**Home Service Sheet Sunday 4th February 2024**

**Call To Worship                  Psalm 119:105-112**

Your word is a lamp to my feet  
    and a light to my path.

I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,  
    to keep your righteous rules.  
I am severely afflicted;  
    give me life, O Lord, according to your word!  
Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord,  
    and teach me your rules.  
I hold my life in my hand continually,  
    but I do not forget your law.  
The wicked have laid a snare for me,  
    but I do not stray from your precepts.  
Your testimonies are my heritage forever,  
    for they are the joy of my heart.

I incline my heart to perform your statutes  
    forever, to the end.

**Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You today for Your Word, which is truly a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. You have given us directions by which to live and have revealed to us the way of salvation through which we can know You and be adopted into Your family. We praise You for Your great love that You have shown us by sending Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to show us the way to heaven, and die on the cross in our place. Help us today to bring You the worship that You desire, worship that is offered through Your Spirit and in truth. May it be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, for we ask this in Jesus' Name, amen.

**Hymn                                     O for a closer walk with God**by ***William Cowper***

<https://youtu.be/gsLtziDXOgk?si=8vL-RghNWXBw6-ga>

O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame,  
A light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul refreshing view of Jesus and His Word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed! How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void the world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return, sweet messenger of rest;  
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, and drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known, whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God, calm and serene my frame;  
So purer light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.

**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                     Ephesians 5:1-10**

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

**Reflection**

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness” wrote Oscar Wilde. In one way he was kind of right, in that imitation can only go so far, humanly speaking. By imitating someone, or something, we seek to be like that person in every way. In our Bible reading today, Paul calls the Ephesians to be imitators of Christ. The difference here, though, is that this is made fully possible by the greatness of God’s Holy Spirit. This is possible because Christians take off the old self and put on the new self. We are made more and more like Jesus, but the way Paul describes things here shows us that we have a conscious part to play in this process of sanctification.

Imitating God means that we are to ‘walk in love’, but what does this look like? God’s love, of course, was demonstrated most perfectly in Jesus giving Himself for us through His willing sacrifice on the cross. Not only did Jesus’ death pay the price for our sin, but it was a fragrant, or acceptable, offering to His Father to reconcile us to Him. Although Paul does not explicitly say here that we are called to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others, this is something that we are told we may be required to do elsewhere in God’s Word. To follow Jesus is to be willing to lose our lives for His sake, the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul comes back to this language of Christians walking later on in our reading today, in verse 8. There he writes that the Ephesian believers are to “walk as children of light”. There are two possible ways of reading this instruction. One is to say that we are to walk in the light of God’s ways and Word, perhaps similar to what we read in Psalm 119. There we are reminded that God’s Word is “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105) Certainly this is true, but it is probably not what Paul meant by what he wrote here. In the fuller context of verses 7 to 9, walking as children of light means that we are to walk in a manner that is in keeping with the new self that we have put on now that we have faith in Christ. In fact, Paul explains clearly in verse 9, that “the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true”.

Earlier in our reading Paul emphasises the clear difference that there should be between God’s people and the people of this world. We are not simply to be a bit different in a few specific ways, but rather noticeably different in many ways. Note the strength of what Paul writes in verse 3, “sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.” If we are in Christ Jesus, we are now saints, or literally ‘holy ones’, not just in status but increasingly in practice too. We must not even name or talk about matters of sexual immorality, impurity or covetousness. This might have been the kind of things in which we were engaged before we put our faith in Jesus, but this belongs to the old self which we should now have put off! Instead, we should thank God for all the good things He has given us in Christ, and for the goodness He is causing to be seen in us more and more now.

In case we were unsure of the potential consequences of such living, this is made clear in verses 5 and 6. Paul writes, “everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” Living in unrepentant sin leads to hell and destruction! If, however, we have faith in Christ and are therefore alert to our sin, seeking God’s forgiveness and sanctification then we can be confident that we will not face God’s wrath as it has been satisfied by the death of our Lord Jesus, on our behalf.

Our reading today concludes with the words “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.” (v.10) This should make it clear that the life to which we are called in Jesus is not simply one of avoiding what is evil but is one of seeking good also. The old self sought to please our own desires, putting ourselves in God’s rightful place and making an idol of our own will. The new self puts God in His rightful place and seeks to do what is pleasing to Him. Our focus in life changes, and we have a new helper, the Holy Spirit, to ensure that we keep that focus. We learn what is pleasing to the Lord by reading His Word, through which He has revealed Himself and His ways to us. The better we know the Scriptures, the better we will know what is pleasing to our Lord. Let us therefore live as those who have put on the new self, imitating God more and more each day. Amen!

**Prayer**

Gracious God, You call us as Your people to live in this world, but not to be of the world. Help us to make good decisions about how we should use our time, effort and resources in ways that honour You and are for the good of others. We pray for those who are caught up in all kinds of evils in this world, criminal or otherwise. May You grant them clear paths out of those ways of life that lead to hell and destruction. Empower Your Church to speak the truth clearly and in love so that lost sinners would hear the Gospel and respond with faith and obedience. Help us to lead by example as we live our lives day by day. These things we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Benediction**

May the Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Go in peace now, in the Name of Christ, amen.

Attachments area

[Preview YouTube video O for a closer walk with God • William Cowper 1731-1800 • Christian Hymn](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsLtziDXOgk&authuser=0" \t "_blank)

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