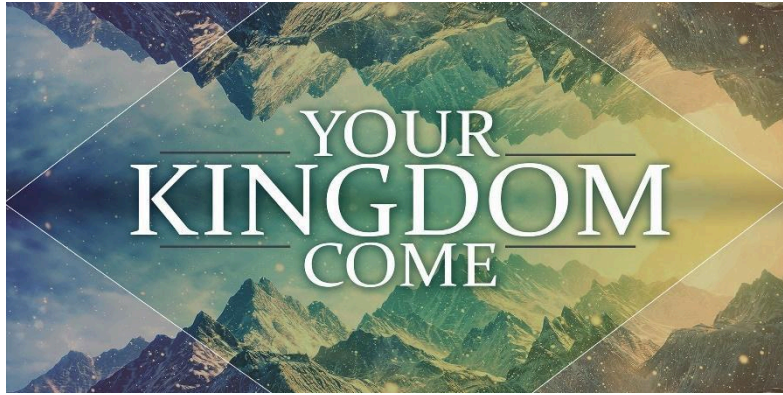


ABBEY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING
WORSHIP SERVICE 10.30 AM 22nd September 2024
Led by Rev Dr Julia Binney with Steve Prince preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church Reading



Theme: The Kingdom of God in Reading – what is it and what does it look like?

Call to worship: *Psalm 34:1-3,8 (NLT)*

We will praise the Lord at all times.

We will constantly speak his praises.

We will boast only in the Lord;

Let all who are helpless take heart.

Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness:

Let us exalt his name together.

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!

Song:

I love You, Lord for Your mercy never fails me.

All my days,

I've been held in Your hands.

From the moment that I wake up,

until I lay my head

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

All my life You have been faithful,

And all my life You have been so, so good.

With every breath that I am able,

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

I love Your voice, you have led me through the fire.

In the darkest night,

you are close like no other.

I've known You as a Father,

I've known You as a Friend

And I have lived in the goodness of God.

A PRAYER OF PRAISE:

God of all the universe: **we honour you!**

God of all power: **we glorify you!**

God of all love: **we adore you!**

God of all mercy: **we thank you!**

God of all grace: **we praise you!**

God of all goodness: **we exalt you!**

God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ: **we worship you!**

Today and every day. **Amen!**

A Prayer of Confession:

Father God, forgive us for the self-centredness and rebellion of our lives, just wanting to do our own thing our own way, rather than the things you want us to do, your way.

Forgive us for the stubbornness and hardness of our hearts and our independent spirits.

Forgive us, cleanse and renew us that we might be more like Jesus.

Fit us for your Kingdom so that more and more your ways and your priorities become ours. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread, and 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 and ever. Amen.**

Family Time: 10 Days of Prayer in Reading

(An offering will be taken during the next song, and after the song the children will leave for their own groups)

Hymn MP 378:

Jesus shall take the highest honour,

Jesus shall take the highest praise.

Let all earth join heaven in exalting

The Name which is above all other names.

Let's bow the knee in humble adoration,

For at His name every knee must bow.

Let every tongue confess He is Christ, God's only Son;

Sovereign Lord, we give You glory now.

For all honour and blessing and power

Belongs to You, belongs to You.

All honour and blessing and power

Belongs to You, belongs to You,

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God.

CHRIS BOWATER © 1988 SOVEREIGN LIFESTYLE MUSIC LTD.

Prayer of Dedication

Bible Reading 1: Matthew 6:5-13

Bible Reading 2: Acts 1:1-8

Hymn MP 378:

I want to walk with Jesus Christ
All the days I live of this life on earth;
To give to Him complete control
Of body and of soul.

*Follow Him, follow Him, yield your life to Him,
He has conquered death, He is King of kings;
Accept the joy which He gives to those
Who yield their lives to Him.*

I want to learn to speak to Him,
To pray to Him, confess my sin;
To open my life and let Him in,
For joy will then be mine:

I want to learn to speak of Him,
My life must show that He lives in me;
My deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak
All of His love for me:

I want to learn to read His word,
For this is how I know the way
To live my life as pleases Him,
In holiness and joy:

O Holy Spirit of the Lord,
Enter now into this heart of mine;
Take full control of my selfish will,
And make me wholly Thine:

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Sermon: What on earth is this Kingdom - and what does it look like in Reading? *Steve Prince*

Bible Readings

Matthew 6:9-10 Let your kingdom come, let your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

Acts 1:1-4 Jesus continues to talk about the kingdom for 40 days

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the kingdom

Book recommendation: *The Upside Down Kingdom* by Donald Kraybill

At the beginning of Acts 1 after the resurrection, Jesus continues to talk about the kingdom of God for another 40 days. Already the main message throughout the 3 years of Jesus' life and ministry, Jesus spends the last of His days on earth teaching the same theme. 40 is significant and is actually the amount of time needed to change a mindset.

What is this kingdom and how is it revealed? (Luke 17: 20-21)

Prophesied in the Old Testament

See Isaiah 40:3-5

Mary sings about it in the New Testament (Magnificat)

Luke 1: 46-55

Its 'upside down' in the sense that much of it is opposite to much of the culture and values we experience and live in. *Donald Kraybill says:*

Jesus doesn't plead for social avoidance or withdrawal from society. Nor does he assume that the kingdom and the world split neatly into separate realms. Kingdom action takes place in the world, in the middle of the societal ballpark. But it's a different game, with special rules and a new coach. Kingdom values challenge the taken-for-granted social ruts of the dominant society.

Rooted in the deep love and abiding grace of God, kingdom people seed new ways of thinking and living.

Besides being upside down, the kingdom speaks with authority today. Not just a dusty idea in an old rubbish bin, it offers a vision for how we ought to conduct our lives. The Gospels don't provide cookbook solutions for every ethical dilemma. But they do raise the right questions, focus important issues, and show how the Spirit of God can transform our lives.

What does this kingdom look like in and through the people of God?

- Integrity - lives lived which are consistent with our biblical beliefs and values. We are our message.
- Willingness to adopt postures which are surprisingly different to what may be expected. Our attitudes, actions and reactions
- Given to generosity of time, purpose, sacrifice. . . and loving well
- Modelling the life and attitude of Jesus. Being the Body of Christ
- Power and not just talk. Demonstrating the proximity of King Jesus in love and actions
- Churches that exist for the communities we serve and for sacrifice and thanksgiving to God. Worship isn't for us!
- Seeing what God is doing and where He is working, and joining in - often behind our backs!
- Living in unity with heaven and across the churches and Christian communities of Reading, and across our individual church congregations
- Conduits and connectors; who has God put alongside us to connect with?
- Influential Nobodies (1 Corinthians 1).

What does the Kingdom of God look like in Reading or any other place?

Taste and see that the Lord is good! Psalm 34:8

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

When we join with the prayer Jesus taught His followers to pray, asking for the Kingdom to come and God's will to be done, we may not realise we are effectively asking to be conduits for that Kingdom. This will mean bending and

re-shaping, connecting with others as well as the source of life and hope, and letting the presence of God, the love of Jesus and the life of the Spirit flow everywhere we go and to all we serve. The wide variety of co-operative cross-church initiatives in around Reading are great conduits which connect with people at their point of need through which the life of Jesus and the kingdom are experienced - even if people don't initially realise it. Another way of putting it is that we are ambassadors for Christ, showing and representing His life and love everywhere.

For further study: Signs of the Kingdom in Acts

- unity of heart and mind
- people regularly giving their lives to Jesus and following Him
- mutual, spontaneous, organic care and support of others
- Generous hospitality
- growth of house churches centred on eating, learning, prayer, breaking bread
- needs met and people restored
- remarkable grace and power

Discipleship Questions for further consideration - Hearers and Doers

1. How does the Kingdom of God influence your life aspirations, actions, attitudes and priorities?
2. Who are the people connected to you and whom you partner with, who help the life of Jesus and the Kingdom flow freely through your life. Who are the people God has connected you with to whom Jesus and the Kingdom might be revealed?
3. Is your focus church primarily on church or the King and His Kingdom?

"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

This spiritual aroma, which results from our encounter with Christ, blesses the heart of God and releases the fragrance of Jesus and the Kingdom of God everywhere we are and go. Let's be fragrance releasers.

What is perfume?

A [fragrant](#) liquid typically made from essential oils extracted from flowers and spices, used to give a pleasant smell to one's body. Fragrance is having a pleasant or sweet smell. The kingdom of God is like a fragrance.

Hebrews 12:26-29

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

HYMN MP 990:

I will offer up my life
In spirit and truth,
Pouring out the oil of love
As my worship to You.
In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
Of a broken heart.

Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring

*To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of Your name for the things You have done?
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part,
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart.*

You deserve my every breath
For You've paid the great cost;
Giving up Your life to death,
Even death on a cross.
You took all my shame away,
There defeated my sin,
Opened up the gates of heaven,
And have beckoned me in.

MATT REDMAN © 1994 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

Prayers of Intercession: Richard and Janet

God of grace and truth, thank you for your Word; living and active, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. May it bring about repentance, hope and transformation as we read, study, memorise and meditate, in Jesus' name. May you protect our faith in the Gospel and encourage us in all our learning and spiritual growth as we continue to serve You our Lord.

Merciful God, please grant wisdom as we offer this prayer for our schools, colleges and universities. May those who teach in them be endowed with the love and understanding we see revealed in the life and example of Jesus Christ that children may be guided in the way that leads to the life which Jesus came to bring all; and that students may accept with gratitude your gifts of mind and the opportunity to use it; that the Spirit of truth may help those teaching and studying to increase their understanding of the purpose for mankind made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

O God, we pray for all Christians throughout the world, particularly for those who are persecuted because of their faith. We ask for your protection for them and strength and guidance for all individuals and organisations that seek to help them.

We pray for all refugees who continue to flee from crises throughout the world, where there is drought, disease and terrorism, and for those who give their time and energy to serve the most vulnerable that they will find opportunities to rest and be strengthened for their work. We remember too, aid workers all over the world working in situations and places that are no longer newsworthy. Give them encouragement to continue showing their love and care for those people rebuilding their lives after natural or man-made disasters. We pray as well for those for whom life is a struggle and for all who fear tomorrow.

Faithful God, as we leave church today and return to our homes, we ask you to draw near to us, strengthen our faith, deepen our love for you and open our eyes to the wonders of your creation. Merciful God, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn BP&W 566:

To God be the glory! great things He has done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son;
And give Him the glory, great things He has done!*

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!
To every believer the promise of God;
For every offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He has taught us, great things He has done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son:
But purer and higher and greater will be
The joy and the wonder when Jesus we see!

FRANCES VAN ALSTYNE (1820-1915)

A Blessing:

Go now as Kingdom people and proclaim the Gospel, not just through words but deeds – through what you say, what you do, and who you are.
May others, as they meet with you, meet with Christ,
and know his living presence for themselves.
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you today and always. **Amen.**

The Grace:

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

Dates for your Diary:

Church Prayer Meeting: Every Tuesday evening 8- 8.30 pm on zoom – see church Whats App group for link or Meeting ID: 862 1518 8882 Passcode: 657161

Newcomers Lunch: Sunday September 29th after the service. If you are new – say joined the church in the last 6 months we would like to share lunch with you, get to know you and tell you a little more about the church and answer any questions. We will also send out invites!

10 Days of Prayer: Reading churches will focus on prayer for 10 days from Oct 3rd to Oct 12th – leaflets to guide your prayers are in the church. Let's take this opportunity to pray more. We will encourage Connect groups to gather to pray or prayer walk and there is a daily opportunity to join short cross Reading zoom prayer groups. Also a worship and prayer evening in Abbey on Friday Oct 4th from 7-9pm where we will be joined by other churches.

Baptismal Service: the next one will be on Sunday 20th October. If you would like to be baptised please have a chat with myself, Simon or Jill.

If you would like to contribute financially to Abbey International Baptist Church electronically, please use the card reader at the back of the church or scan the following QR code below to pay:

QR Code for Offering:

