**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 22nd September 2024**

**Call to Worship Psalm 108:1-4**

**My heart is steadfast, O God!**

**I will sing and make melody with all my being!**

**Awake, O harp and lyre!**

**I will awake the dawn!**

**I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;**

**I will sing praises to you among the nations.**

**For your steadfast love is great above the heavens;**

**your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.**

**Prayer**

**O Lord, our God, You are great in all Your ways, steadfast in love and abounding in mercy. To us, You have made Yourself known and opened up Your perfect way of salvation. No-one can compare with You in heaven or on Earth, for You alone are God. Remind us today of Your glorious gospel through which we learn of Your grace, mercy and forgiveness. May our hearts, minds and lips respond to Your love for us with praise and thanksgiving. This we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.**

**Hymn We have a gospel to proclaim by Edward J Burns**

[**https://youtu.be/uNSaI8RakZg?si=65jDl0I3dVQEnWUh**](https://youtu.be/uNSaI8RakZg?si=65jDl0I3dVQEnWUh)

**We have a gospel to proclaim, good news for all throughout the earth;**

**The gospel of a Saviour’s name: we sing His glory, tell His worth.**

**Tell of His birth at Bethlehem, not in a royal house or hall**

**But in a stable dark and dim: the Word made flesh, a light for all.**

**Tell of Hid death at Calvary, hated by those He came to save;**

**In lonely suffering on the cross for all He loved, His life He gave.**

**Tell of that glorious Easter morn: empty the tomb, for He was free;**

**He broke the power of death and hell that we might share His victory.**

**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 1:1-4**

**“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”**

**Reflection**

**Today we are starting a new series looking at Luke’s Gospel, and as we do so I’d like to consider the background to the book. Luke is one of the four gospels that we find in the New Testament, alongside Matthew, Mark and John. Luke likely wrote his gospel sometime around the middle of the First Century, although some scholars argue for a later date. Most importantly, though, Luke wrote this book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So, who was Luke? We know that he also wrote the book of Acts, and in that second volume there are a few passages where he writes that ‘we’ did this or that. These passages are helpful because they do point us to a particular individual named Luke, who was a travelling companion of the apostle Paul.**

**Who was Luke sending his book to? Unlike the other three biblical gospels, Luke actually tells us this. He addresses someone called Theophilus in both the gospel and in his second volume, Acts. The name, Theophilus, is a very interesting one. It is Greek name and literally means something like ‘one who loves God’, ‘friend of God’ or even ‘beloved of God’. Was Luke addressing a specific person or simply anyone who was seeking God? There has been some scholarly debate about this, but I think there is a big clue in verse 3 of our reading. Theophilus is addressed as ‘most excellent’, which suggests that Luke has a particular person in mind.**

**Some scholars suggests that Theophilus was an honoury title afforded to a well thought of official or even a Jewish priest. Others have discovered that there are examples of specific individuals who were called Theophilus from birth. We don’t know for certain who Theophilus was, but it seems most likely that he was an individual known to Luke. In some ways, though, it doesn’t really matter as the gospels are all written to provide the readers with sufficient information about the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus so that they may believe that He is the Messiah and Son of God.**

**In our short readings today, we also learn Luke’s purpose for writing the gospel that bears his name. In verse 3 he tells us that he is making ‘an orderly account’ of all that Jesus began to do and teach. He also tells us that he has made a ‘careful study’ of other accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus, which may suggest that he has seen some of the other biblical gospels. He does not claim to be an eyewitness of the life of Jesus, but he has used the writings of those who were eyewitnesses. In Acts chapter 1 and verse 1 he again tells us that he has recorded (in the gospel) ‘all the things Jesus did and taught’.**

**So, we know what he was writing about and how he researched this, but we still haven’t established why he did this. In Luke chapter 1, verse 4, though he does reveal that purpose. We read that he has written this account ‘so that you will know the full truth about everything you have been taught’. Truth and accuracy are clearly important to Luke, but so is learning about Jesus so that you will be saved. The opening of Acts also tells us the scope of what Luke wrote about in his gospel. “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up.” (Acts 1:1-2) In other words, Luke’s focus is on Jesus, His birth, life, ministry, teaching, death, resurrection and ascension.**

**So, what are we going to take away from this and what are we to do about it? There are three points, all relating to us sharing of the Gospel with others. Firstly, when we share the Gospel with others we must try to be accurate and complete, not missing anything out. Secondly, there are two main reasons why we are to share the Gospel. Jesus told us to do so (Matthew 28:19-20), and to be honest this should be reason enough. Also, we are to proclaim the Gospel so that others may be certain of who Jesus is, what He did and what He has accomplished for us. Thirdly, we are to share the Gospel to correct error. To quote the English poet Alexander Pope, “a little learning is a dangerous thing.” It is important that we know the truth of the Gospel and make sure to lovingly correct error where we find it in others. Let us make the most of every opportunity that God provides for us to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen!**

**Prayer of intercession**

**Heavenly Father, thank You for the good news of the Gospel of Jesus, and for the salvation which is ours by grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank You for the truth of Your Word and for the wonderful message of grace that You extend to all who trust in Christ for salvation. Help us to hold fast in the evil day, knowing that Christ is returning to take all who believe in Him to be with Himself in the very near future. Place in all Your people an urgency to proclaim the Gospel to all who do not know You. By Your Holy Spirit, draw people to You and grant unto them the gift of faith. This we ask in Jesus’ Name and for His sake, amen.**

**Prayer of Blessing**

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