**Home Service Sheet 2nd July 2023**

**Call To Worship                 Song of Songs 8:6-7**

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
    as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
    jealousyis fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
    the very flame of the Lord.
Many waters cannot quench love,
    neither can floods drown it.
If a man offered for love
    all the wealth of his house,
    hewould be utterly despised.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we praise You today because of Your wonderful love for us. From before You made the heavens and the earth it was Your plan to save us and bring us into Your family. You demonstrated Your love by sending Your Son, Jesus into this world to reconcile us to Yourself. In saving us You sent Your Holy Spirit to come and live within us as a seal upon us, and we thank and praise You for that. Help us today to listen carefully to Your Word and respond to it with thanksgiving and obedience. This we ask in Jesus’ Name and to Your glory, amen.

**Hymn                         Behold our God**by ***Jonathan, Meghan and Ryan Baird, Stephen Altrogge***

<https://youtu.be/6fWhcomzC8U>

Who has held the oceans in His hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at His voice
All creation rises to rejoice

***Behold our God seated on His throne
Come, let us adore Him
Behold our King! Nothing can compare
Come, let us adore Him!***

Who has given counsel to the Lord?
Who can question any of His words?
Who can teach the One Who knows all things?
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds?

Who has felt the nails upon His hands
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man?
God eternal humbled to the grave
Jesus, Saviour risen now to reign!

**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 1:3-14**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined usfor adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guaranteeof our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

**Reflection**

Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus comes some time after he spent time there establishing a new congregation (see Acts chapter 19). The opening chapter of the letter outlines what God has done for us in Christ, starting before creation and going through to the wondrous future hope we have in God’s nearer presence at the end of time. It is good to be reminded of the foundation. Of our faith and all that God has achieved for us so that we can respond to Him with thanks and praise. Paul also takes time to tell us about the roles the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each play in our salvation.

Notice how, in verse 3, Paul begins by speaking of the heavenly blessings that God has bestowed upon us. What kinds of things does he mean by this? He describes them as being in the heavenly realms, which may suggest two things. Firstly, they are things that come directly from God, rather than from fellow human beings. Secondly, they are things of the Spirit that benefit our spiritual well-being, rather than necessarily our physical or emotional well-being. Paul also points us towards the fact that God has prepared these gifts for us from before the world was made, showing us that God has created all things, including us human beings.

Paul also writes of us being ‘predestined’ us for adoption into His family, and that is His will. We could get into all kinds of theological trouble with this phrase, but instead of getting into the nitty-gritty of it, let’s focus on the main point instead. It shows us that God’s purpose for the human race, and us specifically, is to adopt us into His family and make us more like His Son, Jesus. This is not a spur of the moment thing, either as God has been planning to do so from before the time He created the heavens and the Earth. God’s plans are well established and cannot be thwarted.

Paul goes on to remind the Ephesians of the amazing redemption they have received from Jesus. To be redeemed is to be bought from our previous slave owner, sin, and become the property of God, who sets us free to make our own choice as to whether we will follow Him. We are called to be servants (slaves) of God in Christ, but we must decide to become such ourselves, because God will not force it upon us. God has loved us so much that He has paid the price for our sin, death, by being executed on the cross in our place so that we can stand in His placeu before the Father. His great plan and will will ultimately be fulfilled at the return of Jesus to judge the earth and its people, and this is what Paul is referring to in verse 10, “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Although we have already been reminded of what God did for us, there is an additional purpose to God’s actions in salvation, and that is to bring Him glory. In verse 12 Paul spells this out clearly, saying “so that we… might be to the praise of his glory.” The transformation that God makes in us through salvation and the ongoing work of His Spirit is done for His own glory, and not ours. How can we tell that someone is truly a Christian? By looking at their life, witness and objective – does their life point to God or to themselves? We are created to reflect the image of God, and we are saved to bring glory to God – the whole creation should point us towards the Creator!

Paul concludes this section of this letter with a reminder about how the Gospel is proclaimed and heard. The Gospel, or the word of truth as Paul also describes it, is that to which we respond in order to be saved from our sin and adopted into God’s family. As Paul reminds the church in Rome, in order to hear the Gospel it must be proclaimed out loud by a person (Romans 10:14-15). Once someone believes in Christ then they are sealed by the Holy Spirit, Paul writes in verse 13. But what does he mean by this, and what is it’s significance for us?

Generally speaking, a seal is something that was used on a document or letter to prove that it had not been tampered with or compromised. In other words it was a kind of guarantee that something was genuine or correct. Paul tells us that God’s Holy Spirit acts as a seal upon us, guaranteeing our eternal life and salvation in Christ Jesus. Again we could get into some theological deep water on this issue, but what matters most is the fact that we can be sure of our salvation if we have believed in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit. That is a wondrous assurance for us to have until we see the fullness of our salvation when Christ returns and we live with Him forever. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we praise and glorify Your holy name for the immeasurable riches that You have bestowed on us, at Christ's expense. Thank You that You have placed Your seal of ownership on each of us so that none can pluck us out of Your hand. Help us to live in the power of Your Holy Spirit, to Your praise and glory, all the days of our lives. We thank You also for sending the Holy Spirit as a pledge of Your faithfulness to fulfil all that You have purposed for us. Help us to remember that we have been bought with a price and to live lives worthy of our calling. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

Heavenly Father, You have blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, and for that we give You thanks and praise. Make us ever more like Your Son, Jesus, that we should be holy and blameless before You. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

Hi Fred

I'll get it sorted.

All good here, hope everything okay with you.

Carole

Hide quoted text

On Wed, 28 Jun 2023, 15:08 frich107uk@sky.com, <frich107uk@sky.com> wrote:

Dear All,

I hope that you are keeping well.

Please find following our home service sheet for this coming Sunday.

God bless,

Fred

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