**Home Service Sheet 16th July 2023**

**Call To Worship                 Psalm 51:7-12**

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
    wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
    let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins,  
    and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
    and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence,  
    and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
    and uphold me with a willing spirit.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, in knowing You and being known by You there is great joy, strength and comfort. In Your great love and mercy You have made Yourself known to us, and invited us to be Your children through faith in Christ. Today we bring You our praise for You alone are worthy to receive all worship, all the glory, honour and power. Lord, there is none like You in heaven or on earth, and with You nothing is impossible. Help us today to worship You as we ought, by Your Spirit and in truth. Help us to understand Your truth as we read Your Word and meditate upon it. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Hymn                                     At the Name of Jesus**by ***Caroline Maria Noel***

<https://youtu.be/Xm19p9Nd-20>

At the Name of Jesus ev'ry knee shall bow,  
Ev’ry tongue confess Him King of glory now;  
'tis the Father's pleasure we should call Him Lord,  
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season to receive a name  
From the lips of sinners unto whom He came,  
Faithfully He bore it spotless to the last,  
Brought it back victorious when from death He passed;

Name Him, brothers, name Him, with love strong as death,

But with awe and wonder, and with bated breath;

He is God the Saviour, He is Christ the Lord,

Ever to be worshipped, trusted and adored.

In your hearts enthrone Him; there let Him subdue  
All that is not holy, all that is not true;  
Crown Him as your captain in temptation's hour;  
Let His will enfold you in its light and pow'r.

Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again

In His Father's glory, with His angel train;  
For all wreaths of empire meet upon His brow,  
And our hearts confess Him king of glory now.

**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 1:15-23**

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great mightthat he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Reflection**

A fortnight ago we began to look at Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, and this week we continue by studying the rest of chapter 1. Paul has reminded the believers in Ephesus about the many heavenly blessings they already have in Christ Jesus, and in verse 15 he explains what this causes him to do, and that is to pray! He is aware of their continuing faith in Christ, their faithfulness to Him and their love for other brothers and sisters in Christ. For this, Paul is very thankful to God, and this should remind us of our own need to thank God for the faith and support of other believers.

In his prayers, about which he writes, Paul asks that God would grant to the Ephesian believers the ‘spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of’ Jesus. What Paul is really praying for them is that they would understand exactly who Jesus is, and what He has done for them and granted them access to through the cross. At the very moment they believed in Jesus they passed from death to eternal life, and through Him have been adopted into God’s family. They also have the promise of life with God, which is sealed by the presence of the Holy Spirit within them. It is important for all Christians to know and recognise all that we have received from God out of His grace towards us. We cannot use or benefit from that which we do not know we have!

Sadly, it would seem that the church in Ephesus did not continue in their love for one another and for God. Although they would remain solid in their beliefs and be able to recognise false teaching and reject it, the ascended Lord Jesus spoke to them about the loss of their first love for Him (Revelation 2:4). Some forty or fifty years later, in the letter to the church that John records for us in Revelation, their spiritual health is certainly not as good as it once was. This can often be a big challenge for us as Christians too. Perhaps we came to faith in Jesus forty or more years ago, but the initial passion and love for God has gone cool over the years. How do we recover that kind of love for God and for others?

I’d like to suggest that Paul actually answers this question, as it through our understanding of who God is, what He has done, and our relationship with Him. By thinking about God and all that He has blessed us with, we can be encouraged and our hearts turned back to God with thanksgiving and praise. Paul also encourages the Ephesians to think of the glorious inheritance they will receive at the end of the age. Perhaps, in some ways, we tend to be too focused on the present with all its difficulties and problems. This means that we do not lift our eyes to God and to the wonderful future He is preparing for us when we will live with Him and all fellow believers for ever. If we keep our eyes fixed on our Lord Jesus Christ and all that He has promised us, then I suspect we will find ourselves in a better place, filled with more love for God and for other Christians.

Paul goes on to conclude this chapter by showing us that all things are under the headship of Christ. What does this mean for us, and what difference does this make? Well, first of all it means that Jesus is reigning over all things here on earth, and nothing can happen without His say so. That is not to say that bad things don’t happen, because of course they do, and that is down to the free will that God has lovingly allowed all human beings to possess and exercise. Sometimes people make bad decisions, and there are bad consequences that come as a result of that. Nonetheless, Jesus is still head over creation.

Not only is Jesus reigning over all things, but secondly the Church is the body of Christ, and is “the fullness of him who fills all in all.” We, as believers in Christ, are part of His body, the Church, and it is to us and for our sake that Jesus was given. In other words, the Church is here on earth to do and say much on behalf of Jesus, for we are His body. That doesn’t mean that we are special or powerful in ourselves, but rather that God uses us and is glorified through us when we do that which God has shown us to do in His Word. The Church exists to bring glory to God and to draw others to eternal life in Christ. We have a purpose in the here and now to work together under the headship of Jesus. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word, through which You reveal Yourself to us and show us the way to eternal life. Today, we pray that we may develop an attitude of perpetual praise, ceaseless prayer, and continuous thanksgiving for all You have done in our lives. We pray that You will continue to do a good work in the lives of all Your children. May we depend on You in all things, grow in grace, mature in the faith, and show forth Your love in all we say and do. May You bless and keep all who are unwell today, O Lord. May You let Your face shine upon all who are struggling with ill heath and sickness of body, mind or spirit, and may You lift up the shining light of Your lovely face on all who are struggling today, with various disease, disorders and health problems. May You pour into all their hearts the peace and love that only comes from the Father, through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit for the surpassing greatness of Your power towards us, simply because we have trusted in Jesus as our Saviour. Thank You for the confident hope we have in Him and the everlasting bliss which has become our portion through Jesus. In His name we pray, amen.