Home Service Sheet 20th August 2023

Call To Worship Psalm 128:1-6

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,

 who walks in his ways!

You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;

 you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine

 within your house;

your children will be like olive shoots

 around your table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed

 who fears the Lord.

The Lord bless you from Zion!

 May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem

 all the days of your life!

May you see your children's children!

 Peace be upon Israel!

Opening Prayer

Lord God, teach us what it means to live day by day with a godly fear of the Lord. We know that You have created all things and set them in their proper places. Without You this world would cease to continue and we could not live. Help us to remember that You are truly awesome, beyond our greatest imaginings – holy, just and righteous. Without Your grace and mercy shown to us in Jesus we are left hopeless and helpless, but we thank You, Lord, that You do not leave us or forsake us. In Your Son You are reconciling the world to Yourself, and through Your Holy Spirit You are making us more like Him. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

Hymn Grace Unmeasured by Bob Kauflin

https://youtu.be/ENAu-q7EuTs

Grace unmeasured, vast and free, that knew me from eternity;

That called me out before my birth to bring You glory on this earth.

Grace amazing, pure and deep that saw me in my misery,

That took my curse and owned my blame so I could bear Your righteous name!

Grace paid for my sins and brought me to life,

Grace clothes me with power to do what is right.

Grace will lead me to heaven, where I'll see Your face,

And never cease to thank You for Your grace!

Grace abounding, strong and true, that makes me long to be like You,

That turns me from my selfish pride to love the cross on which You died.

Grace unending all my days, You'll give me strength to run this race,

And when my years on earth are through, the praise will all belong to You.

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 Genesis 9:18-29

The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.

Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said,

“Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

He also said,

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem;

 and let Canaan be his servant.

May God enlarge Japheth,

 and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,

 and let Canaan be his servant.”

After the flood Noah lived 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

Reflection

Noah was undoubtedly a special man, in whom God saw goodness and faith. When we think of Noah we tend to focus on his favour with God and his obedience to the Lord at a time of great wickedness, and this is all true. In the letter to the Hebrews this is how he is described, “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” (Hebrews 11:7) However, Noah also had his flaws as we see in our Bible reading today. In verse 20 he is described as becoming a ‘man of the soil’, which is a very interesting phrase. Rather than living a righteous life, his focus seems to have shifted to the things of this world and its temporary pleasures.

Of all that we read about Noah in Scripture, this incident is perhaps the most puzzling. Why was it recorded and handed down for us to read? What are we to learn from it? Perhaps it is included as a reminder that all men are flawed, and need the mercy and forgiveness of God. Noah is put forward as a hero of the faith in the letter to the Hebrews, but still only Jesus is perfect, without sin or flaw. Up to this point we have heard how Noah had been noticed by God, saved by Him from the great flood, and remained obedient in the face of ridicule and persecution whilst building the ark. It was also with Noah that God first established His covenant.

When we think of all that God had done for Noah, and how He had blessed Him for his faith and obedience, it seems surprising that Noah would wander from that path. Yet he did. We are told that he grew a vineyard and made wine from the grapes, and clearly overindulged in the produce. Noah is not explicitly described as sinning in getting drunk, but it is clear from elsewhere in Scripture that this is contrary to God’s ways. We are called to have self-control and honour God through our bodies. Nonetheless, the focus seems to be more on the actions of Noah’s three sons.

Ham, the middle son, was the one who found Noah drunk and naked inside his tent where he lived. Rather than do something to help or care for his father he went and told his brothers what he had seen. They knew what to do, and they went with a cloak to cover up their father, whilst making sure not to look on his nakedness. Perhaps what we are to take from this is the need to care for those who are vulnerable and not take advantage of them. What are our instincts when we come across someone in need? Do we follow the example of Shem, Japheth and the Samaritan from Jesus’ well-known story (Luke 10:25-37) in caring for those in need, or do we pass by on the other side, so to speak?

Notice how Noah responds when he is back in his sober mind. He speaks a blessing on the sons who cared for him, and a curse on the one who did not. Interestingly God seems to honour these words of blessing and curse, and brings about the appropriate actions in the fullness of time. From Ham came Canaan, and from him came the ultimately pagan nation and people who God instructed the Israelites to wipe out from the land they inherited under the leadership of Joshua. From Shem would come the people of Israel, who would be God’s chosen people (see Luke 3:23-38). God blesses those who seek to do what is right. This is for those who are already His people by faith, and cannot earn salvation.

The example of Ham points us towards God’s judgment and condemnation of the wicked. There are consequences for those who live in sin, not caring for the weak and vulnerable. This is what Noah said, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.” (v.25) We are to live according to God’s ways relying on His grace and mercy towards us, and we are to extend that grace and mercy towards those who are in need. Ultimately Noah and his sons would all die, but by faith they could be saved. This same hopeful message is given to us for us to share with others that they too may be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Amen!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we live in a world full of evil and disobedience, where man does not care for his brother or look after the widows and orphans. Help us, as Your people, to be different. May our lives be filled with Your grace, mercy and love that we may extend it to others. Help us to stand out as lights in the darkness of the world that others might be pointed to Jesus. When we are tempted to live by the ways of this world grant us courage and strength to resist. We pray also for those who are abused by others, and ask that You would provide protection and healing for them. In this dark world may the light of Christ shine today and forever. In His Name we pray, amen.

Benediction

Gracious God, fill us with love and compassion for all who are in need. Help us to extend Your grace and mercy toward those who are vulnerable or in trouble. Remind us of Your grace and mercy to us in Christ and grant us the boldness and courage to share the Gospel of salvation with others. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.