**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 21st July 2024**

**Call To Worship                  Deuteronomy 7:6-10**

 For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we thank You for Your love for us and Your faithfulness towards us. You have rescued us from our own slavery to sin, just as You rescued Your people Israel from the land of slavery in Egypt. You have chosen us and drawn us to Yourself through the work of Your Holy Spirit who has given us the gift of faith and for this we thank You and praise You, O Lord. Help us today to remember Your great love for us and all Your people. Amen!

**Hymn                                     In heavenly love abiding**by ***Anna Letitia Waring***

<https://youtu.be/0sd7GDDSsvk?si=_dj7sZK9tIiN94aJ>

 In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear;

And safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here;

The storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid,

But God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?

Wherever He may guide me, no want shall turn me back;

My Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack:

His wisdom ever waketh, His sight is never dim,

He knows the way He taketh, and I will walk with Him.

Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen;

Bright skies will soon be o’er me, where the dark clouds have been:

My hope I cannot measure, my path to life is free,

My Saviour has my treasure, and He will walk with me.

**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                     Jeremiah 2:1-13**

 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord,

“I remember the devotion of your youth,  
    your love as a bride,  
how you followed me in the wilderness,  
    in a land not sown.  
Israel was holy to the Lord,  
    the firstfruits of his harvest.  
All who ate of it incurred guilt;  
    disaster came upon them,  
declares the Lord.”

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. Thus says the Lord:

“What wrong did your fathers find in me  
    that they went far from me,  
and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?  
They did not say, ‘Where is the Lord  
    who brought us up from the land of Egypt,  
who led us in the wilderness,  
    in a land of deserts and pits,  
in a land of drought and deep darkness,  
    in a land that none passes through,  
    where no man dwells?’  
And I brought you into a plentiful land  
    to enjoy its fruits and its good things.  
But when you came in, you defiled my land  
    and made my heritage an abomination.  
The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’  
    Those who handle the law did not know me;  
the shepherds transgressed against me;  
    the prophets prophesied by Baal  
    and went after things that do not profit.

“Therefore I still contend with you,  
declares the Lord,  
    and with your children's children I will contend.  
For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see,  
    or send to Kedar and examine with care;  
    see if there has been such a thing.  
Has a nation changed its gods,  
    even though they are no gods?  
But my people have changed their glory  
    for that which does not profit.  
Be appalled, O heavens, at this;  
    be shocked, be utterly desolate,  
declares the Lord,  
for my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me,  
    the fountain of living waters,  
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,  
    broken cisterns that can hold no water.

**Reflection**

 Do you remember the old public message or advert that proclaimed ‘a dog is for life not just for Christmas’? The whole point of the saying was that getting a dog is not just a nice surprise for a special occasion, but it is also a commitment to look after and care for the dog for its whole life. Sadly, as I’m sure we are all aware, there are still people who buy animals without thinking about the long-term commitment of caring for them. In fact, we seem to be living in a world today where there is far too much short-term thinking. It’s all about what we want right now.

Our Bible reading today begins with God’s message to His people, recalling the obedience and faithfulness of Israel after they had come up out of the land of Egypt and entered into the Promised Land of Canaan. God said, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.” At this point the people had mostly been following God’s laws and when foreign powers oppressed them God brought about judgment on those nations. This, however, is not how their relationship with God continued as time went on. It’s not that the people had forgotten how they were supposed to behave, because the law that God had given them still stood firm before them.

Jesus summed up the law by two commands – love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself. It is simple to understand and yet humanly impossible to live out without God’s help and the intervention of His Son, Jesus Christ who died in our place on the cross. Listen to the words that God spoke to the people of Israel in verse 5 of our reading, “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?” God points out the root of the peoples’ problems, pointing to their desire for something new or something more, except they already had relationship with the one true God so there was nothing new or more for them to find. All that the Israelites desired was nothingness and worthless – a mirage by which they had been tricked.

They had lost their contentment with God and His provision for them. They had forgotten God’s wonderful promise to be faithful to them that He had shown them in His covenant with Abraham. They thought that there were better things than God’s steadfast love for them – how foolish they were! Yet, if we’re honest with ourselves we too can be tempted by the same kinds of desires. In verse 7, God reminds the people what they did when He provided their ancestors with a fruitful new home. He says, “when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination.” It was as though they were throwing God’s generosity back in His divine face. They were, in effect, saying ‘we’ll take it from here; we don’t need you anymore!’ This, of course, did not go well for them.

In spite of the actions of Israel and its leaders, God had this to say to them in verse 9, “Therefore I still contend with you”. There is clearly a negative way of looking at this – God will contend with or battle His people. Life is going to be difficult as the Lord uses circumstances and even other nations to show His people their sin through judgment. However, this also demonstrates the fact that God has not given up on them or rejected them. You only contend with someone else if you still care for them and want the best for them. God wanted the people of Israel to return to Him. He wanted them to respond to His love for them with faith and obedience. This is the same call that God issues to us today.

Even though we may have gone astray, ignored His Word and sinned against Him, God, in His Grace and mercy, desires us to return to Him with faith and repentance. If we have already placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are already His. Our sins have been forgiven and our salvation is assured, but this is not an excuse for us to go back to living according to the world’s ways. The world around us needs to hear the wonderful, good news of the Gospel. They need to be called to faith in Christ and repentance from their sin. The Lord is full of love, grace and mercy and will forgive all who have faith in His Son and repent of their sin. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, forgive us for the times that we have not listened to Your voice or responded to Your Word, but have rather followed our own ways and have been influenced by things that dishonour Your name. Keep us low at the cross and broken before You. Open our ears to hear Your Word and open our eyes so that we may follow in Your way. As we consider ancient Israel's failure to listen to Your Word and obey Your voice, help us to be attentive to all that You would teach us, and may we honour Your name in all we are and all that we do. This we ask to Your praise and glory and in Jesus' name, amen.

**Blessing**

May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and always, amen.