

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 3rd January 2021

Heart & Mind

Welcome to our service at the start of a new year as we continue with the e-Service and the small gathering at the church. We hope that during this year circumstances will change and that all of us will enjoy meeting with each other at the church. Today we are going to focus on the **heart** and **mind**.

Habakkuk: 3 – 4

His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendour was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand.

Song: When morning guilds the skies.

In verse 1 it says, “my **heart** awakening cries,” and verse 4 says, “Does sadness fill my **mind**?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCsC0CUH34I>

Prayer:

Father we do indeed praise you for the beauty and wonders of creation for it lifts our heart and spirit. You are the Sovereign Lord who is in control of our universe and when we acknowledge this it brings peace to our troubled minds. We confess that we fail to honour and worship You as we ought but we thank You for your love and compassion toward us and especially for sending Your Son, Jesus, that by believing in Him we might know the forgiveness of our sins and be reconciled to You. We ask that the Holy Spirit will be present as we listen to the songs, bring our prayers and study Your Word in the precious name of Jesus. Amen

Our next song reminds us how thankfulness lifts the **heart** especially as we recognise what Jesus has done for us.

Song: My **heart** is filled with thankfulness

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qntf2Y_VNok

Intercessory Prayer:

Father we give thanks that at the start of a new year we can bring our petitions and requests to You recognising that even in these difficult times You are loving, faithful and compassionate to the broken hearted and to those with troubled minds. Let us bring before the Lord those we know who are suffering at this time.

Let us give thanks for the vaccine that is now available and pray that the programme for vaccination will go well.

Pray for the Church in our nation that it will faithfully proclaim the gospel message and people will come to know Jesus as their personal Saviour and find that peace that the world cannot give.

Pray for the protection of those who are serving in the health service and in other vital services and who are at risk.

Pray for our government as they make important decisions that may not be popular but essential for the preservation of lives.

As we prepare to look at the Word of God we would want Him to speak to us through it.

Song: Speak O Lord

One of the verses says; "Speak O Lord and renew our **minds**."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubRIJj8xkds>

Prayer:

Father we ask that by the power of Your Holy Spirit that You will speak to our hearts and re-clothe our minds as we study Your Word. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The importance of the **heart and **mind****

Reading: Philippians 4: 4 – 9

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your **hearts** and your **minds** in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and

sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

The linking of the **heart** and the **mind** is a theme that runs through the whole of the Bible. The following passages are examples showing how significant the **heart** and the **mind** are to our wellbeing.

Deuteronomy 11: 18 Fix these words of mine in your **hearts** and **minds**; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

Psalm 7: 9 O righteous God, who searches **minds** and **hearts**.

Psalm 26: 2 Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my **heart** and my **mind**;
³ for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.

Mark 12: 30 Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your soul and with all your **mind** and with all your strength.

Revelation 2: 23 Then the churches will know that I am he who searches **hearts** and **minds**, and I will repay each according to your deeds.

These scriptures emphasise the importance of keeping the word of God in our **hearts** and **minds** and the need to examine our **heart** and **mind** for ultimately Jesus will search our **hearts** and **minds**.

Psalm 26 said, “Test me.” Indeed many of us have found 2020 to be the most testing year of our lives. Countless times we heard the words on the news I am “**broken hearted**” as people lost loved ones and were unable to be with them when they died and not able to have a proper funeral. Others said they were **heart** broken because significant events in their lives such as weddings and other family celebrations had to be cancelled. The **heart** is the seat of our emotions and when the **heart** is troubled it impacts our wellbeing as we become anxious. The Bible recognises this and that is why we read in Philippians 4. “Do not be anxious” and then we are urged to bring our concerns in petitions and requests to the Lord. We have heard from churches around the country that people have been requesting prayer because they have been so down hearted and anxious. This is a challenge to us who believe, to regularly pray for those who are broken hearted at this time. There are

many people suffering from loneliness especially at not being able to see members of their families.

Last year saw an increase in demand for support for mental health services as so many people suffered from mental health issues. People's **minds** became increasingly troubled by health issues, financial concerns, employment anxieties and family challenges just some of the issues that become overwhelming for them. We can say that 2020 has been a devastating year for the **hearts** and **minds** of millions of people. Yet Philippians 4: 6 says, "Rejoice" and James 1: 2 - 3 states, "Count it pure joy, by brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." The wonderful thing about the Bible is that it helps us to face reality. We are going to have **heart** breaking times in our lives and we will have sleepless nights as our **minds** wrestle with anxious thoughts. However in Philippians 4: 5 we are told that, "The Lord is near." He is there to hear our prayers and for us to cast all our burdens and heartaches upon Him 1Peter 5: 7, "Cast all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you." When we turn to Jesus we can experience what verse 7 says, we will have peace that transcends all understanding and our **hearts** and **minds** will be guarded and centred in Christ Jesus.

Verse 8 gives us guidance for the preservation of the **mind** and that is to focus our thoughts on noble things. I don't think it has been helpful that the news last year bombarded us with news of deaths and the increasing threat of the virus spreading plus the tragic events occurring in people's lives. This constant depressing news was not helpful. It was always encouraging hearing about the wonderful acts of kindness and selfless devotion to duty shown by many and what **heart** lifting news it was to hear that a vaccine is available.

So from this passage in Philippians we have guidance for the protection of our **heart** and **mind** and the recognition of the importance this is for our wellbeing.

To summarise:

- Yes we need to be realistic and understand that we will have difficult times but we can rejoice that the Lord is near during these times.
- We need to value that communication with the Lord in prayer and bring all our cares to Him.

- We need to read and study the Bible in order to preserve our **minds**.

Putting these three steps into practice will mean as it says in verse 9, “And the God of peace will be with you.” May you experience this during this year 2021.

Prayer:

Loving Father thank you that Your Word gives us practical help for the way we live our lives. That you want us to have life and have it to the full. So help us to keep our hearts and minds in you. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Song: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Verse 1 says re-clothe us in our rightful mind and verse 5 mentions the beauty of Thy peace.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqOnjmr9Ah0>

Blessing Numbers 6: 24 - 26

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.”

Amen