**Home Service Sheet 10th September 2023**

**Call To Worship                 Psalm 122:1-9**

I was glad when they said to me,
    “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
Our feet have been standing
    within your gates, O Jerusalem!

Jerusalem - built as a city
    that is bound firmly together,
to which the tribes go up,
    the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel,
    to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
There thrones for judgment were set,
    the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
    “May they be secure who love you!
Peace be within your walls
    and security within your towers!”
For my brothers and companions' sake
    I will say, “Peace be within you!”
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
    I will seek your good.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we thank You that because of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we can enter into Your presence and bring Your praise. In You we are built up and made Your people. It is You, O Lord, who gives us peace and mercy, and upon that we depend. You are truly awesome in Your grace and love and we praise You for that today. Help us to pay attention to Your Word and to apply it in our lives. May we seek to live to Your praise and glory today and every day. In Jesus’ Name we ask this, amen.

**Hymn                                     Christ is made the sure foundation**translated by ***J M Neale***

[***https://youtu.be/HTEwpTahI18?si=p3X3pXpcRlNExhku***](https://youtu.be/HTEwpTahI18?si=p3X3pXpcRlNExhku)

Christ is made the sure foundation, and the precious cornerstone,

Who, the two walls underlying, bound in each, binds both in one,

Holy Sion’s help for ever, and her confidence alone.

All that dedicated city, dearly loved by God on high,

In exultant jubilation pours perpetual melody,

God the One, in threefold glory, singing everlastingly.

To this temple, where we call Thee, come, O Lord of hosts, today;

With Thy wonted loving-kindness, hear Thy people as they pray;

And Thy fullest benediction shed within its walls for aye.

Here vouchsafe to all Thy servants what they supplicate to gain;

Here to have and hold for ever, those good things their prayers obtain,

And hereafter, in Thy glory, with Thy blessèd ones to reign.

Laud and honour to the Father; laud and honour to the Son,

Laud and honour to the Spirit, ever Three, and ever One,

Consubstantial, co-eternal, while unending ages run.

**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 that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, For ever and ever, amen.

**Bible Reading                     Ephesians 2:17-22**

And he (that is Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

**Reflection**

Perhaps one of the more unexpected responsibilities of a pastor is involvement in the fabric and material of church buildings. Most pastors have no background whatsoever in building, repairs and maintenance and yet we are often assumed to have knowledge and understanding of what needs doing at any given time. In our Bible reading today, Paul uses an illustration of Christians being the household of God. Although he is clearly using this to refer to the family of people who belong to Christ there is enough about the description to make us also think of a literal building too.

The building in question is called a “holy temple” in verse 21, which is further defined in verse 22 as “a dwelling place for God”. In other words, this description is all about how Christ has made us one body, or people, and is building us up into a dedicated place where God will dwell with us forever. We should note the way in which this building is made, starting with the cornerstone which is Jesus Christ Himself. He is the rock on which the Church must be built, because without this solid ground the Church will crumble and wreck, a bit like the house built on sand that Jesus talked about in one of his parables (see Matthew 7:24-27).

Not only is Jesus the very founding stone for the Church, but there is also a foundation in Paul’s description. Before we get there, though, let me just ask a question – how many times are foundations laid when making a building? It’s not a trick question, and even someone with as little building knowledge as me knows that the answer must be once. You don’t keep building new foundation once a structure has been built. Paul tells us that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Some people seem to think that this is an ongoing building project, requiring new apostles and prophets in our time. This is simply not true, though, as the foundation has already been laid a long time ago. The Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of Christ as God spoke through them. The apostles of Christ, that is the twelve disciples, Matthias and Paul, were foundational to the beginning of the early Church, and it is their writings, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that make up the New Testament. Ultimately God’s people are built on the cornerstone of Jesus and the foundation of His Word. That is what Paul is telling us here.

Whenever the Church tries to move away from this solid and established foundation it goes very wrong. However, if we do remain standing on this solid foundation we will be built up into a holy temple where God will dwell with us. This is a beautiful and wondrous promise that God has given to us if we stand firm on the sure foundation of His Son and His Word. In verse 22 Paul also shows us that it is not we who do this building work but rather it is the Spirit of God. The Father created us, Jesus saved us and gave us the one true and solid foundation for our faith and the Spirit works to build us up together into the very dwelling place of God.

In verse 19 we also read that because of Christ Jesus we are no longer strangers and aliens to God. Despite the fact that we were all once far away from God, separated on account of our sin, through Jesus we are reconciled to God. This good news is open to all who will believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. We do not need a new foundation, because the very best foundation ever laid has already been laid by Jesus Himself, who laid down His life for us. We do not need a new builder or architect as God is the best Builder there has ever been or ever will be, and we are His workmanship in Christ. To Him alone be the glory – amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You that Jesus is our Saviour and the Chief Cornerstone of our faith. Indeed, as it says in Your Word, He is the stone that the builders rejected, andwhosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Thank You that Your unchangeable and unchanging Word is the foundation upon which our faith must be anchored. Keep us ever watchful for the false teachings that are flooding the Church today and let us hold fast to that which is good, rightly dividing the Word of truth. Help us stand firm in this evil day looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and the only secure foundation upon Whom we can stand. Amen.

**Benediction**

Heavenly Father, You have started a good work in me, and look upon us as Your handiwork in Christ Jesus. Today we pray that You will continue to fashion, form, and transform us evermore into the likeness of Jesus, each and every day. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.