**Home Service Sheet 9th July 2023**

**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.

**Prayer**

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we know that Your Word is truly a lamp to our feet and the light to our life’s path. From the darkness of our sins You have led us into Your perfect and righteous ways. Lord, we praise You for Your faithfulness to us and Your love and mercy towards us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for guiding us through life and teaching us through Your Holy Spirit illumining Your Word to us. As we come to You today, we ask that You would help us to listen closely and obey Your Word that we may walk in Your ways all the days of our lives. This we ask in Jesus’ name, and to Your glory, Lord, amen.

Sing or read the hymn **Teach me Thy way, O Lord**by Benjamin Ramsay

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZCbQFTswrs&feature=youtu.be>

1 Teach me Thy way, O Lord; teach me Thy way!

Thy guiding grace afford; teach me Thy way!
Help me to walk aright, more by faith, less by sight;

lead me with heavenly light; teach me Thy way!

2 When doubts and fears arise, teach me Thy way!

When storms o'erspread the skies, teach me Thy way!
Shine thro' the cloud and rain, thro' sorrow, toil, and pain;
make Thou my pathway plain; teach me Thy way!

3 Long as my life shall last, teach me Thy way!
Where’er my lot be cast, teach me Thy way!
Until the race is run, until the journey’s done,
until the crown is won, teach me Thy way!

**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.

**1st Bible Reading              Isaiah 55:1-13**

“Come, everyone who thirsts,
    come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
    come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
    without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
    and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
    and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
    hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
    my steadfast, sure love for David.
Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
    a leader and commander for the peoples.
Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
    and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
    for he has glorified you.

“Seek the Lord while he may be found;
    call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
    and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
    and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
    neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
    so are my ways higher than your ways
    and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
    and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
    giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
    it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
    and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

“For you shall go out in joy
    and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
    shall break forth into singing,
    and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
    instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the Lord,
    an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

**2nd Bible Reading             Romans 8:1-11**

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesusfrom the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

**Reflection**

The book of the prophet Isaiah comes from a time when God’s people Israel were regularly rebelling and sinning against God. Much of the first half of the book deals with God pronouncing His deserved judgment on the people. In chapter 40, though, the focus shifts to God’s plan of redemption based around the promised Messiah. By the time we get to chapter 55 God is speaking through Isaiah, calling the people back to Himself with an offer almost too good to be true. “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Verse 1)

We might ask the question, ‘how can you buy something without having any money, or anything else of value?’ However, God’s question to the people is rather different, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” (Verse 2) Already the Israelites have been using their resources to commit idolatry, chasing after other so-called ‘gods’, and the desires of their flesh. God, however, cuts to the chase. There is nothing the people have or possess that could possibly be good enough to buy God’s favour or blessing. The only way they can receive it is to be given it directly by God through His Grace and mercy.

The language here is all about food, but in reality this is about the Word of God and the blessing and salvation that comes through listening to it and obeying it. Verse 3 makes this clear, “Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live”. Life, that is eternal life, only came to us through the act of God in Christ at the cross of Calvary. Only Jesus could pay this price, which He did through the New Covenant that God made by the blood of his Son. Verse 5 even points us to evangelism to all peoples and nations, not just to Israel.

God also emphasises that salvation is to be sought directly from Him, whilst there is still time. In other words, people shouldn’t leave it to their deathbed to come to God, because we never know when we’re going to die. The details are clear – seek God, or rather respond to God’s call, and repent of your sin. Verse 7 speaks of the forgiveness that God has poured out upon us because of Jesus. This is God’s way, and not the way of this world.

Finally, we come to a well-known saying in verse 11, “so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty”. God offers his people a second chance, one that will be open to all humanity in His proper time and purposes. Yes, when God’s Word is taught and preached it will not be done in vain, but to limit the meaning to this is to miss the bigger picture. God’s most important Word is the Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s ultimate Word brings life to the world, and will in the end usher in a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more death, mourning or pain, and God’s people will live with Him for eternity.

Our second reading from Romans picks up on very similar themes, but from this side of the cross. God has now fully revealed His Messiah and His salvation plan, and has accomplished it. Through faith in Christ, by God’s Grace, we may be forgiven our sins and become children of God. Paul expresses it beautifully, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Verse 1) It is the death of Christ that buys our forgiveness. It is the resurrection of Jesus that raises us again to new life, and the Spirit who brings us life. Let us live to the glory of God, pointing others to Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your grace, which has set us free from the curse of the law and the power of sin in our lives. Thank You for sending Christ Jesus, whose death bought my freedom from the power of sin and death. We pray today that we may walk in spirit and truth as we submit to Your Holy Spirit, so that our old sin nature is kept in the place of death. Help us to walk in spirit and truth and not revert back to the law or engage in conscious sin. We pray also for others who are struggling in their battle with sin and the flesh. Grant to the, strength and courage to live according to Your ways instead. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all today. May we all know and experience the fellowship we share through Your Holy Spirit. May we live our lives to the praise and glory of God our Father. Amen!