

Welcome, Introduction and Prayer

Welcome everyone and Happy New Year! What a joy to see you all here at the first worship service of 2021. Thank you for gathering with us, despite our city being under Tier 4 right now. **Let us read *Psalm 111:1-3. 1 Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. 2 Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them. 3 Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.*** Let's be grateful to all the Lord has been doing in our lives and for His hands of protection over us all and our beloved ones. May our hearts rejoice and be delighted in our salvation and in the goodness of God. Please follow us through the worship songs we're going to sing, pondering on the lyrics, meditating in your heart on how great our God is.

Let us pray

Father God, we gather here in this place with our hearts full of adoration and thanksgiving for all your benefits. You are indeed our gracious and compassionate God whose deeds are majestic. You and you alone are worthy of our praises. You and you alone are holy and all mighty, and yet you call us your people, your children. May the songs we'll sing, the prayers we'll make, the offerings will be given and the word that will be proclaimed be all pleased at your sight, as a token of our adoration to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Song 1 – Holy, Holy, Holy

<https://youtu.be/AgHrNNM23p8> Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed trinity!*

*Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.*

*Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
Though the eye of sinfulness thy glory may not see,
Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.*

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed trinity!*

Song 2 – Here For You

<https://youtu.be/dtj-G1gKnD8> Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*Let our praise be Your welcome
Let our songs be a sign
We are here for You, we are here for You
Let Your breath come from heaven
Fill our hearts with Your life
We are here for You, we are here for You*

*To You our hearts are open
Nothing here is hidden
You are our one desire
You alone are holy
Only You are worthy
God, let Your fire fall down*

*Let our shout be Your anthem
Your renown fill the skies
We are here for You, we are here for You
Let Your Word move in power
Let what's dead come to life
We are here for You, we are here for You*

*We welcome You with praise
We welcome You with praise
Almighty God of love
Be welcomed in this place (x2)*

*Let every heart adore
Let every soul awake
Almighty God of love
Be welcomed in this place*

*We welcome You with praise
We welcome You with praise
Almighty God of love
Be welcomed in this place*

Song 3 – This is My Desire

https://youtu.be/OHRZxkluZ_Q Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*This is my desire, to honour You
Lord with all my heart I worship You
All I have within me
I give You praise
All that I adore is in You*

*Lord I give You my heart
I give You my soul
I live for You alone
Every breath that I take
Every moment I'm awake
Lord have Your way in me*

Preaching and Teaching A Prayer For The New Year

Introduction

Grace and Peace to you all and Happy New Year! I would like to read with you the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians Chapter 1 and suggest to you all: "A Prayer for the New Year!" A Prayer for 2021 – What to pray about 2021? What would be a good prayer for this New Year? All religion traditions and humanist philosophies agree that a good life is a life that is dedicated to something that is outside. There is consensus that says that as more as we are mobilized or involved with something beyond ourselves, the happier we are. Whenever we are centred on ourselves, being selfish, worried and occupied with the fulfilment of our own and individual needs, we run into the probability of having an empty feeling and a deep dissatisfaction. This is quite reasonable because we human beings are not auto sufficient. We are not enough in ourselves. We don't have everything we need for our full satisfaction. Only God has everything He needs and only He is enough in himself. He created us by an act of love, by his own choice. In fact, He actually didn't need to create us, but he did it because he wanted to. If he had chosen not to create us he would still be complete and happy. He's sovereign and almighty; therefore he doesn't need anything beyond himself. As for us, we are different from God because we need something that is external. We don't have life and sufficiency in ourselves. We became what we are upon the act of kindness and care of someone else. We had to relate and interact with so many people and receive so many resources that were given to us. So we exist because of all these external help we received. This makes us desiring beings and we desire. We always want something we don't have and we're always looking for something we haven't experienced yet. We desire something all the time and to desire is good. We suffer this appeal of many things that are external, calling us for our engagement, commitment and involvement. Desire is that external force that pushes us outside of ourselves in direction to an object of desire. It can be to a simple cup of tea in cold winter, a glass of water in a hot day or a good night of sleep when we are tired to more sophisticated ones like an international holiday trip, a new house, a new car, a new job, and so on. We always desire more things and also more knowledge, more understanding, more pleasure, more health, and so on. **Some Examples in the Bible:** The Bible tells stories of people who had desires, Adam and Eve desired to be like God and occupied the place of God. It wasn't a good desire and because of this desired they had, sin came into the world and we got ourselves into a big trouble. The wives of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel were all sterile women and they all wanted to have children. In their culture a woman who couldn't conceive children was considered cursed, so they desired to have children. Rachel, Jacob's wife for example, came to a point she said **"Give me children, or else I die!" Genesis 30:1.** For Rachel this desire was so strong that she said that if she didn't have children it would be better to die. She would rather die than to live childless. There are some people who can't live without

their desired object as it gives them the sense and power for living. For other people, life is monotonous and boring so they lost the sense of desire. It seems they don't have any dreams or ambitions for their lives or they might have dreams but they aren't doing anything in order to reach them. Instead they are waiting for their desires to become reality as if their dreams would come true like in a fairytale magic. In other hand we have people who desire all the time and have this capacity to delight with their desired object. They fall in love so easily. They fall in love for a car, for a film, for clothes, etc. They fall in love easily but they also quit very easily. This is probably better than someone who doesn't enjoy and delight in anything, because our desires have the power to make us to feel alive. When we conquer what we desire it makes us feel that life is worth of living. This is probably why Rachel said she would rather have died than to be childless. But the Bible tells the history of another man, an extraordinary man who was possessed by an object of desire. The bible tells us that King David, was in the balcony of his palace and saw a woman having a bath and this woman was of an astonishing beauty, to the point of capturing King David's eyes on such a way that he was possessed of desire for this woman. Her name was Bathsheba. David wanted this woman and he was ready to do anything in order to have her for him. This was his object of desire, and we all know that this was the cause of his life's disgrace, ruin and destruction. Salomon, son of David was this type of person that fall in love with everything. He was curious and interested about everything in life so he wanted to talk and experience everything. He searched and looked for everything under the sun. The bible tells us in Ecclesiastes that Salomon was someone who had everything he desired. ***"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure." Ecclesiastes 2:10a*** However in the end he said: You know what, this is all vanity, vanity and vanity and a chasing after the wind. It didn't bring real satisfaction. In other words he is saying... "I desired with all my strength, with all intensity and with all my passion and I pursued everything I desired thinking that they would fill me, would fulfil me and satisfy. However, as soon as I conquered them they were not what I thought they would be, but they just brought me emptiness and dissatisfaction. In one instance it was all perfect, but in a blink of an eye, at next moment it was not perfect any longer. This is the trap of wishes and desires that Salomon discovered. If we go to the New Testament we will find Jesus talking about the Kingdom of God and he speaks about a merchant of precious stones that found a pearl of great value. That one pearl that he found captured him in such way that he didn't stop to think about that pearl, he woke up thinking about that pearl and he went to sleep thinking about that pearl. He passes in front of the shop where this pearl is exposed and he goes inside, he asked to see that pearl. He gives it back, talks to the shop keeper, he keeps dreaming about that pearl until he sells everything he has in order to buy the expensive pearl. Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God is like that pearl. May we desire this pearl in such a way that we could leave everything behind in order to see His Kingdom come and His will be done in our lives. That is why we find the Apostle Paul saying: ***"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace." Acts 20:24.*** Either I accomplish my calling or for me life is not worth living. Are we willing to make sacrifices in order to see His kingdom expanding here on earth and to learn more about Jesus and grown in intimacy and in relationship with Him? We all know that if we choose the wrong object of desire, it can destroy us. However, if we choose to know more God and dedicate our time and resources in His kingdom, this would bring real fulfilment and life to us. And this is exactly what Paul's prayer here is about. Mainly because we are very good at desiring but we are not very good at discerning what things are best and can bring real

fulfilment and satisfaction to us. Let us read Philippians 1 from versus 9-11: ***“9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.*”**

I – May We Choose What is Best

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best ...”

Philippians 1:9-10a Have you ever heard a saying that says: “love is blind”? I don’t think Paul would agree with this statement, because it is not a true one. It is not good to love like this because love can’t be blind. Love needs to be lucid and illuminated. We need to see it and it needs to be conscious, we need to love with perception and discernment. There is no place for illusions and lies when we love. We have to accept and see the reality as it is. And this is why Paul is writing this prayer to the Philippians. ***“...so that you may be able to discern what is best” NIV- “...that you may approve things that are excellent” NKJ- “For want you to understand what really matters”... New Living Translation*** – Paul is praying for us to learn how to say yes to what is worthy and to say no for what is not worthy and give up some of our desires. Not everything we want it’s supposed to be ours. Not everything is offered to us it’s supposed to be accepted. In other words he is saying; “I pray that you have lucidity, being illuminated, get understanding, filled with knowledge and discernment so that you may evaluate and choose what is best.”

II – May We Find The Pearl of Great Value

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Matthew 13:45-46 This passage helps us to understand what Paul is saying in his prayer for us ... ***“that we may be able to discern.” V.10*** Jesus is talking about this merchant of precious stones who knows how to evaluate and give value to jewelry. Someone brings him lots of beautiful jewels and precious metal like gold and silver and put in front of him in on a table for him to evaluate and examine each one. The merchant would look at each one and say: This is gold and that is not gold. This is silver, that is not silver, this has value, that doesn’t have any value and this has a lot of value. An expert merchant has a way to discern and to approve things which are more excellent. While we are living there will be all sorts of things that would be presented for us to choose and I pray that you may have the discernment, the power to evaluate each one, so that you pick only what is more excellent and worthy.

III – May Our Desires Be Sanctified

...“may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.”

He is praying for us to have our desires sanctified and we will make the right choices for our lives. When I was meditating in the words that Paul used here ...***be pure and blameless.*** The word blameless gives an idea of a track and train moving on with tranquility and you don’t have the danger to fall into a hole. There is no danger for you because your train is on track and it will not fall into a precipice. Your life keeps moving and it is moving on smoothly because you have learned to make right decisions and to approve what is more excellent. This is probably the most important talk you should have with God at the beginning of this year. What are your desires? What is it that is

driving you? What is in your heart that you will dedicate your time, your resources and your energy this year? What is it that is calling your attention and is captivating your heart that you are ready to make sacrifices in order to have it?

Conclusion

This is Paul's prayer for the Philippians and this is his prayer for all of us this year that we may know how to approve the most excellent things. Teach me how to desire and give me that capacity to choose what is best so that I don't fall and stumble in my life. I may walk pure and blameless producing fruit of justice for your glory. Usually we make a list of wishes and resolution for the New Year and you have probably done yours already. What about if you choose that one and precious thing that would bring life to you, which is to know God and pursue an intimate relationship with Him above all other things? What about if you write on the top of your list to seek His kingdom first and dedicate our time in prayer, reading and meditating in His word, growing in your faith and trust of Him? What about if you choose to engage in living out Jesus and preaching this Gospel of Salvation, interceding and pointing your family members, relatives, neighbors and people in our community to Jesus? What about if we choose to love God with all hearts and minds and soul, obeying His word and following the example of Jesus so that He may set us free from all our addiction and bad behaviors? What about if all our wishes and desires be centered in God's will for our lives and we choose to follow and obey what He says to us? This then will be for sure a very Blessed and Happy New Year!

Responsive Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the New Year in which our desires, dreams and hopes are renewed. God helps us to desire and to choose what is best for us this year. Help us not to fall into temptations and for things that would not bring glory to your name. May our lives be pure and blameless and protect us from stumbling so we honour you in everything we say and in everything we do. Lord we want to know you more and pursue an intimate relationship with you. Please set us free from our iniquities and help us to choose you first and above everything else. We pray for a fruitful and blessed year for each one of us. In Your holy and precious name I pray, Amen

Intercessory Prayer, by Mary Marriot

Our Loving Heavenly Father we come to you this morning with our hopes and prayers for this New Year. We give you thanks that you have brought us safely through this past rather strange year and as we start this year we pray for your love and guidance, and in the hope that there will be better times ahead. We thank you for all those who have worked so hard on a vaccine and pray that this may be a means of restoring our world to a more normal way of life. We thank you for the dedication of all medical staff and ask that you will give them strength to carry on the wonderful work in this new crises. Lord we know there have been so many acts of help and kindness during the pandemic and we pray that this may continue and that we may increase our love for all our brothers and sisters worldwide. We thank you for bringing Claudio and his family to us and ask that you bless their ministry in this church and in our neighbourhood. So that more may be added to our fellowship. We remember Lord, those of our fellowship unable to worship with us at this time, either through shielding or through fear of mixing, so they

may know your love and strength surrounding them. We also pray Lord for our country now that we have left the European Union. Guide our leaders as they seek a new way forward for the benefit of us all and we pray for all the countries of this world where there is still war and hunger, that a better way of love, peace and sharing with one another may be found. Lord, we know that our climate is changing through our lack of care for the wonderful world you have given us. We pray that as nations and as individuals we may all learn to take more care of your wonderful gift, which is so beneficial for our life and health. And finally Lord we pray for ourselves, that you will inspire a new spirit within us that we may love you more dearly and follow you more nearly day by day and that you will show us the way forward in this New Year. We ask you all of these in Jesus' precious name. Amen

Poem – “Change”
By Richard Trander

*Richard came to church trying to find,
A reason he was lonely and the world was unkind.
He didn't know what to do when he came there,
He only knew one person when he sat on a chair.*

*He was going to come in and sit at the back,
But he sat near the front to put his life back on track.
He sat through the sermon and then said goodbye,
And went home all happy and started to cry.*

*He loved all the verses and all the songs,
Hoping that one day he might sing along.
He listened to every word for the answers he yearned,
And put into life the verses he'd learned.*

*Some weeks had past and he wasn't alone,
Spending Sundays with his friends in a place he called home.
Richard thought it was too late because of his age,
But I'll tell you the truth while I'm up here on stage.*

*It's all glory to God for the journey I've done,
My tears now are for joy because the pain I have none.
If this year you make a resolution,
Have God in your life is the only solution.*

Amen

Song 4 – Build My Life

https://youtu.be/QZW4_8_zCBE Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*Worthy of every song we could ever sing
Worthy of all the praise we could ever bring*

*Worthy of every breath we could ever breathe
We live for you*

*Jesus, the name above every other name
Jesus, the only one who could save
Worthy of every breath we could ever breathe
We live for you
We live for you*

*Holy, there is no one like you
There is none besides you
Open up my eyes in wonder
And show me who you are and fill me
With your heart and lead me
In your love to those around me*

*And I will build my life upon your love,
It is a firm foundation
And I will put my trust in you alone
And I will not be shaken*

Final Words and Apostolic Blessings

Next Sunday is my official commission day to the office of minister of Buckminster Road Baptist Church and Dr. Nick Ashton from the East Midlands Baptist Association will come to share a word. I am also inviting a few friends to join us. Please don't forget to write your name to book a place if you are sure you will be here on Sunday as I would need the numbers in order to invite others and not to go over the number we can host at our church hall at this season. There is an offering plate available at the exit for those who wish to contribute and give your tithes as well as you can make a direct payment to the church bank account for your contribution as follows: A D L Memorial Buckminster – Sort Code: 09-01-51 and Account Number: 13749406

Let me finish the service by praying the priestly blessing over us all

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Father, and the sweet presence and fellowship with the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more, Amen

See you all on Sunday