Home Service Sheet for Sunday 19th January 2025

Call To Worship: Psalm 1:1-6

Blessed is the man

    who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

nor stands in the way of sinners,

    nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

but his delight is in the law of the Lord,

    and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree

    planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season,

    and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so,

    but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

    nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,

    but the way of the wicked will perish.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we bring You our praise and thanks today for You alone are God and to You alone belongs the praise, glory, adoration and blessing. It was You who created all things and without You nothing was made. Help us to recognise Your handiwork around us as we wonder at the beauty of Your creation. Gracious God, we thank You especially today for Your written Word. Help us to read it, to meditate upon it, and to apply its truth to our lives. May we not be conformed to the ways of this world, but rather may we become more and more like Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray, amen.

Hymn:   Take time to be holy by William D Longstaff

<https://youtu.be/Uawzv85Nmow?si=sLl7ZvDbzeh2XY3->

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord!

Abide in Him always and feed on His Word;

Make friends of God’s children, help those who are weak,

Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on.

Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone;

By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be.

Thy friends, in thy conduct, His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy guide;

And run not before Him whatever betide.

In joy, or in sorrow, still follow thy Lord,

And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word!

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul;

Each thought and each temper beneath His control.

Thus, led by His Spirit and filled with His love,

Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

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: Matthew 7:1-6

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Reflection

As Christians, there are certain Bible verses and short passages that we know well, and the short passage we’re going to look at today is one of them. We have heard these words many times before and so we may be tempted to switch off, thinking that we already know everything that we’re ever going to need to know about this passage. We must not forget, however, that understanding the Scriptures is not simply about human effort and intellect. Rather, it is about reading the Bible in context, with the help of the Holy Spirit, so that we might understand what God has revealed to His people. It is God the Holy Spirit who sheds light on the Word so that we might understand and apply it, thereby giving glory to God.

As we study these verses from Matthew’s Gospel today, I would like to begin by suggesting that verse 1 does not mean what it might, at first, appear to say. Jesus said, “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.” This verse has been used by false teachers and con-artists alike within the Church to shut down biblical discernment and critical thinking. Jesus is not saying that we shouldn’t think or make judgments about the actions of others. Rather, he is pointing us towards the biblical approach of applying the same standards to ourselves as we do to others. Some folk are easier on themselves than they are on other people, while others give others the benefit of the doubt that they wouldn’t dream of extending to themselves.

Even in the passage itself, Jesus goes on to speak about taking logs out of our own eyes so that we can take specks out of the eyes of others (vv.4-5). In other words, judgment is still to take place, but according to the same standards we apply to ourselves. These standards are found in God’s Word and show us how we should live as Christians. We are to obey God first, which involves us being loving, trustworthy and honest in our dealings with one another and with others. We must be open to godly and biblical correction so that we can repent of our sins, be forgiven and become more like Jesus.

Elsewhere in the Bible there are many examples of God’s people being called to judge the words and actions of other people. Let me give you a few examples. In Proverbs 27:5 we find this, “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.” To rebuke someone requires you to judge their actions as bad and needing correction. Proverbs 31:9 says, “Open your mouth, judge righteously…” Judging rightly is a part of the Christian life that we are to put into practice. Listen to these words of Jesus, recorded in John’s Gospel, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” (John 7:24)

The Church, and we as individual Christians, can and do get ourselves into all kinds of trouble by not following the biblical command to judge rightly, or according to God’s standards. It is not an optional extra, and we must begin by measuring ourselves against God’s Word. Do our actions and speech match up to the holiness in which Jesus calls us to live? We are to help one another in Christ to become ever more like Jesus. May we, with much prayer and love, be there for one another, correcting and rebuking where that is necessary so that we may be good witnesses for our Lord who is perfect in every way.

At the end of our reading, we have a verse that doesn’t seem to link very easily with what has come before, so what are we to make of it? To help us understand Jesus’ words here we need to understand that dogs in the First Century were wild and dangerous creatures, and pigs were the ultimate symbol of something that was unclean. In other words that which is holy and righteous should not be mixed with that which is wild and impure. To know whether something or someone is unclean requires judgment based on God’s Word. The Scriptures are not to be ‘wasted’ on those who knowingly and consistently reject God, but rather focused on those who will respond with repentance. Amen!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word and Your perfect and righteous ways that You have revealed to us. Keep each of us today, we pray, from hypocritical thoughts and unrighteous judgement of others. Instead, O Lord, grant to us the wisdom and discernment we need to judge between that which is good and that which is evil in ourselves, in the world around us and in our brothers and sisters in Christ. Help us to provide loving challenge and correction to one another where that is needed and keep us walking humbly before You all the days of our lives. Help us also to consider the needs of others before our own so that we might bring honour and glory to Your Name, amen.

Benediction

Heavenly Father, may we not settle for living a defeated life. Instead, may the intercession of Your Son, the Lord Jesus, assure us that an increasing degree of holiness is possible thanks to His grace and power. Give us a love for You that is always accompanied by a love of holiness, amen.