**Home Service Sheet 17th September 2023**

**Call To Worship                 Psalm 77:10-15**

Then I said, “I will appeal to this,  
    to the years of the right hand of the Most High.”

I will remember the deeds of the Lord;  
    yes, I will remember your wonders of old.  
I will ponder all your work,  
    and meditate on your mighty deeds.  
Your way, O God, is holy.  
    What god is great like our God?  
You are the God who works wonders;  
    you have made known your might among the peoples.  
You with your arm redeemed your people,  
    the children of Jacob and Joseph.

**Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, to You we come, remembering all that You have done for us. It was You who has made us, sustains us day by day and saved us from our sin in and through Your Son. We thank You and praise You, O Lord, for Your love for us and Your grace and mercy towards us in Jesus. You alone are worthy to receive all praise, honour and glory. Help us today to listen closely to Your Word with faith and obedience that our lives may be lived to Your praise and glory! In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Hymn                                     Name of all majesty**by ***Timothy Dudley Smith***

<https://youtu.be/OUeNwAVMHEA?si=mrj8dGh3JoJ3pEOF>

Name of all majesty, fathomless mystery,

King of the ages by angels adored;

Power and authority, splendour and dignity,

Bow to His mastery, Jesus is Lord!

Child of our destiny, God from eternity,

Love of the Father on sinners outpoured;

See now what God has done sending His only Son,

Christ the beloved One, Jesus is Lord!

Saviour of Calvary, costliest victory,

Darkness defeated and Eden restored;

Born as a man to die, nailed to a cross on high,

Cold in the grave to lie, Jesus is Lord!

Source of all sovereignty, light, immortality,

Life everlasting and heaven assured;

So with the ransomed, we praise Him eternally,

Christ in His majesty, Jesus is Lord!

**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                     Joshua 4:1-24**

When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, “Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’” Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the Lord told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them downthere. And Joshua set uptwelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day.For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua.

The people passed over in haste. And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the Lord and the priests passed over before the people. The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel, as Moses had told them. About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the Lord for battle, to the plains of Jericho. On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

And the Lord said to Joshua, “Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan.” So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.” And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”

**Reflection**

Throughout the Old Testament we are given an account of God’s relationship with His people Israel. This story stretches from the covenant made with Abraham, through the dealings with Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the exodus from Egypt, right through to the entry into the Promised Land and beyond. Our Bible reading today comes just after Israel has entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. This was made necessary because of the disobedience and anger of Moses, who ignored God’s command. As we look at the life and actions of Joshua we see faith and obedience, both of which are positive characteristics for us to imitate as we follow Christ today.

In a sense, our reading is looking back and remembering what God has already done for His people. This idea of remembering the past is very much a central part of our Christian faith too. At communion we break bread and drink wine that help us to remember Jesus dying for us on the cross. In the breaking of bread we look back to Jesus’ body being broken for us, and in the pouring out of the wine we remember the blood of Jesus being shed for us at Calvary. Through His death and resurrection our sins may be forgiven and we can enter into eternal life through faith in Christ. What God has done in the past gives us hope for the future, and shows us that He is both faithful and trustworthy.

In our Bible reading today, we should note that the slightly strange things that Joshua commands of the people come at the direct command of God. That is not to say that God always acts in strange ways, but rather that this is a description of how God operated on this one specific occasion. Joshua chooses a representative man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. He then tells them to each retrieve a stone from the middle of the Jordan River. These must have been large stones as they are told to hoist them onto their shoulders, and it was expected that they would be a permanent memorial of God leading His people into the land of Canaan.

As we think about this odd command we need to think about how they were able to get these stones in the first place. The River Jordan is not a small, calm stream that is easy to dredge. Rather, it is a wide, fast running river. The only way that these men were able to lift out the stones is through the act of God cutting off the waters of the river for the people to cross. In other words, this was entirely God’s doing, and not that of the people. It is very similar to our salvation in that we are saved only because of what Jesus did in our place, and not because of anything we did. It is down to faith and obedience that salvation is given to us, and even these are the gift of God.

We should also notice that the stones are erected as a memorial for future generations to remember what God had done in the past for His people. We are told where they were placed, at Gilgal, so this could be proven true by earlier generations. The problem today is that we are not sure of the exact location of this place. We have an idea of the area from what Scripture tells us, but as it is no longer a settlement where people live we cannot be too precise. Nonetheless, we have a better sign of God’s acts in saving His people in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed to us in the Word of God.

Our reading ends with Joshua giving an explanation for the stones being there, “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.” If you like, this is an act of witness to all people – this is evangelism! By looking at these stones and knowing where they came from, you would realise that this must rely on something supernatural, something beyond our human knowledge and capabilities. This points to the One mighty God who created heaven and earth, and everything in them. Only He could make it possible for these stones to be removed from the Jordan river and erected at Gilgal. It should make people tremble in reverent fear before God, just as the realisation that we are sinners. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), and it is something that our world desperately needs in order for it to be saved! Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the wonderful things that You have done, in and through Israel and in and through the Church. Thank You for the way You have guided and directed our lives and the lives of all Your people. Help us to carry out the good works that You have prepared for us to do in the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray that we may each be consecrated to You in thought, word, and deed, for You are a great and mighty God. Keep us remembering all that You have done for us in thankfulness. May You help us to reflect Your ways by the way that we live day by day so that others might be reminded of You also. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

**Benediction**

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant us to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.