**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 14th August 2022**

**Call To Worship:                Exodus 20:1-6**

And God spoke all these words, saying,

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

**“**You shall have no other gods beforeme.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousandsof those who love me and keep my commandments.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we praise You and thank You today for creating this world and giving us life and breath. We praise You also for making Yourself known to us and calling into relationship with You through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord, You are holy and Your anger burn against sin, and yet Your love extends to generations of those who love You and are called according to Your purposes. Help us today to carefully listen to Your Word and obey it so that our whole lives would be lived to Your praise and glory. In Jesus’ Name we ask this, amen.

**Hymn                                     Brother, sister, let me serve you**by ***Richard Gillard***

[***https://youtu.be/ttW9oQ-yiuU***](https://youtu.be/ttW9oQ-yiuU)

1. Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

2. We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road;
We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

3. I will hold the Christlight for you in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

4. I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow, till we've seen this journey through.

5. Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you;

Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

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:                    Colossians 3:18-4:1**

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your bondservantsjustly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

**Reflection**

We live in a world today where equality is considered to be one of the, if not the, most important of virtues. Everyone should be treated equally regardless of their sex, race, faith or various other things. At one level this approach is absolutely right. As the Scriptures say, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28). However, we need to read this in context and understand what this does say, and what it doesn’t. Paul is writing to the Galatians about salvation and how each person is made right with God through faith in Jesus. Those who have placed their faith in Jesus are adopted into God’s family on an equal footing regardless of their sex, race and social status.

What Paul is not saying in Galatians 3:28 is that there are no differences between men and women, Jews and non-Jews, slaves and freemen (or free women). There are obvious differences, and they are good differences that reflect God’s creativity and His great plans to make different people compliment each other. Generally speaking, although there are exceptions, men are more suitable for certain tasks than women and vice versa. It doesn’t mean that one is better than the other, just different, and that’s the way that God has created us. Having stated this it should help us to better understand what Paul is writing in our Bible reading today.

Wives are told to submit to their husbands, and husbands are told to love their wives. Each set of these practical instructions has two sides to them, and that is important to note. There is an assumed two sided relationship between husband and wife, children and parents, slaves (or employees) and masters (or employers). Paul reflects the world in which he lived where slavery was an everyday reality. He is not saying that it is ok, but rather he is trying to help Christian slaves and masters to live out their faith as Jesus called them to do. Just because some Bible passages may raise eyebrows today, it doesn’t mean we should ignore them. We cannot pick and chose which parts of God’s Word we should obey and which we should ignore.

Possibly the best starting point to help us better understand these Biblical instructions is our relationship to God. He is the Creator of the world and everything in it. He is the one who sustains all things and knows all things. He is the One who has brought about the way of salvation by sending His only Son into this world to die in our place so that we might be saved and adopted into His family. Compared with God we are all lesser, and our place is to submit to Him and obey His commands. We are most certainly ***not*** equal with God, and although the Bible was written by human beings it was inspired, or literally ‘God-breathed’ by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is not the opinion of human beings, but is rather the very words of God.

Having said all that, let’s briefly look at the practicalities of what Paul writes. If husbands love their wives, in a very similar way to how Jesus loves the Church (Ephesians 5:25), and are not “harsh with them” then submitting to that husband should not be particularly onerous or difficult. The kind of husband-wife relationships in view here are ones of mutual love and respect. A Christian husband should not be asking their wife to do things that are not in her best interests, but rather they should be for her benefit and done out of love. In reality this kind of relationship will look like mutual submission of the husband to the wife as well as the wife to the husband.

In a similar way children are told to obey their parents in all things, but when this parent is following Jesus these instructions should be in the best interests of the child. That’s not to say that children will always like what they are told to do by their parents, but that’s no excuse to disobey. However, as godly parents Christians are not to “provoke your children”. Again there is a mutual relationship where obedience is balanced by a love for the child that wants the best for them.

Finally there is the relationship between slave and master. Living in Twenty-First century Britain where slavery is thankfully illegal, we can better understand these words in terms of employee and employer. Employees are to work diligently, carefully and sincerely for their employers, doing as they are told (within reason). Other Scriptures make it clear that ultimately if we are asked to disobey God we should ignore that, but be willing to pay the price for disobeying earthly authorities, or employers. Christian employers are also given instructions which should make life easier and better for their employees. In all these pairs of instructions there are mutual relationships and responsibilities in sight, all of which point us towards the loving care of our Heavenly Father who has created us in this way, equal and yet not the same. Amen!

**Pastoral Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for placing each of us in families and for guiding us in the biblical roles and responsibilities we have towards one another. Help us to be obedient to You in thought, word, and deed, and help us to be good examples of a godly life in our own families and to those in the wider community with whom we come into contact. Thank You for my own parents and thank You that I am Your child. May we live and work to Your praise and glory each day. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all this day and forevermore, amen.