**Home Service Sheet Sunday 23rd April 2023**

**Call To Worship**                **Psalm 116:1-4**

I love the Lord, because he has heard
    my voice and my pleas for mercy.
Because he inclined his ear to me,
    therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
The snares of death encompassed me;
    the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
    I suffered distress and anguish.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
    “O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!”

**Prayer**

Gracious God, we lift our voices to You today in praise and adoration. In creation we see Your handiwork, and in Your Word Your love and care are revealed to us. In times of plenty and contentment we can see Your provision, and in times of difficulty and distress we can call out to You for deliverance. On You alone, O Lord, is our hope built. Keep us close to You day by day, and help us to bring You the glory that You deserve. This we ask in the Name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Hymn                                     Open my eyes**by ***Clara H Scott***

<https://youtu.be/o7e8dq6xx4k>

Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Open my ears that I may hear voices of truth Thou sendest clear,
And while the wave notes fall on my ear, everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see.
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Open my mouth and let me bear gladly the warm truth everywhere.
Open my heart and let me prepare love with Thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see.
Open my mouth, illumine me, Spirit divine!

**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                     Luke 24:13-35**

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven milesfrom Jerusalem,and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**Reflection**

Although we are now two weeks on from Resurrection Sunday, our Bible reading today is still reporting the events of later Easter Day. Luke has already given us an account of the women and Peter at the empty tomb, but so far in this Gospel we have not had a revelation of the risen Jesus. It would seem that some of the Lord’s followers were beginning to believe the testimony of the angels, that Jesus had risen, but others were not so sure. Why else would two disciples be travelling away from Jerusalem to the town of Emmaus? Although it is not a massive distance away, by foot seven miles is not insignificant.

On the road these two followers of Jesus are speaking about what has happened, and what it all meant. Jesus then joins them on this walk, although “their eyes were kept from recognising him.” (v.16) This raises questions about whether Jesus’ risen body was different from His pre-resurrection body, as these disciples are not the only ones who do not immediately recognise Him. Scripture doesn’t give us a clear answer one way or the other, and it could simply be that their grief blinded them. What is much more important is the fact that Jesus is physically risen from the dead, can walk, talk, touch and eat.

Jesus asks them what they are talking about, knowing fine well exactly what it is. In a way He leads them to a correct understanding of all that they have seen and heard regarding Himself and what the Scriptures say about Him. They already had all the facts and information they needed to come to the truth, but as yet they did not have the understanding and faith to put it all together. Jesus gently rebukes them for their confusion and unbelief, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (vv.25-26)

Note where Jesus points these two followers to find the answers they need – the Old Testament. Luke tells us that Jesus began with Moses and the Prophets, explaining exactly who He is, although they do not know it is Jesus who is telling them this yet. In other words, God had already revealed His salvation plan through the Word He had given to His people that we know as the Old Testament. From Genesis through to the book of the prophet Malachi the Messiah is promised, foretold and revealed, and in Jesus this was all fulfilled. The disciples got themselves into all sorts of confusion by focusing on actual events and their own limited understanding of them, rather than the perfect and sure Word of God.

It was only when Jesus sat down to share food with them, and broke bread that their eyes were finally opened to the stranger’s identity. Perhaps it was this similar action of giving thanks and breaking bread that pointed them back to the Last Supper. Whatever it was, their eyes were opened and they now knew that it was Jesus there with them, who had helped them to understand His death and resurrection as God’s plan of salvation. At this point, Luke tells us that Jesus disappeared. It’s a slightly odd detail, but it is far from the only time that the risen Jesus is able to come and go at will.

Having recognised that it was Jesus who was there with them, they said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (v.32) Perhaps we might even compare this feeling with the experience of John Wesley, whose heart was ‘strangely warmed’ as God’s Spirit enabled Him to understand the Gospel from the Scriptures, and believe. Ultimately, though, our faith is not about feelings or experiences, as lovely and encouraging as they may sometimes be. Rather, our faith needs to be founded on Christ Jesus, the Rock of our salvation. Our faith is based upon truth that God has revealed to us about Himself, through His Word. If we take our eyes off Him and our ears away from His Word then we will be easily swayed by all kinds of false teaching and strange ideas (see Ephesians 4:11-16).

Following this appearance of Jesus to them they hurry back to Jerusalem and find the eleven. By this time they are able to compare resurrection appearances as Jesus had also appeared to (Simon) Peter. From their doubt and sorrow, the followers of Jesus are now filled with joy and faith that Jesus, their Lord, is risen. He truly is God’s promised Messiah and He has earned salvation for all who will place their faith in Him. Within a few short days they would all be fully equipped to proclaim the Gospel truth in the power of the Holy Spirit. May we have complete confidence in God’s Word, and in the work of His Spirit, who enables us to understand and share His Word! Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word and the wonderful truths that we read in its pages. It is so wonderful that we have a more sure Word of prophecy that has been unveiled in the face of Jesus Christ. Thank You that all the prophecies relating to His First Coming were fulfilled in every detail, and that by believing on the name of Christ, we have been forgiven of our sins and have received life eternal. Praise You that every prophetic word relating to Christ’s Second Coming cannot fail, for Your Word is faithful and true. Thank You for the witness of those two disciples on the road to Emmaus and the reminder that even when doubts appear in our hearts, You remain faithful to Your promises. Hear this prayer as we ask it in the precious Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Benediction**

Loving God, send us out today with our hearts burning within us from the joy of Your glorious Gospel. Grant us courage to share with others the wondrous news that Jesus is risen and reigns with You forever. Amen.