

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING  
WORSHIP SERVICE WITH COMMUNION 10.30 AM 3<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST 2025  
Led by Chris Mbukwa, with Simon Bird Preaching.  
[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk).  
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**THEME:** Who is in control? God or Man? Do we control others?

**Call to Worship:**

We have come to worship the risen Lord.

**Be with us as we praise your name.**

We have come as a group of people ready for what you have to say to us today.

**Give us hearts ready to respond to what we hear.**

We have come knowing that you are a loving, listening God.

**We ask that you will hear our prayers and accept all that we do in your name.**

We have come to acknowledge you as our Lord and Lord of all.

**We bow before you in adoration and devotion. Amen.**

**Hymn MP50: Be still for the presence of the Lord**

Be still for the presence of the Lord

The Holy One is here

Come bow before Him now

With reverence and fear

In Him no sin is found

We stand on holy ground

Be still for the presence of the Lord

The Holy One is here

Be still for the glory of the Lord

Is shining all around

He burns with holy fire

With splendour He is crowned

How awesome is the sight

Our radiant King of light

Be still for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place  
He comes to cleanse and heal  
To minister His grace  
No work too hard for Him  
In faith receive from Him  
Be still for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place  
David J. Evans © 1986 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Integrity Music Ltd)

**FAMILY TIME:** Object lesson using a balance scale

*(An offering taken during the following song, and after the song, the Kids will leave for their groups)*

**Hymn MP245: How great is our God**

How great is our God, how great is his name,  
How great is his love for ever the same.

He rolled back the waters of the mighty Red Sea,  
and He said, 'I'll never leave you, put your trust in Me.'

ANON

**PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING:**

Heavenly Father, yours is the kingdom:

**A kingdom of love, justice and peace.**

Lord Jesus Christ, yours is the power:

**The power to heal and forgive us.**

Holy Spirit, yours is the glory:

**The glory to renew and recreate us.**

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit we praise and worship you and give you thanks for all you are and all you do for us.**

Lord, you call us to follow you.

**In love and humility we bow down before you and say, 'Lord, where you lead we will follow.' 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.**

**First Bible Reading:** James 4: 11-17

**Second Bible Reading:** Ephesians 4:29-5:2

**Hymn BPW537: May the mind of Christ**

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,  
live in me from day to day,

by His love and pow'r controlling  
all I do and say.

May the word of God dwell richly  
in my heart from hour to hour,  
so that all may see I triumph  
only through His pow'r.

May the peace of God my Father  
rule my life in everything,  
that I may be calm to comfort  
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me  
as the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self-abasing:  
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,  
strong and brave to face the foe,  
looking only unto Jesus  
as I onward go.

May His beauty rest upon me  
as I seek the lost to win,  
and may they forget the channel,  
seeing only Him.

### **SERMON: Who is in control, us or God? An object lesson in humility**

James 4:11-17

We are following a series on the letter of James. We are finding it has hard-hitting lessons. But it is about growing to maturity in the faith. It may be tough, but the goal of becoming like Jesus is worthwhile. This means we put on crowns of life (1:12).

There are different ways of summarising James. One way is that James addresses true religion in three areas: 1. how we control our tongue; 2. how we treat each other; and 3. how we live a holy life.

Today's passage rounds off a section about controlling the tongue and moves us into living a holy life. Pauline spoke about selfish ambition and quarrels last week, and Jill spoke about humility the week before. Those had James' beautiful and memorable instructions about getting wisdom from heaven and about humbling ourselves before God. Today, James highlights two areas where his readers needed to put this teaching into practice. They were speaking badly of each other and not submitting their plans to God.

The first instruction is 'do not slander one another' (11). The word used for slander, means to speak against, speak evil, or speak down to each other. The whole letter shows that people must have been speaking badly about each other. For example, why did James write: be slow to speak and slow to become angry (1:19)?

James adds reasons why speaking badly is so serious. If you follow the arguments (11,12) it involves judging the law, and this means taking God's place. He asks them, 'who are you to judge your neighbour?' (12). Looking down on each other, was not only arrogance over people, but it was also arrogance over God.

Are we guilty of this? It is a theme often repeated in scripture. Gossip and speaking behind each other destroys fellowships (Gal 5:15). So we always need to be on our guard. If we have an issue, we should follow the scripture guidelines: talk to (not email) the person concerned first, and not grumble to others, that leads to discontent and factions. We should do what James has said: be peacemakers (3:18); and above all start from a place of humility, which is where James left us at the end of the last section (4:10).

How can we find Good News and turn this round to be a positive instruction? Instead of speaking badly, we can speak well of each other (Eph 4:29), and this transforms situations. The bible speaks of a gift of encouragement (Rom 12:8, 1 Thess 5:11). I wonder what our experience was when growing up. I know from parenting that just correcting, telling off or shaming destroys a child. But words of encouragement build up. One person said we need to give eight words of affirmation for every negative one. Let us get into the habit of noticing when someone does something well and telling them.

The second instruction is about making plans without seeking God's will. From the letter we see that many in the church were poor, but there were merchants going around the Roman Empire, buying and selling, making lots of money. "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." (13). Some of them would have been Christians, and James has a lot to say about rich people in the letter. But here, James' main point is again about arrogance: 'you boast in your arrogant schemes (15).' Their specific sin was not submitting their plans to God (15).' James goes so far as to call this evil. They were arrogant, but particularly before God.

Are we guilty of this? Now, many of us have changed country. So this is a real issue. I do not think any would say they came to the UK just to make money, but did we seek God's will? Maybe we did, and it hasn't worked out, and where is God now? Maybe we still have choices before us. How do we seek God's will? Some would say they were forced to move. Where is God in this? This is a huge area, but I want to say two things.

1. James says, 'you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life?' (14). This was a warning to these arrogant people, but behind this is a reminder that God is sovereign. He is in control, and we can trust our loving heavenly Father.

2. James encourages us to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that' (15). This is making plans in a humble way, submitting them to God, and praying about decisions. I see this as positive instruction, not just to avoid selfish schemes but to follow the Lord's will in every part of our lives (17). Actually, following the Lord's will is the best path and rally can become a way of life. We can either make our plans in a worldly way or we can humbly submit our ways to God and live according to his values. It is our privilege as children of God to be led by God (Rom 8:14).

How do we do this? There are many promises about finding God's guidance in our lives (Pv 3:5-6, Ps37:5), and they start from a place of humility. The steps of 4:7-10 are a very good model: submit yourself to God, resist the Devil, come near to God, cleanse yourself, humble yourself, and he will lift you up.

I have in my bible a series of intercession steps that I picked up in Hong Kong. Have a clean heart; confess any sin. Have a time of worship and thanksgiving. Renounce your own thoughts (this is humbling yourself). Rebuke Satan's voice. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thank the Lord in faith. Wait in silence and listen. Close with thanksgiving and prayers.

If we are obeying God, this is what we will be doing each day, in our quiet times, when we would also read a portion of scripture and see what that says to us. Sometimes we would need to spend longer times in quiet meditation and waiting on God. Maybe the answers will not come straight away, but we will find we develop a lifestyle of being led by the Lord. Also, we had a series on the Holy Spirit, and I cannot stress enough the need for us to know we have received the Spirit into our experience. Keep asking (Lk 11:13). None of this works without the Holy Spirit. God may indeed help us with our business, or find a good job; but equally he may prompt us to make costly choices, to go somewhere we didn't expect. We need to be seeking a crown of life.

So James addressed speaking badly about each other and not making plans with God in mind. This follows teaching on humility, so these are forms of arrogance. The way out is through humility. We can turn this round for good by speaking well of each other and becoming encouragers, and we develop a lifestyle of being led by the Lord.

**Prayer:** We say sorry for being arrogant. Sorry for speaking badly about each other. Maybe we were spoken down to, criticised, by our parents or teachers. We ask you to heal our hearts. Help us control our tongues, be thankful, and more than that become those who speak well of each other and are encouragers. And sorry where we have made our plans without asking you. You are our loving heavenly Father. We resolve to develop a lifestyle of seeking your face and listening. Please fill us with your Holy Spirit, who leads and guides. Amen

### **Hymn MP272: I have decided to follow Jesus**

1. I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
No turning back; no turning back.

2. If no one joins me, still I will follow;  
If no one joins me, still I will follow;  
If no one joins me, still I will follow;  
No turning back; no turning back.

3. The cross before me, the world behind me;  
The cross before me, the world behind me;  
The cross before me, the world behind me;  
No turning back, no turning back.

### **COMMUNION**

#### **WORDS OF INVITATION:**

We are not here as of right but by the grace of God.

We have not come to parade any virtue of our own but to acknowledge our faults and seek God's forgiveness.

At this table is where sorrow brings joy, despair, hope, defeat, victory, and death, life - it is the *Lord's* Supper!

Come to him, just as you are, and open your heart to all that shall yet be.

#### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

#### **TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION**

#### **INSTITUTION:**

'The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

This is the body of Christ, broken for you.

*(take a piece of bread and eat as it is served to you)*

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

*(we drink together once all have been served)*

#### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION: Ernest and Benna**

Heavenly Father, we come before You today, grieving the pain and brokenness in our world. Wars rage, natural disasters, economies shake, and injustice continues to rise. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the headlines and powerless in the face of so much suffering.

But Your Word, through James, reminds us that **YOU are still in control**. You are the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and You never change-not like shifting shadows, not like the instability we see around us.

So we pray for wisdom – true, heavenly wisdom - "Peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." May you impart this wisdom to our leaders, our communities, and us.

We pray for our children and youth, protect their minds from confusion, their hearts from despair, and their futures from fear. Raise them as kingdom builders, rooted in truth, filled with love, and anchored in the belief that **God is in control**.

Lord, may our church be a house of prayer. We place our church in Your hands, for You are in control, and we trust You. We thank you for this new chapter in the life of our church, which brought us Zoltan, our new minister and his family. Bless their new home, which surrounds them with Your presence as they unpack, adjust, and prepare for the ministry ahead.

Father in Heaven, we thank you for our brothers and sisters from Iran, Hong Kong, and other countries for their faith, courage, devotion, and presence in our church family. Let no barrier divide us, for we are all one in Christ. Let us listen, learn and walk with one another.

We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen!

#### **HYMN MP 760**

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word

What a glory He sheds on our way!

While we do His good will, He abides with us still

And with all who will trust and obey

Trust and obey, for there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey

Not a burden we bear,  
Not a sorrow we share,  
But our toil he will richly repay;  
Not a grief nor a loss,  
Not a frown nor a cross,  
But is blest if we trust and obey.

But we never can prove  
The delights of his love  
Until all on the altar we lay;  
For the favour he shows,  
For the joy he bestows,  
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet  
We will sit at his feet,  
Or we'll walk by his side in the way;  
What he says we will do,  
Where he sends we will go;  
Never fear, only trust and obey.

JOHN H. SAMMIS (1846-1919)

#### **A Blessing:**

We are all summoned to humility and to refrain from judging others while accepting God's reigning authority over everything, including our lives and words.

*To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!". 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.**

#### **Notices for the week**

Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup>	8.00pm Zoom Prayer
Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 Renew Wellbeing 12.15 Bible Study
Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 Bible Study 10.30 Toddlers 7.30 Men's Bible Study
Friday 8 <sup>th</sup>	5.00 Table Tennis Club 7.00 Iranians Meal and Bible Study

Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 <b>Worship</b> Visiting speaker Ray Lam James 1. 9-11, 2.5-7 and 5.1-6 <b>Fair Trade stall</b> <b>Church Lunch</b>
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