**Salendine Nook Baptist Church – Church Together**

**Sunday 1st May 2022 - Never Enough Time - Time For God!**

**Welcome**

Welcome to Church Together.
**No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together.**

Today’s Service for this First Sunday in May 2022 will be looking at: **Ecclesiastes 1 v. 1 - 18 & Ecclesiastes 3 v. 1 - 15**

The theme for today’s service is: **Never Enough Time - Time For God!**

Today’s service that is set out in this edition of **Church** **Together** also includes Communion. We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for this service and that you would be able to **Spend Quality Time In The Presence Of God Through Prayer.**

**Call To Worship**

**Lamentations 3 v. 22 - 26 NLT**

The unfailing love of the Lord never ends!
By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction.

Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin
afresh each day.
I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!’ The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for him and seek him.

So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord.

**Moment Of Reflection**

If you will make time with God your first priority, everything else in your life will fall into place.

**Opening Prayer**

Lord, our God, today is your day. A day when we come to worship and exalt your Holy name. Living God: in this building here at Salendine Nook, used to the sound of singing; this building which has seen baptisms and funerals; this building where people have come to be married, or to celebrate the birth of a child; this building where people have wept, and been filled with joy; this building where people have wrestled with the deep things of life, have prayed urgently, been stirred and changed; in this building where you have so often been with your people, be with us now today we pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, you declared yourself the way, the truth, and the life. Reveal to us today we pray, your truth, and inspire us we pray, with your life, that now and at all times we may find in you the way to the Father.

Loving Lord Jesus, in the security of this moment, we con- fess to you that we have often failed to live up to the reasonable expectations of others; we have fallen short of our own modest standards and we are far from being all that you would have us to be. We have hurt our fellow men and women, disappointed ourselves and added to your suffering. In the name of Jesus who welcomed sinners and lifted up the downcast, we ask you to forgive us for what we have done and what we have made of ourselves. Refresh our faith we pray, in your willingness to accept us, help us enjoy our standing as your much loved children, and enable us to live lives in which you can take delight today, we pray.

We ask these prayers as we come to you this day, in the precious and glorious name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

**Amen**

**Song Suggestion**

Be Thou My Vision

**Moment Of Reflection**

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. **Ecclesiastes 3 v.1**

**Bible Reading**

**Ecclesiastes 1 v. 1 – 18 NIV**

**Everything is meaningless**

1The words of the Teacher, son of David, king of Jerusalem:

2 ‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher.

‘Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’

3 What do people gain from all their labours

at which they toil under the sun?

4 Generations come and generations go,

but the earth remains for ever.

5 The sun rises and the sun sets,

and hurries back to where it rises.

6 The wind blows to the south

and turns to the north;

round and round it goes,
ever returning on its course.

7 All streams flow into the sea,

yet the sea is never full.

To the place the streams come from,

there they return again.

8 All things are wearisome,

more than one can say.

The eye never has enough of seeing,

nor the ear its fill of hearing.
9 What has been will be again,

what has been done will be done again;

there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there anything of which one can say,

‘Look! This is something new’?

It was here already, long ago;

it was here before our time.

11 No one remembers the former generations,

and even those yet to come

will not be remembered
by those who follow them.

**Wisdom is meaningless**

12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on man- kind! 14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

15 What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

16 I said to myself, ‘Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.’ 17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

**Tithes, Gifts & Offerings**

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

Now that we find ourselves once again holding services in Church, we can give of our finances to the work of the Lord when we are in church. If you feel that you can, then please keep on giving with a cheerful and grateful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.

**Moment Of Reflection**

In Ecclesiastes 1, Solomon makes a simple point: Knowledge, wealth, & life are meaningless apart from God. Everything else is worthless!

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father who art in Heaven

Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

On earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever and ever.

**Amen**

**Song Suggestion**

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

**Moment of Reflection**

Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grave to help us in our time of need. **Hebrews 4 v. 16**

**Bible Reading**

**Ecclesiastes 3 v. 1 – 15**

3 There is a time for everything,

and a season for every activity under the heavens:

2 a time to be born and a time to die,

a time to plant and a time to uproot,

3 a time to kill and a time to heal,

a time to tear down and a time to build,

4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,

a time to mourn and a time to dance,

5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

6 a time to search and a time to give up,

a time to keep and a time to throw away,

7 a time to tear and a time to mend,

a time to be silent and a time to speak,

8 a time to love and a time to hate,

a time for war and a time for peace.

9 What do workers gain from their toil? 10 I have seen the burden God has laid on the human

race. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. 13 That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil – this is the gift of God. 14 I know that everything God does will endure for ever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.

15 Whatever is has already been,
and what will be has been before;

and God will call the past to account.

**Song Suggestion**

I Know Not Why God’s Wonderous Grace

**Prayer**

Father of all time,
We believe that time, space and events lie firmly under your control.
Help us to change what is useless into what is useful for you.
Help us to transform wickedness into justice by our obedience to you.
Help us to turn every disappointment into a positive step of faith.
Help us to face the good and the bad in life with equal fortitude.
Help us to discover your will in difficult times and testing circumstances. Forgive us that we expect life’s journey to be smooth and without suffering. Forgive us that we forget your blessings fall on both good and bad people. Forgive us that we gladly accept success from your hand but refuse failure. Enlarge our hearts and minds that we might understand your ways more fully.
In a world where the unpredictable reigns, help us to see your reliable, caring purpose.

**Amen**

**Church Together Thought**

Do you ever feel too busy or tired to pray? Often, we seem to be left with little or no time or space to spend with God. After all, we are very busy, and some of our busyness is on God’s behalf, doing his work, isn’t it? As well as all the other important and urgent demands on our time — work, family and even a little time for ourselves — there is church on Sunday, maybe one or more midweek meetings. If we do all this, we must be giving time to God, mustn’t we? Or are we just giving time to God’s work but neglecting him?

**JESUS’ PRIORITIES: PRAYER**

I suspect that most of us would feel that we both needed and deserved a long rest - at the very least a good night’s sleep. Jesus, however, rose before dawn (**Mark 1 v. 35**) and went out to find a place where he could he quiet and undisturbed with the Father. Prayer, communication with God, was more important to Jesus than anything else. Rather than fitting his prayer life around his busyness, Jesus fitted his busy- ness around his prayer life. Spending time with his Father was the all - important, sustaining power behind everything he did.

This is demonstrated later on in Mark’s Gospel (**Mark 9 v. 29**) when Jesus, having just returned from what is likely to have been a prolonged time in his Father’s presence on the mountain top, (**Mark 9 v. 1 - 13**) was asked by his disciples why they had been unsuccessful in their attempts to heal the boy who had a demon.

Jesus’ reply suggested not the ability to pray prayers but, rather, a life lived in prayerfulness, where time with God is the priority. He emphasised the centrality of prayer. God’s work cannot be done without it. Prayer comes first and work follows.

The writer of Ecclesiastes describes the world of work (the whole of life, indeed) as ‘meaningless’ (**Ecclesiastes 1 v. 1 - 18**). Without God, without prayer, which brings us into God’s harmonising presence, life - all our busyness - even our work ‘**for God**’ has no real meaning.

‘For the times they are a changin’ crooned Bob Dylan in the 1960s, but for Solomon nothing seemed to be changing. ‘**What will be will be**’ (**Ecclesiastes 1 v. 9**). Life is ‘**a chasing after wind**’ (**Ecclesiastes 1 v. 17**); and here is one of the most depressing commentaries on life in the Bible ‘**What do people get for all their hard work**’? (**Ecclesiastes 1 v. 3**).

Throughout Ecclesiastes, the writer makes several absolute statements about the seeming meaninglessness of life and its various activities. But he is not necessarily opposed to these activities; he is simply decrying the futility of making them the ultimate goal and end of our existence. For example, work is not wholly worthless as we are told in **Ecclesiastes 2 v. 17 – 24** which says: ‘17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. 18 I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. 19 And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. 20 So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labour under the sun. 21 For a person may labour with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. 22 What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labour under the sun? 23 All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless. 24 A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God’.

Elsewhere in Ecclesiastes the writer encourages us to enjoy our work as seen in **Ecclesiastes 3 v. 9 – 11, 22** which tells us: ‘9 What do workers gain from their toil? 10 I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end . . . 22 So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them?’ But work is meaningless if we try to use it to make sense out of life. Only God can give true meaning to all our activities ‘under the sun’.

In **Ecclesiastes 1 v. 3 – 11** we see that the writer of Ecclesiastes began his search for meaning in life by looking at the world od nature. He concluded from nature that life is a weary grind, filled with seemingly endless repetition. Though life may often seem like this, we know that God is indeed sovereign and that he is working out his will among those who will follow him (**Romans 8 v. 28**). This should give us a new, hopeful perspective that looks beyond the bounds of our natural world and enables us to cope with the difficulties of daily life.

Then we see in **Ecclesiastes 1 v. 12 – 16** that the writer continues his search for meaning by trying to acquire understanding and wisdom. Instead of finding meaning, however, he only discovered the limits of knowledge and the pain that wisdom brings. This is because we are becoming more in touch with the realities of our fallen world. It is by trusting God and obeying his will for us that we find meaningful direction and joy in life.

Yet the mood changes in **Ecclesiastes 3** as Solomon begins to see things from God’s perspective.

**THERE ARE SEASONS (Ecclesiastes 3 v. 2 - 8)**

To analyse each of these ‘times’ that are mentioned in these verses, individually, would most likely miss the point that the writer is trying to make. These are figures of speech that present two opposite extremes that cover the entire spectrum between them. There is a time for everything because God has set the times. When we follow God’s plan and timing for our own lives, we assist the process of spiritual growth.

In these verses Solomon indicates the richness and breadth of experience which time gives us. By means of contrast he directs us to the areas of life that affect us most. We need to note well that these are times of life given or allowed by God.

Mechanical clocks have a balance wheel; Gods clock has its spiritual equivalent. We need to balance our use of time throughout our lives. Giving God time therefore means several things. We appreciate God’s purposes in all the positive events of life. Yet it stretches our faith when he allows the darker side of life to touch us. Mourning, losing, and hating are some of the down sides of life that challenge our trust in God. Giving time to God means not only accepting his timescale in our lives, but also acknowledging - and resisting - the presence of evil in our world.

Killing, hating and war inevitably affect us (personally or nationally). How do we use such moments? How might we see God in them? ‘My times are in his hands’ **Psalm 31 v. 15** tells us and God may use the hard times to deepen our faith as we see for example in **Hebrews 12 v. 7 – 13** which say: ‘7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined – and everyone undergoes discipline – then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! 10 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteous- ness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 ‘Make level paths for your feet,’ so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed’; and then in **1 Peter 4 v. 19**: ‘19 So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit them- selves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good’.

**THERE IS ETERNITY (Ecclesiastes 3 v. 9 - 11)**

In Ecclesiastes 3 v. 11 we are told that God has placed eternity in our hearts. This probably refers to our innate human desire for ultimate meaning in life. Yet in this life, our perspective and understanding are limited. We can’t always understand why things happen as they do. It is like looking at the underside of an Oriental rug. Most of what we see are knots and loose ends. We can only faintly make out the rug’s pat- tern. But we must not allow the things we can’t understand to drag us down. God tells us enough in the Bible to direct us to a life filled with joy and meaning.

Just as God who dwells in eternity came into time, so we who dwell in time have an awareness of eternity. But we mustn’t read too much into this. Solomon had no knowledge of resurrection life. With a sense of eternity placed in the mind of humankind, it is imperative that we find and obey God’s will for life in general and our lives in particular. This includes enjoying the ordinary things of life, as well as our work. God also intends us to fear him, that is, to respect and trust him. Then we can face eternity with confidence. Rather, humankind has the capacity for not only looking back, but also looking forward beyond time.

**ENJOY WHAT GOD PROVIDES (Ecclesiastes 3 v. 12 - 15)**

Within these verses, the writer of Ecclesiastes proposes a practical alternative to his frustrating search for ultimate meaning in life. He calls for responsible enjoyment of life as God’s good gift. Solomon wants to enjoy life more and spend less time and energy trying to make sense of it all. We need to notice though that **Ecclesiastes 3 v. 14** sets parameters around the enjoyment of life. Everything we do must be done with the recognition that God is in charge. We must act in ways that demonstrate our respect for him. This will prevent our enjoyment of life from becoming selfish hedonism.

Solomon concludes positively by stating that life is to be enjoyed. This is the ideal, for not everyone can enjoy life as they ought to, due to illness, poverty, disability etc. Yet the time we have on this earth remains a gift from God. He knows what he is doing and our understanding of his ways, particularly post -resurrection, enables us to worship him. Far from being gloomy, Ecclesiastes encourages us to keep all

life - good and bad times - in God’s eternal perspective. resurrection, enables us to worship him. Far from being gloomy, Ecclesiastes encourages us to keep all life - good and bad times - in God’s eternal perspective.

**CHANGING OUR PRIORITIES**

So how can we begin to change our priorities in prayer? Is it possible for us, living in a society that demands ever greater commitment to the workplace, to carve out space at the heart of our lives to spend more time in prayer? When and how might we do it? Here are a few suggestions. Start the day earlier: start it with prayer. Use the journey to or from work or school to pray. Replace half an hour of TV with prayer or Bible reading. Pray in the bath or shower. Pray as you wash up. Go for a walk and pray as you go.

May God give you ‘time’ that is meaningful and productive for him – and give him thanks for it!

**Communion**

Today is a Sunday when we would normally share communion together. We come together today remembering the love and sacrifice that Jesus made on the Cross for our sins and for our forgiveness. We gather together here in Church or at home as the body of Christ in order to share the bread and the cup together.

We are able do this by getting a small glass of red juice (fruit juice, squash etc.) and a small piece of bread and ‘sharing these elements’ at a time that is convenient to you.

(Normally as a church we will do this during the service at about 11.30am.)

Our normal practice is to say these words:

For I received from the Lord what I pass on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, (you might like to pray at this point) he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ (this is the time to eat the bread). In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ (now is the time to drink the cup). For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11 v. 22 - 26

If you would like to do this today with us, if you are at home, then please do so, and may the Lord’s richest blessings be with you today.

**Prayers of Intercession**

Creator God, we praise and thank you for the earth and the wonder of its life: the beauty of landscape, sky and seasons; the variety of animals and plants; with their intricate interdependence; for making us to be part of it all, shaping landscape, affected by seasons, partners in creation.

Redeemer God, we praise you for Jesus Christ and the glory of your work in him: his life in all its fullness of doing and being; his following through of your way to the end; for your raising of him and all who follow him. Help us to be more like Jesus.

Inspirer God, we praise and thank you for human history and the richness of our inheritance: the heights of human artistry and the depths of human understanding. You come to us by your Spirit and perform your work of new creation.

Generous and bountiful God all good things come from you and now we give you thanks.

God of kindness, you gave your only Son, because you loved the world so much. We pray for the peace of the world. We remember in prayer today the ongoing conflict that rages in the Ukraine. May your peace dwell in the lives of those how’s lives have been devastated by war. Move among us by your Spirit, break down barriers of fear, suspicion, and hatred. Heal the human family of its divisions and unite it in the bonds of justice and peace.

We pray for our country. We especially pray for the upcoming Elections. Enrich our common life; strengthen the forces of truth and goodness; teach us to share prosperity, that those whose lives are impoverished may pass from need and despair to dignity and joy.

We pray for those who suffer, for those who have recently lost loved ones and for those who are unwell at this time. Surround them with your love, support them with your strength, console them with your comfort, and give them hope and courage beyond themselves.

We pray for our families, for those whom we love. Protect them at home; support them in times of difficulty and anxiety, that they may grow together in mutual love and understanding, and rest content in one another

We pray for the Church universal and also our own fellowship here at Salendine Nook. Keep our church true to the Gospel and responsive to the gifts and needs of all. Make known your saving power in Jesus Christ by the witness of our faith, our worship and our life. We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus.

**Amen**

**Song Suggestion**

I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky

**Moment of Reflection**

Gods way is better than your way. His plan is bigger than your plan. His dream for your life is more rewarding, more fulfilling, better than you’ve ever dreamed of. Now stay open and let God do it His way.

**Blessing**

May you be strong to grasp,
with all God’s people, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge.

So may you attain to fullness of being, the fullness of God himself.

**Amen**