**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 26th June 2022**

**Call To Worship:                Psalm 77:11-15**

I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
    yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

I will ponder all your work,
    and meditate on your mighty deeds.
Your way, O God, is holy.
    What god is great like our God?
You are the God who works wonders;
    you have made known your might among the peoples.
You with your arm redeemed your people,
    the children of Jacob and Joseph.

**Opening Prayer**

Almighty God, the Psalmist has reminded us of Your great and wonderful deeds through Your dealings with Your people Israel. We rejoice also in the great things that You have done for us and all Your people in and through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord, with You nothing is impossible, and You are perfect in holiness. No-one is truly like You, and we praise You and thank You today. Enable us to give You the praise and worship You deserve and help us to listen closely to Your Word that our lives might be lived in faithful obedience to You. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Hymn                                     Dear Lord and Father**by ***John Greenleaf Whittier***

[**https://youtu.be/WqOnjmr9Ah0**](https://youtu.be/WqOnjmr9Ah0)

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways;

Reclothe us in our rightful mind, in purer lives Thy service find, in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard, beside the Syrian sea, the gracious calling of the Lord,

Let us, like them, without a word, Rise up and follow Thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee, O calm of hills above, where Jesus knelt to share with Thee

The silence of eternity, interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all our words and works that drown the tender whisper of Thy call, As noiseless let Thy blessing fall as fell Thy manna down.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease; Take from our souls

The strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and Thy balm; Let sense be dumb,

Let flesh retire; speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire, O still, small voice of calm.

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.

**1st Bible Reading:              1 Kings 19:9-18**

There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” And the Lord said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

**2nd Bible Reading:             Luke 9:51-62**

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

**Reflection**

Of all the characters in the Bible, Elijah is one of the most charismatic and exciting folks. Although he doesn’t appear in many chapters of the Bible, God used him to speak important lessons to the rebellious king, Ahab during a time when idol worship was rife in Israel. Elijah stands out as a faithful prophet who walked closely with God. Despite his significance and his powerful actions, empowered by the Spirit of God, he also appears to have suffered with depression and regularly felt discouraged. In the previous chapter of 1 Kings Elijah had defeated the prophets of Ba’al at a huge contest on Mount Carmel and following that he slaughtered all these false prophets.

Yet, in chapter 19, Elijah runs away, scared of Queen Jezebel. God provided for him and made him rest so that he would be ready for what comes next. In our Bible reading today we find Elijah sheltering in a cave on Mount Horeb and at this point “the word of the Lord came to him”. Firstly, lets note that God spoke directly to Elijah in a clear, audible voice. However, this is not something that we should expect to happen to us. As we are reminded at the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews, God has spoken to us by the prophets and then by His Son in the last days (past tense). In other words, everything we need to know and hear from God has already been revealed to us in the Scriptures.

God ask Elijah this question in verse 9, “What are you doing here Elijah?” It’s a straightforward question, or at least it seems so at first glance. Elijah answers it by summarising what has happened and how he feels about it. This shows us that his viewpoint of the state of God’s people Israel is a little bit ‘off’. He says that he is the only one faithful servant of God left. As we will discover, this is not the case, but that doesn’t stop Elijah feeling very downhearted and hunted. Then God tells him to do something a bit unusual. He says, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” What is God about to do, we might wonder?

The reality is that God causes various things to happen. He sends a great wind, an earthquake and fire, but we are told that God was not in any of them. Rather, in verse 12, we are told there was a sound like a low whisper, and as he heard this Elijah exited the cave and wrapped his face in the cloak that he was wearing. Elijah understood that no-one can see God face to face and live (Exodus 33:20), so he protected himself from the presence of God. Notice, though, that God did not speak to Elijah through this low whisper – that is never how God speaks to His people in the Bible. Rather He speaks clearly and audibly. There is never any doubt that God has spoken!

God then asks Elijah the same question, “What are you doing here Elijah?” He responds in the same way, but this time God makes it clear to him that his pessimistic outlook is not the reality. Firstly, Elijah is commanded to commission the next generation who will follow God’s ways. He is to anoint a new king over Syria and Israel (by which Ahab is rejected by God) and a new prophet who will follow Elijah. Then God reassures him that there are in fact 7000 faithful people in Israel who have not got caught up in the idolatry of the day. Perhaps this is a foreshadowing of the faithful remnant who will keep on following Jesus in the last days.

In our New Testament reading Luke shows us examples of what it means to remain faithful to Jesus. In the passage we hear Jesus speaking with individuals who apparently wanted to follow Him, but who were perhaps not willing to do so at any cost. Are we willing to remain faithful to Jesus regardless of the cost? Will we follow Him even if it means giving up all we own and losing friends and family? Are we willing to stand up and be counted as Christians in the face of ridicule and persecution? In verses 51 to 55 of Luke 9 there is a challenge issued by Jesus to prepare a Samaritan town for his arrival. However, the folk of the town were unwilling to listen to Jesus, so James and John come up with a solution!

“Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” they ask in verse 44. In other words, they are saying that rejecting Jesus should result in instant judgment and punishment. Jesus, however, disagrees andrebukes them. The reality is that not everyone to whom we speak about Jesus will like or accept the message. The biblical pattern is to then move on to others because our responsibility is to proclaim the Gospel, not to ensure that people respond in a particular way, because only the Holy Spirit can do that. Jesus goes on to make is clear that following Him is a whole of life commitment. “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” He says in verse 60, and “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” In verse 62.

What we need to take away with us from these two passages of Scripture are the following two points. Firstly, God is sovereign over all events, times, and people. Nothing happens without His say so and nothing we can do is going to alter that. We just need to trust in God and get on with the tasks that He has given us to do, including the essential job of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Secondly, if we are serious about following Jesus then we need to do so wholeheartedly regardless of what the cost might be to us. Even though we may be a small minority as Christians we must remain faithful to God, just as Elijah did and the 7000 faithful folk in Israel. Amen!

**Pastoral Prayer**

Father God, as we come before You, we are humbled to realise that You have included us and our lives, as part of Your plan for humanity. We have come to realise that we must decrease in every area of our lives and entrust all circumstances into Your gracious hands. Gracious God You call us to live so that You may increase, and we may decrease. Use each of us, Lord, as You will, in Your wider plans and purposes, and develop in us an understanding heart and a listening ear to hear all You have to say to us through Your Word. Teach us the lessons that You would have us learn and keep us always looking to Jesus. This we ask in His precious name, amen!

**Benediction**

May the grace of God Almighty, our loving Father, the salvation of His obedient Son, Jesus Christ, and the empowering of His faithful Spirit be with us today and forevermore, amen.