**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 24th July 2022**

**Call To Worship:                Psalm 145:1-3**

I will extol you, my God and King,
    and bless your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless you
    and praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
    and his greatness is unsearchable.

**Opening Prayer**

To You alone, O Lord, be the glory, honour and praise! You created the world and everything in it, and for You nothing is impossible. The world declares Your glory, and creation cries out in worship to You. Help us today to worship You as You desire, by Your Spirit and in truth. Grant to us understanding as we read Your Word and reflect upon it. May we worship You with faith, love and obedience. Amen!

**Hymn                                     Immortal, invisible**by ***Walter C Smith***

[***https://youtu.be/DD2e2N9Nvbk***](https://youtu.be/DD2e2N9Nvbk)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed most glorious, the Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious − Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light, nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;

Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above - Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest − to both great and small; in all life Thou livest − the true life of all;

We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree, and wither and perish − but naught changest Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light, Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;

All praise we would render − O help us to see ‘tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee!

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 1:15-23**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For byhim all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creationunder heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

**Reflection**

Perhaps one of the most difficult of things for us to understand about Jesus is the fact that He was both fully man and fully God. None of us has this same combination of humanity and divinity, and neither has anyone else in the whole of history. When we cannot relate something to our own experience we often struggle to get our heads around it, and I suspect that this is true of our understanding of who Jesus was and is. Our Bible reading today begins with a wonderful statement about Jesus, which describes Him as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” (Colossians 1:15)

Some scholars suggest that this section of Paul’s letter is quoting a hymn of the early Church, and although we don’t know whether this is so, we can certainly appreciate the poetic language that Paul uses here. What does it mean for Jesus to be ‘the image of… God’? We might start by suggesting that whereas God the Father is hidden from our sight, Jesus was revealed to human eyes. He is the One Person of the Trinity who has been seen physically and, as such, gives us the best idea of what God looks like. Yet, even that doesn’t fully explain what Paul has written here. Jesus helps us understand what all Three Persons of the Trinity are like. In verse 18 Paul shows us that Jesus is also the head of the Church. He relates to God in one way, and to the Church in another way.

Paul also tells us that Jesus is the ‘first born of all creation’, but how can this be? In Genesis the creation of the world is described for us in detail and yet there is no specific mention of Jesus, so what does Paul mean? Perhaps we need to look to the apostle John’s account of the beginning, which speaks of the Word existing before anything else. This Word is Jesus, and He existed before God created the heavens and the Earth. In fact, He was at work in the very act of creation itself (John 1:3). In verse 18 we have another contrast where Jesus is described as the ‘firstborn from the dead’. He is there as the first from the original creation, and now He is revealed as the first of the new creation.

Paul goes on to tell us that not only was all creation made by Jesus, but it was also made for Him. Nothing in this world was created without Jesus, and nothing was made that was not for His praise and benefit. It is only because of the fall that creation is less than perfect and marred, but in its original state it was perfectly made by Jesus and perfect for Him. We could almost say that Jesus is like the glue that holds everything together, at least as it is intended to be. Without Jesus the whole of creation is lost, included the believers at Colossae to whom Paul wrote this letter. Without Jesus this world doesn’t even make sense as He was its creator and its ultimate aim. It will be perfectly completed and restored when Jesus returns.

The reconciliation of all things to Jesus, about which Paul writes in verse 20, began at the cross. It was through Jesus’ blood shed for sinful humanity that true forgiveness became possible, and through His resurrection that the new creation was brought into being. This wondrous reconciliation will be made complete when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead, drawing the faithful to Himself. We enter into the new creation through faith in Jesus, because that is the only way in which we can be forgiven and made pure. In verse 22 Paul tells us that we will be presented as “holy and blameless and above reproach before him”. Of course, that is not how we have lived, but rather how Jesus lived on our behalf. Through faith in Him we receive Jesus’ status before God the Father.

This section of Paul’s letter concludes with a challenge to continue in faith, and not shift our hope from the Gospel. In other words as we grow as Christians we do not ‘move on’ from the Gospel, because the minute we do that we begin to think that our salvation is down to what we are doing. This is simply untrue, as nothing we do can ever be good enough to earn us salvation or God’s favour. This can only ever be ours because of what Jesus did for us. The moment we shift our focus from Jesus and His cross, is the moment we reject God. That is the serious point that Paul is making to the Colossian believers. We grow by continuing to focus on the Gospel and proclaiming the same to others. Amen!

**Pastoral Prayer**

Heavenly Father, when we consider the enormity of Who the Lord Jesus is and what He has done to save us, we stand in awe of You. We know that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; He died on the cross so that we might be forgiven our sins and rose again to give us His resurrected life. Thank You for Your word of truth and for revealing Christ to us through the Scriptures. Father, may we never forget the tremendous and terrible price that it cost You to redeem us to Yourself. We know that there is nothing that we can add to our salvation, for it was paid in full by Jesus Christ, the innocent Lamb of God. Help us to spread the good news of the Gospel to all those around us. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

Send us out, O Lord, with the grace of God the Father, the love of Jesus the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.