Home Service Sheet for Sunday 1st May 2022

Call To Worship:                Psalm 30:1-5

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
    and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
    and you have healed me.
O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
    you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
    and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger is but for a moment,
    and his favour is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
    but joy comes with the morning.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with praise and thanksgiving in our hearts for You. In every time and place You are with us, and Your love and comfort surrounds us. In our difficulties we can cry to You, knowing that You will hear us. Even in the darkest times You are there with us, O Lord, and ultimately You will grant to us Your joy and peace. Help us now to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the One who has restored us and bought our forgiveness. May we carefully listen to Your Word and respond with faith and obedience. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.
amen.

Hymn:                   How firm a foundation by Robert Keene
<https://youtu.be/6ZCG3l5IKLw>

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

Fear not! I am with thee; O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose;
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake!

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:              2 Kings 22:1-13

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the Lord, saying, “Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people. And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the Lord, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the Lord, repairing the house (that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons), and let them use it for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house. But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly.”

And Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.” And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, “Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the Lord.” Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king.

When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, “Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”

2nd Bible Reading:              Matthew 5:17-20

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Reflection

Two of the main themes that we find in the Bible are law and grace. So often the problems that the Church has faced over the years has been down to a separation of the two, emphasising one to the exclusion of the other. There was a time when the dominant issue was called ‘legalism’, whereby obeying the law of God was emphasised without speaking of God’s grace to forgive us our sin in His Son, Jesus Christ. More recently the pendulum has swung back in the opposite direction where much is spoken about God’s love and grace, without mention of God’s law and the fact that we are all found wanting against its holy standards. The Bible emphasises both law and grace together, and that is what we are going to be thinking about today.

Over 3000 years ago God gave His written law to Moses on Mount Sinai. We find this recorded for us in great detail in the Old Testament, and particularly in Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers. The Israelites were to learn the law and teach it to their children, but over the generations God’s command was ignored and forgotten. By the time of King Josiah virtually nobody knew the law or obeyed it, and this is where our Old Testament reading comes in. Josiah was king of the Northern kingdom of Judah, and was but a young boy when he came to the throne. He needed good advisors to help him rule, and thankfully some of his aides were good.

In the fuller account of Josiah’s reign that we find in 2 Chronicles (chapters 34 & 35) we discover that as he grew up he began to become more and more committed to following God. He began to seek God for Himself, then He cleared the land of idols and around the age of 26 he issued a command to pay workmen to repair the temple. Through this work the book of the law is discovered in the temple. This leads us to ask at least a couple of questions. How had it become lost in the first place? What exactly was this book? We don’t know the definite answer to either, but we can have an educated guess.

During the reigns of the previous few kings the people had been ignoring God, and worshiping false gods in the very temple that Solomon had dedicated to the One true God. It is not unreasonable to think that these false worshipers would want to hide the holy book that makes it clear that what they are doing is wrong and angers God. But, at just the right time, the book is rediscovered and it is brought to king Josiah. It is read to Josiah, and his response is recorded for us in verse 11, “When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.” This was serious stuff, and it greatly upset the king because he realised that he and his people stood condemned by it before God.

Before we move on I believe it is important to pause and realise that this is the purpose of the law. It shows each of us that we are sinners. By the measure of God’s perfect standards laid out in the law we are all found guilty and wanting. God convicts us of our sin by His law, and shows us that we deserve to be punished. Thankfully that is not the end, and so there is hope. That hope comes as a result of God’s grace which is revealed to us in the person and actions of His Son, Jesus. Although Josiah and the people of Judah didn’t have this specific hope they did have an understanding that God is gracious and merciful, and upon this they relied and had hope.

Josiah responded to hearing God’s law by sending a priest to speak with God about the people. He understood the implications of the law, as we see in verse 13, “great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book”. Disobedience to God’s laws provokes God to anger, and this has not changed. Perhaps today we take our sin too lightly? We speak of ‘making mistakes’ rather than admitting that we are truly desperate sinners in need of a Saviour. We need to listen to the conviction that the Holy Spirit brings to us, and respond with repentance and prayer asking for forgiveness.

If we are in Christ then we have wonderful assurance that we will be forgiven because He has paid the price for us, but that does not mean that the law is no longer applicable. God’s law remains and the commands are still to be obeyed as we live our lives day by day. Listen to what Jesus said, “until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:18) We are saved by God’s grace, but we are then called to obedience to the law. We are convicted of our sin by the law, but by God’s grace the price has already been paid by Jesus.

Jesus came and fulfilled the law through His obedience to it and through His death for us on the cross. God’s wrath was assuaged through His sacrifice, and through Jesus’ resurrection we too are raised to eternal life through faith in Him. Through the Scriptures we see that it is not a case of us choosing between law and grace. Rather God gave us the law, and used it to show us our need of His grace. Law and grace work together in God’s perfect plan to bring us into His family for eternity. May we all respond to it with faith and obedience. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer
Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word, by which You have revealed Yourself to us as You truly are. We thank You for Your holy law, by which You have shown us how to live. Lord, we confess that we have failed You, and sinned against You and against Your ways. Father, forgive us we pray, and help us to truly repent of our sin. Thank You for Your grace and mercy towards us in Jesus. Thank You that You do not treat us as our sin deserves, but rather You forgive us and have adopted us into Your family. Thank You that You have given to us the wonderful gift of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Benediction

Lord Jesus Christ, You came to fulfil the law on for our sake. Send us out in the certain knowledge of our forgiveness and adoption into Your family, through grace and by faith. Help us to live as Your ambassadors each and every day that others may be drawn to You. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.