**Home Service Sheet for 26th February 2023**

**Call To Worship      Psalm 32:1-5**

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
    whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
    and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
    through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
    my strength was dried upas by the heat of summer.

I acknowledged my sin to you,
    and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,”
    and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, the heavens declare Your glory, and the earth, the work of Your hands, proclaims Your majesty. Yet, even the most wondrous parts of creation are but a pale reflection of who You truly are. In You, O Lord, we find true love, understanding, grace, mercy and forgiveness. Even though we are born as sinners You sent Your only Son into this world to die for us, and pay the price for our sin. We thank You and praise You that through faith in Him You have given to us eternal life. Help us to live to Your praise and glory today for we ask this in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Hymn                         Love Divine, All Loves Excelling**by ***Charles Wesley***

[*https://youtu.be/Zea3QsSFcqo*](https://youtu.be/Zea3QsSFcqo)

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of Heaven, to earth come down,

Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;

Visit us with Thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O, breathe Thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast;

Let us all in Thee inherit, let us find Thy promised rest;

Take away the love of sinning, Alpha and Omega be;

End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.

Come, almighty to deliver, let us all Thy life receive;

Suddenly return, and never, never more Thy temples leave:

Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above,

Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation: pure and spotless let us be;

Let us see Thy great salvation, perfectly restored in Thee:

Changed from glory into glory, till in Heaven we take our place,

Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

**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 Readings                  Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7**

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” …

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

**Romans 5:12-21**

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned - for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespassled to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Reflection**

There was a time when the teaching of ‘original sin’ was simply taken for granted and accepted by the vast majority of Christians. In essence, this doctrine tells us that each person who is born into this world is born as a sinner, in need of God’s forgiveness. Since the Garden of Eden this has applied to everyone, except God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. However, in more recent times, this traditional teaching has become controversial. Many people don’t like to think babies are sinful, but rather prefer to focus on them being cute, dependant and innocent. It is, I think, an understandable sentiment to hold, but it is not one that I believe is found in the Scriptures.

In our first Bible reading today, from Genesis, we hear how humanity fell into sin through the actions of Adam and Eve. In the beginning our ancestors had only one instruction to follow, which was not to eat from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17). So far, so straightforward, or at least you would think so. Sadly Eve, and then Adam, were tricked through the craftiness of Satan. It all came down to a twisting and questioning of God’s Word, and even today that same devilish tactic gets many Christians, and even Churches, into all kinds of sinful trouble.

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”, the serpent hissed (Genesis 3:1). A quick look back at chapter 2 shows us that this is not what God said. He generously gave the first humans all kinds of trees from which to eat the fruit. There was only one tree that they were to avoid – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent’s question seeks to undermine the authority of God’s command. This is then followed up by a blatant contradiction of the truth that God had spoken, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4-5)

There was a half-truth in what Satan said, which is what is particularly dangerous. It’s a lot easier to be taken in by something that is partly true than by something that is completely false. God made Adam and Eve completely innocent as to sin, so they only has instincts to do what was right. However, by eating from the fruit of this one tree, they would now be able to distinguish between right and wrong themselves. This would not, though, make them like God. Rather this would lead to their ultimate death and their expulsion from the Garden. By disobeying God they had sinned and would face the consequences of God’s right judgment upon them. They would no longer live for ever with God, and because of this Jesus had to come to reconcile people to God.

Why does the action of our ancient ancestors impact us today? This is where our second reading from Paul’s letter to the Romans comes in. Paul tells us that all die as a result of Adam’s sin, and this is without exception. That sin of disobedience by Adam means that we all inherit a sinful desire from Adam, along with the knowledge of the difference between good and evil. Thankfully, though, that is not the end of God’s dealing with human beings. Rather we have a wondrous free gift given us through the work of the ‘second Adam’, Jesus Christ.

In verse 18 Paul contrasts the impact of Adam’s sin with the impact of Jesus’ death on the cross, describing it as “one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men”. Jesus was without sin, and as such was the only One who could die in our place to pay the price for our sin. His act of righteousness, or justice, means that we who have faith in Him as the Son of God and Saviour are counted as innocent before God the Father. Eternal life is also given to us as part of our inheritance in Jesus. This life starts at the moment of faith and continues into eternity. This is God’s undeserved favour, or grace, at work today in the lives of you and me, through the work of the Spirit and to the glory of God the Father! Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word that You have given us to read and hear. Today we are so grateful for the lessons we can learn from the choices Adam and Eve made so long ago, when they chose to disobey Your Word. Thank You for this insight into the fall of man and the ease with which we can be deceived and tempted to sin against You. May we not only know the truth of Your Word, but trust You in all things so that we will not be seduced by the lies of the enemy, nor enticed to follow the lusts of own own sinful hearts. Thank You, Father, for Your wonderful plan of redemption and for sending Jesus to be the last Adam and the Head of a new creation through whom we are saved, by grace through faith. In His Name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

Gracious God, send us out today in the full and certain knowledge of Your forgiveness and reconciliation through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to be thankful for Your grace that You extend to us each day, and enable us to share the good news of the Gospel with everyone we meet. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.