**Home Service Sheet For 21st April 2024**

**Call to Worship:**                  **Psalm 68:1-6**

God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered;
    and those who hate him shall flee before him!
As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away;
    as wax melts before fire,
    so the wicked shall perish before God!
But the righteous shall be glad;
    they shall exult before God;
    they shall be jubilant with joy!

Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
    lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts;
his name is the Lord;
    exult before him!
Father of the fatherless and protector of widows
    is God in his holy habitation.
God settles the solitary in a home;
    he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
    but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we praise You and thank You for this day that You have given to us. We praise

You because of Your love for us, and for the grace and mercy that You show to us through Your

Son, Jesus Christ. Almighty Father, who in Your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the

sight of the risen Lord, give us such knowledge of His presence with us, that we may be

strengthened and sustained by His risen life and serve You continually in righteousness and truth.

Grant to us wisdom and understanding as we read Your Word today. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Hymn**                                     **I Sing the Mighty Power of God** by ***Isaac Watts***

[***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r0\_7KxM8E8***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r0_7KxM8E8)

I sing the mighty power of God, that made the mountains rise;

That spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;

The moon shines full at His command, and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food;

He formed the creatures with His word, and then pronounced them good.

Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed, where’er I turn my eye:

If I survey the ground I tread or gaze upon the sky!

There’s not a plant or flow’r below, but makes Thy glories known;

And clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from Thy throne;

While all that borrows life from Thee is ever in Thy care,

And everywhere that we can be, Thou, God, art present there.

**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                                 Acts 4:1-12**

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead - by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

**Reflection**

After Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared before at least 500 different people in and around Jerusalem, He ascended to His Father in heaven. Shortly afterwards God poured out His Holy Spirit upon the Church, equipping and empowering His people to effectively and powerfully proclaim the Gospel. This is the background to our Bible reading today from the book of Acts. We are still in the very early days of the Church. The context to our reading can be found in Acts chapter 3 where Peter and John have been used by God to heal a man who had been born lame. In fact, this is the first recorded miracle by any of the disciples after Jesus had died, risen and ascended.

During our Lord’s earthly ministry, objections had been made against His healings, questioning the authority or source of the power by which He did these things. The Jewish authorities did not question whether healings had occurred, because clearly and factually they had. The same is true for the healing of the lame man by Peter and John. The Jewish rulers, elders and scribes are recorded as saying “For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.” (Acts 4:16) The healing itself, as good as it was for the man who had been lame, is simply a sign that pointed towards the truthfulness of the message that Peter and John proclaimed about Jesus.

When we read about people being healed in the Gospels, or the book of Acts, it invariably leads to either a realisation of Who it is that has healed them, or to a validation of the message that was being preached. In other words, the message of the Gospel and its benefits to those who listen and believe is much more important and significant than any of the amazing miracles that were performed. Notice how the Jewish leaders were primarily annoyed by the preaching of Peter and John, rather than by their deeds. It was for this reason that they arrested them and spoke with them the following morning.

In verse 7, they ask Peter and John, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” They had seen the crowd amazed by the healing, and had heard the proclaiming of resurrection in Jesus. They were not genuinely curious about what the apostles had done, and where their power or authority came from. Rather, they wanted evidence by which they could charge them and get rid of these troublemakers. As far as they were concerned they were up against some uneducated country folk and so they would have imagined they would have the upper hand. However, Peter was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (v.8) as he replied to them. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit spoke, but rather that the Spirit helped Peter to speak boldly and truthfully, bringing to mind what was most important.

Peter goes on to state that it is “by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead - by him this man is standing before you well.” (v.10) Peter, who has denied Jesus three times in the courtyard outside where Jesus was being tried, now fearlessly proclaims Jesus before these powerful men. This is the difference that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes for us who believe in Christ. Whatever our natural tendencies may be, God’s Spirit will empower us and enable us to do what is right in the most difficult or frightening of situations. Peter is not concerned about defending himself or saving face, but rather his priority is to proclaim the truth of the Gospel of Jesus.

In fact, Peter goes even further by pointing out that these powerful men had rejected God’s Messiah, and yet there was still hope for them. This is how he proclaimed the Gospel, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (v.12) Peter, filled with the Spirit, made the most of this opportunity to speak the truth of the Gospel to these religious leaders. We too, as disciples of Jesus Christ, are filled with the same Holy Spirit, and we too must speak the same Gospel message to the people we meet as we are given opportunity. Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your great, astonishing love for us and all Your people. We bring before You now our prayers for this world, its people and ourselves. In the midst of this world’s conflicts we pray for Your peace. Peace between nations, peace between people of different ideas and political ideals, and mostly between You and those who do not yet know You. We pray for the witness of Your Church throughout this world. Strengthen and embolden Your people to proclaim the Gospel message without fear or compromise through the work of Your Holy Spirit. Help us too, O Lord, to live out our lives to Your praise and glory regardless of the cost to us, just as did the disciples in our Bible reading today. Hear our prayers, O Lord, for we ask them in the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, amen.

**Blessing**

May the One True God, who breathed life into creation, be our delight. May Christ Jesus grant us a clear revelation of the hope that we have in Him alone. May the Holy Spirit, our advocate and supporter, kindle our hearts with love for God, and empower us to share the Gospel with the world around us. In the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, we pray, amen.