**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 20th October 2024**

**Call to Worship**                   **1 Samuel 2:1-10**

Hannah prayed and said,

“My heart exults in the Lord;
    my horn is exalted in the Lord.
My mouth derides my enemies,
    because I rejoice in your salvation.

“There is none holy like the Lord:
    for there is none besides you;
    there is no rock like our God.
Talk no more so very proudly,
    let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the Lord is a God of knowledge,
    and by him actions are weighed.
The bows of the mighty are broken,
    but the feeble bind on strength.
Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
    but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.
The barren has borne seven,
    but she who has many children is forlorn.
The Lord kills and brings to life;
    he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
    he brings low and he exalts.
He raises up the poor from the dust;
    he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
    and inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
    and on them he has set the world.

“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
    but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
    for not by might shall a man prevail.
The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces;
    against them he will thunder in heaven.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth;
    he will give strength to his king
    and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

**Prayer**

Loving Father, we are in awe of Your amazing grace and wonderful goodness. The more we come to understand Your indescribable love towards us, the more we desire to glorify Your holy Name. We worship You, our Saviour and Lord, for You are full of grace and mercy. Thank You that You gave Your eternal Son to be born as Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem, and Saviour of the world. Help us today to understand Your Word and guide us in Your ways. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Hymn**                                     **Tell out my soul**by ***Timothy Dudley Smith***

<https://youtu.be/p6UQbW1I9W8?si=kkemReW92zA0eOle>

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!

Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;

Tender to me the promise of His Word;

In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His Name!

Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done;

His mercy sure, from age to age the same;

His holy Name, the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!

Powers and dominions lay their glory by.

Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,

The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!

Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord

To children’s children and forevermore!

**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                     Luke 1:46-56**

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
   and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
    For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
    and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him
    from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
    he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
    and exalted those of humble estate;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
    and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
    in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
    to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

**Reflection**

 When good things happen to us, how do we respond? Maybe it makes us happy, or we may want to celebrate. Its possible that we may want to share the good news with friends or family members. We may well be thankful to whoever has done this good thing for us and want to express that directly to that person. In our Bible reading today we find the response of Mary to what God has done for her in giving her His only Son to bear.

If we were to sum up this response in one word, I think it would have to be ‘thankful’. Mary is thankful to God for the blessing of bearing His Son. She is thankful for His grace towards her, a young woman of lowly status. She recognises that God has not chosen her because she is special or particularly worthy, but simply because this was His choice to do exactly as He willed. We should also note that she knows who to be thankful towards, and that is God. He alone deserves Mary’s thanksgiving and praise for the good that has happened to her.

“My soul magnifies the Lord” begins Mary. It is the Lord who is to be thanked and praised, and it is on Him alone that Mary is focussed. Note that it is Mary’s soul, or inner being that praises God here. This is something that is bubbling up inside her and must now find its voice. Her thanksgiving is not simply words of duty that she knows she should say, but it comes from her feelings of thankfulness. Every part of her being must speak out her praise and thanks to God.

Mary praises God for the great things that He has done, and also speaks of God’s holiness. God is perfect and pure, fully devoted to His own purposes, plans and ways that He has laid out in His Word. She goes on to refer to God’s mercy and clearly implies that God is gracious, giving to the lowly and humble that which they do not deserve. For such a short expression of thanks and praise there is so much good theology in this short passage! God is full of grace, mercy and compassion and it is upon those very attributes that we all heavily reliant.

On the other hand, we are all sinners who have not done great things. Instead, we have sinned against God and against one another, and we are most certainly not holy in our actions. What we deserve is punishment, death and hell, but through the wondrous gift of His Son, God offers us His gracious forgiveness. Even before the birth of Jesus, Mary is confident of God’s grace and mercy. Note how Mary speaks of God’s mercy being available to people from all generations who fear the Lord. In the Old Testament we read some important things relating to the fear of the Lord.

God is worthy of respect, honour, praise and thanksgiving. He is holy and awesome but is also full of grace and mercy. In Mary’s words there is recognition of God’s character and there is so much that we can learn about God from them. Yet, Mary concludes with words that show us something that is perhaps even more significant. We read, “he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” God has not only revealed His character to His people, but He has also spoken to us. The words that He has spoken were not just for our ancestors, but they are for us too. God’s Word is just as relevant and applicable today as it always was.

So how are we to respond to these words of thanksgiving and praise today? Firstly, they can teach us about God, His character and His actions. Secondly, they can inspire us to also speak, pray or sing words of praise and thanksgiving to God ourselves, based on what He has done for His people in the past and down through history to today and the wondrous future He has promised us in His Word. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, we can rely upon the grace and mercy of God revealed in His Son. We can come to Him in faith with repentance and out of love for Him obey His commandments. To God alone be the glory! Amen!

**Prayer of intercession**

 Gracious God, we know that You care for those who are afflicted, support the weak, provide for the widows and orphans and help those who are in need. Use our hands to be of service to those in need and use our voices to speak words of healing and encouragement to those who are afflicted and in distress. Fill us afresh with gratefulness for all that You have done for us in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to share the good news of the Gospel with others too that they may also bring their thanks and praise to You. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Prayer of Blessing**

May the strength of God sustain us; may the power of God preserve us; may the hands of God protect us; may the way of God direct us; may the love of God go with us this day and forevermore, amen.