Home Service Sheet Sunday 14th January 2024

Call to Worship:                  Psalm 139:1-6

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

    you discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down

    and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,

    behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.

You hem me in, behind and before,

    and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

    it is high; I cannot attain it.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You for this fresh opportunity to come before You and fellowship with You. You alone are our strength and salvation. Loving God, You call us to live in holiness and obedience, and yet in our own efforts we cannot do this. We rely upon Your grace and mercy, and we thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, through Whom You forgive us and reconcile us to Yourself. Help us to live with an awareness of and thankfulness for all that You have done for us, O Lord. Be with us now and help us to listen closely to Your Word. May we respond with faith and obedience that by doing so we bring You the praise and glory You deserve. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

Hymn O Worship the Lord by John Monsell

<https://youtu.be/LBEmXFkwcOE?si=mQG2CF0fCTRHJno_>

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; bow down before Him, His glory proclaim;

With gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness, kneel and adore Him: the Lord is His name.

Low at His feet lay thy burden of carefulness: high on His heart He will bear it for thee,

Comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness, guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter His courts in the slenderness of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine:

Truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness, these are the offerings to lay on His shrine.

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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 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” - and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Reflection

Just because I can do something it doesn’t necessarily mean I should do it. This is basically what Paul begins our Bible reading today by saying. It is likely that Paul is quoting a common saying either amongst the members of the church in Corinth, or that they have been taught by a false teacher. “All things are lawful for me” sounds like something the ancient church heresy known as antinomianism (anti-law) would state. The main idea behind it was that because Jesus died in our place, paying the price for our sin, we can do whatever we want now. This is, of course, a gross misrepresentation of what the Bible teaches us.

Paul addresses this clearly in his letter to the Romans. “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” We were bought by God with the price of His Son dying for us. We are transformed into new creations, adopted into God’s family and made citizens of His Kingdom. We cannot and must not continue living in unrepentant sin! As Paul rightly says to the Corinthians, not all things are helpful, and if we continue in sin we will be dominated or enslaved by it. In Christ we have been freed from our sin and choose to become slaves of Christ instead.

It would seem that there is a context to what Paul is saying here as he addresses some very specific examples involving food and sex. Let’s start by dealing with the food as that is fairly straightforward. Under the Old covenant there were various laws dealing with what should not be eaten by God’s people Israel. This was part of the purity system that has now been fulfilled through Jesus’ death on the cross. It no longer applies to us, as can be seen by the explicit teaching of the New Testament (see Acts 10:9-16 & Matthew 15:10-20). There are, however, moral laws that still apply to us today. To alter the phrase (“love is love”) we often hear banded around today, “sin is sin”! The consequences of sin are still the same as they always have been and that will never change. The only difference for those of us who have faith in Christ is that we have a substitute who has taken those consequences upon Himself.

In verse 13 Paul sums up God’s standard when it comes to sex. He writes, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” This does raise the question as to what is ‘sexual immorality’. Basically, it is any sexual act that is declared as wrong in the Old Testament law. Sex between a husband and wife is good and a God-given gift, but anything outside of this relationship is sin, or sexual immorality. This the unchanging and consistent teaching of God’s Word.

Paul goes on to explain that we who are Christians are now one with God, “he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.” (v.17) In other words, increasingly God’s desires become our desires and His ways become our ways. He shows us faithfulness and purity, and this is what we are called to in every area of our lives, including our sexual thoughts and activities. Paul, in fact, distinguishes sexual sin from all other sins in this passage. He writes, “Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.” (v.18) This doesn’t mean that sexual sins are unforgivable or somehow worse than other sin, but it does point to their highly destructive nature.

Just in case we think this teaching isn’t relevant to us, we need to remember what Jesus said. Speaking in the Sermon on the Mount He taught “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28) Our thoughts are as serious as our actions, and both can be sinful and require God’s mercy and forgiveness in Christ. Paul concludes by showing us the better alternative – “glorify God in your body.” (v.20) Sin separates us from God and defiles our body (the temple of the Holy Spirit), so in Christ we need to live according to His ways so that we glorify Him in and through our minds and bodies. Amen!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the freedom we have in Christ. Thank You that we are no longer under any form of the Law, but under grace. Keep us from sin and give us wisdom to recognise things that we can do, but which are not good for us or others. May we not cause others to stumble or backslide because of our words or actions. We praise and thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit to dwell within us. Lord, we ask that we may be worthy witnesses to Your goodness and grace, and that You would accept our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto You. This we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

Benediction

May the strength of God sustain us; may the power of God preserve us; may the hands of God protect us; may the way of God direct us; may the love of God go with us this day and forever more, amen.

Attachments area

[Preview YouTube video CHESTER CATHEDRAL-O WORSHIP THE LORD](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBEmXFkwcOE&authuser=0" \t "_blank)

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