**Home Service Sheet For 28th April 2024**

**Call to Worship:**                  **Psalm 22:27-31**

All the ends of the earth shall remember
    and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
    shall worship before you.
For kingship belongs to the Lord,
    and he rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
    before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
    even the one who could not keep himself alive.
Posterity shall serve him;
    it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
    that he has done it.

**Opening Prayer**

To You, O Lord, belongs all praise, all glory, honour and power! All creation shall proclaim Your majesty and worth from the North to the South, and from the East to the West. May we be counted amongst that great number who will worship You in heaven. As we spend this time in Your presence, O Lord, help us to worship You wholeheartedly, with all our soul, mind and strength. Help us to understand Your Word and guide us in applying it in our lives day by day we ask. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Hymn**                                     **Great is Thy faithfulness** by ***Thomas Chisholm***

<https://youtu.be/4Zj6EwlL9E0?si=3rKs3ajIas5Xnf83>

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                                 Acts 8:26-40**

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
    and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
    so he opens not his mouth.
In his humiliation justice was denied him.
    Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

**Reflection**

The book of Acts is the second volume of two written by Luke in the New Testament. It picks up where the Gospel left off, with the ascension of Jesus to His Father’s right hand, which we’ll come on to in a fortnight. Acts describes how the early church came into being and how it grew, led by the apostles who had been empowered by the Holy Spirit. Some people take this book as a blueprint of how the Church should be today, but I think that they’re missing the point. Rather, the book of Acts shows us how God established both the Church and the Gospel message in the first generation of Christian believers. This is the foundation upon which the modern Church is built, but we should only expect the message to be the same.

Our Bible reading today shows us how God orchestrated the spreading of the Gospel through Philip, one of the seven men set aside in Acts chapter 6 to free up the apostles for preaching the Gospel and traveling. We know next to nothing about Philip, other than the fact that he was a man of good standing amongst the early Christians in Jerusalem. Philip received a message from an angel to go to a particular place, and so he obeyed. We should rightly see that as simply a description of what happened then and there. Communications from angels were very rare, even in Scripture. Thankfully, we have the sure and certain Word of God written down, from which we can learn how to live and serve as God’s people.

At this prearranged (by God) place, Philip finds an Ethiopian official returning to him homeland in a chariot. He is described as having “come to Jerusalem to worship”. (Acts 8:27) This tells us that this man already had an interest in the God of Israel, and at least some knowledge of God and the Law. He was reading the scroll of Isaiah as he travelled along. This tells us that this official was both well-educated and a man of means. God’s Spirit directs Philip to go over to the chariot, and from here an opportunity arises to proclaim the Gospel. There is a principle here from which we can learn, and that is to make the most of every God given opportunity we have to tell people about the Gospel of Jesus.

It would seem that God had already prepared the way for this Ethiopian official to have faith in His Son, as the very book he was reading refers to Jesus many times, pointing to future salvation that would come through Him. The specific verses that the official was reading (Isaiah 53:7-8) clearly point forwards to the promised Messiah, and under God’s direction Philip began to explain the words of the prophet Isaiah. Note the words of the official to Philip about understanding the Scriptures, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31) This is true for all of us – without the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit it is impossible to understand the Bible. Human intellect only goes so far, and so we find that some of the most intelligent people cannot understand the Scriptures, whilst the simplest believers have an understanding from the Lord Himself.

The official asks Philip some sensible questions regarding the verses from Isaiah, and under the guidance of God Philip goes on to explain that these verses are about Jesus, and how He was the Lamb of God who was slain for the sin of the world. Some people may ask us questions about our faith that seem reasonable, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that they are truly seeking for God. They may simply have an idle curiosity, or it may be a distraction technique to steer the conversation away from a need to respond with faith and repentance. True seeking for God originates with the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and mind of theindividual and will lead to genuine faith.

In our Bible reading we find the Ethiopian official responding to Philip’s presentation of the Gospel. He says, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:37) He recognised that his newfound understanding of the Scriptures, and who Jesus is, demanded an active response from him. It is important for us to understand that baptism did not save the Ethiopian from judgment and hell. Rather, his baptism is an outward sign of the internal change that God had done in the Ethiopian official. Baptism is a sign of God saving someone to eternal life and should be a marker point on that person’s journey of faith in Jesus. Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession**

Holy God, You have called us to follow in the way of Your risen Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. You call us to love one another and care for those who are our companions, not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love. Help us to share Your love and compassion with all who we come across who are in need. Guide us in the path of discipleship, so that, as You have blessed us, we may be a blessing for others, bringing the Gospel message and the promise of the kingdom near by our words and deeds. In Jesus’ Name we ask this, amen.

**Blessing**

Gracious God, You sent Your Son into this world so that we might live through Him. May we abide in His risen life so that we may bear the fruit of Your Holy Spirit in the ways that we live in this world, and know the fullness of Your joy, amen.

Attachments area

[Preview YouTube video Great Is Thy Faithfulness (Hymn 86) - Hymnology (Official Video)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Zj6EwlL9E0&authuser=0" \t "_blank)

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