Home Service Sheet For 2nd June 2024

Call to Worship: 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, how great You are! Today we want to kneel before You and say thank You. Thank You that Your blessings and mercies are new every morning. You are a great and wonderful God, and we love You. Thank You that Your love and grace towards us is waiting for us from the beginning of each day until its end, and You protect us during the dark hours of the night too. Thank You, that as we live out our lives each day, You are there leading, guiding, helping and supporting us. Thank You for all Your wondrous blessings and thank You that You pour them out on us day by day. Great is Your faithfulness O God our Saviour. All we have needed You have provided. Bless Your holy name for ever and ever, amen.

Hymn Great is Thy faithfulness by Thomas Chrisholm

<https://youtu.be/4Zj6EwlL9E0?si=wUXIrtfHBr6qUlHZ>

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God, my Father;

There is no shadow of turning with Thee.

Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;

As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,

Sun, moon and stars in their courses above

Join with all nature in manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,

Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside!

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 Psalm 121:1-8

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

    From where does my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,

    who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;

    he who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold, he who keeps Israel

    will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;

    the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day,

    nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;

    he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep

    your going out and your coming in

    from this time forth and forevermore.

Reflection

The Psalms are a wonderful collection of songs and poems that express the character of God and a range of human thoughts and feelings towards Him. Amongst them we have mini collections of themed Psalms, one of which is known as the Psalms of ascent. These are found between Psalm 120 and Psalm 134 and are a collection of shorter Psalms that originally would have been sung or chanted on the approach to God’s temple in Jerusalem for a festival or celebration. They often encourage those reading or hearing the words to look beyond themselves and their situation to the God who holds all things in His hands and rules over them.

Our Psalm today begins with the focus on the Psalmist, using the language of ‘I’, and ‘my’, but by verse 3 it has shifted to God and His people. He begins by looking at the world around himself, and in particular the mountains. Living in Riddlesden myself, I can look out of our bedroom window and see the hill on which the village is mostly built. There is a sense in which we might feel small and weak compared to the vastness of creation around us. Perhaps this is how the Psalmist felt? He certainly thinks about his need for help and protection, writing, “From where does my help come?” (v.1) He immediately assures himself with the answer, “My help comes from the Lord” (v.2). In the original Hebrew, God’s Name is used to distinguish Him from all other so-called ‘gods’ to whom the surrounding nations would have looked.

This question and answer should give us pause to consider where we look for help, support and protection today. Do we look to friends or family? Perhaps to carers, social services, local government or the police? As good as these people and organisations might be, they are not perfect, and they can and do make mistakes. God, however, is not like this. The Psalmist reminds us that God will keep us safe and protected throughout the day and night, for God does not sleep or look the other way. Our God is constant in His care and loving kindness towards us, His people.

Verses 3 to 6 of our Psalm speak to us about the fact that God is constant and unchanging. Another of the Psalms reminds us of God’s unwavering presence with His people. “If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.” (Psalm 139:8-10) Although some folk might see this as overbearing or even a bit disturbing, we should see God’s continual presence with us as a great comfort and encouragement!

Perhaps, though, the greatest reassurance we can find within this Psalm is in verse 7. The Psalmist writes there, “The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.” We all know that bad things happen in this world, and sometimes to Christians. However, even in the midst of suffering, persecution and grief God is with us and will work all things together for good (see Romans 8:28). The greatest evil in the world is sin, and through sending His Son to die for us, God has kept us from it and will keep our life for eternity through faith in Jesus with repentance. God’s salvation plan is revealed to us in outline in verse 7 of this Psalm. We need not worry about the troubles of this life as God is with us and will keep us safe in His Son, Jesus. Amen!

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank You for being our ever-present help in troubled times and that by the blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ, we now have full access to Your throne of grace, for mercy to find help in time of need. Lord, we thank You for the many friends, family and loved ones that You have graciously placed in our lives. Today we lift them up to You, praying that You would protect and care for each one this day and in the days to come. We thank You that the angel of Your presence encamps around those that fear You and that our lives are hid with Christ in God so that nothing can pluck us out of Your hand. You, O Lord, are our Fortress and our Shield - our Stronghold and our Protector! Be with all those we love this night and grant to each the beloved sleep that You have promised to all Your children. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

Blessing

In Your Word You have told us that “Our help comes from God, the Creator of heaven and earth. He will not let you stumble or fall; the One who watches over you never tires and never sleeps.” May You therefore send us out into this world in peace and confidence, knowing that we do not go alone. Amen.