**Home Service Sheet for 12th February 2023**

**Call To Worship      Psalm 119:1-8**

Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
    who walk in the law of the Lord!
Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
    who seek him with their whole heart,
who also do no wrong,
    but walk in his ways!
You have commanded your precepts
    to be kept diligently.
Oh that my ways may be steadfast
    in keeping your statutes!
Then I shall not be put to shame,
    having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.
I will praise you with an upright heart,
    when I learn your righteous rules.
I will keep your statutes;
    do not utterly forsake me!

**Prayer**

Gracious God, You have shown us how to live life in all its fullness, according to Your commands. You have made Yourself known to us and revealed Your love, mercy and forgiveness in Your Son, Jesus Christ. In Your Word You call us to follow You and worship You by Your Spirit and in truth. Help us to follow You more closely, love You more dearly and obey You more fully each day that we live. Grant to us wisdom and understanding not only to understand Your Word, but also to put it into practice in our lives day by day. May this time of worship be acceptable to You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Hymn                         We are called to be God’s people**by ***Thomas A Jackson***

<https://youtu.be/Tmx67-HRcoI>

We are called to be God's people showing by our lives His grace.
One in heart and one in spirit, sign of hope for all the race.
Let us show how He has changed us and remade us as His own;
Let us share our life together as we shall around His throne

We are called to be God's servants, working in His world today;
Taking His own task upon us, all His sacred words obey!
Let us rise then to His summons, dedicate to Him our all,
That we may be faithful servants - quick to answer now His call.

We are called to be God's prophets, speaking for the truth and right;
Standing firm for godly justice, bringing evil into light.
Let us seek the courage needed, our high calling to fulfil;
That we all may know the blessing of the doing of God's will!

**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                    1 Corinthians 3:1-9**

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

**Reflection**

If you’ve ever tried to learn another language you’ll know that you have to start with common words and phrases, and a grasp of the basic grammar helps too. If you start by trying to read complicated documents in the new language you’ll likely get confused and give up. In a sense Paul is trying to make a similar point to the believers in Corinth. He calls them ‘infants in Christ’, or even ‘babies’ as some translations might put it. Yes, they have made the initial step of placing faith in Jesus, His death and resurrection, but they know very little else about their newfound faith. We might say that they need to learn more so that they can grow and mature in the faith.

Behind Paul’s assessment of the kind of spiritual nourishment the Corinthians need is an important lesson. As Christians we are all meant to grow and mature in our knowledge of God and the practice of our faith. If someone becomes a Christian but doesn’t mature, something is wrong. That is not to say that everyone should have a perfect understanding of every theological idea, or be able to understand every verse in the Bible. However, we should all be growing in our knowledge of God’s Word and our love for God, and this, in turn, should lead to us becoming more and more like Jesus in our words, deeds and thoughts.

In our Bible reading Paul gives us an example of what Christian immaturity looks like. In verse 3 he writes about “jealousy and strife among you”, pointing to this as being fleshly. In other words, immaturity looks a lot like how we used to be before we placed our faith in Jesus, whereas Christian maturity looks a lot more like Jesus. Paul draws this out further by referring to the way in which believers had their own favourite leaders that they looked towards. Instead of following Paul, Apollos or even Fred(!) we need to seek to follow Jesus Christ as He has been revealed to us through the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to our spirit.

This is not to say that all who call themselves Christian leaders are to be viewed in the same way. Some clearly do not teach the Scriptures and rather churn out their own ideas. Leaders like that are to be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17 & 18) because they are not drawing us closer to Jesus and the truths God has revealed to us in His Word. However, if a church leader is correctly handling God’s Word, teaching it clearly and faithfully, then it shouldn’t matter who that leader is. As Paul puts it in verse 5, they are simply “servants through whom you believed”. For those of us called into leadership this is the pattern for us to follow.

The Apostle Paul goes on to show us that we all have a part to play in God’s work of building His Church and making disciples. We do not all have the same gifts and abilities, and that is fine and normal. Some have a gift for teaching, whereas others have a gift for encouraging others. Paul uses an illustration from farming, writing about one planting seeds, another watering them and God causing them to grow. This picture shows us that we all have a role to play in helping believers mature in their faith. It’s not just ministers or deacons who are involved in this, but rather all of us. Whether we have an understanding of New Testament Greek or Reformed theology should be neither here nor there. Rather, what matters is that we use the gifts God has given to us to help others grow in their faith in Christ.

There are a couple of other brief points that I think we need to notice here too. Firstly, it is God who causes believers to grow and mature in faith. He uses what we do to make that happen, but it is not our actions that cause other people to become mature Christians. Secondly, Paul refers to the whole Church, or even local fellowship, as “God’s field”, and “God’s building”. In other words we are all made into one people in Christ Jesus. We have the same aim and purpose as Christians and because of this it is important that we work together as God has directed us to do. He has made it clear, in His Word, what the Christian life is all about. He has also drawn a clear picture for what the Church should be doing, and that is what we need to follow. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the instructions we receive from Your Word, and particularly today in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Help us to take on board what You have said, and help us to put that into practice in our lives. Prevent us from falling into the trap of thinking of ourselves or others as more important in the Body of Christ here on earth, the Church. Develop in each of us a teachable spirit, that we may all learn the value of living in the unity of Your Spirit for the glory of God. Help us too to be good witnesses for You amongst our communities, friends and family. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding guard our hearts and minds today and every day. May the wisdom of God fill our hearts and minds so that we will evermore live to His praise and glory. May the unity of the Spirit guide us to work together, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.