in the world – we wait in silence

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We hear your word: 'father forgive them, for they know not what they do; My God why have you forsaken me? 'Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit'

Thanks be to God, Amen.

## **BPW 559 'Love divine all loves excelling'**

### **Benediction**

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 projecting and processing; Nick printing and posting; Edward & Lesley reading; Rachel sorting music and playing with Ali and Dave; Tyndale singers singing; the Stewarding Team preparing, watching over us, and cleaning up after. Thanks everyone for taking part.

In the 'new normal' – the first stages, anyway – we look to continue our lives of faith and service into the coming week.