Home Service Sheet for Sunday 3rd July 2022

Call To Worship:                Psalm 30:1-5

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
    and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
    and you have healed me.
O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
    you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
    and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger is but for a moment,
    and his favour is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
    but joy comes with the morning.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we lift up Your name and enthrone You on our praises today. In all circumstances and times, You are with us, always faithful and always full of grace and truth. Lead us into all truth as we read Your Word and sing Your praises. Help us to remember You in both the good and the bad times of life and keep on reminding us of Your promise to never leave us nor forsake us. Thank You, Lord. Hear our prayer for we ask it in Jesus’ Name, amen.

Hymn                            A charge to keep have I by Charles Wesley
<https://youtu.be/8w-m4JIKjy4>

A charge to keep have I, a God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky.

To serve this present age, my calling to fulfil;
O may it all my powers engage to do my Master’s will!

Arm me with watchful care as in Thy sight to live,
And now Thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray, and still on Thee rely,
O let me not my trust betray, but press to realms on high.

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 10:1-20

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. 2 And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.

8 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 11 ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

13 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

16 “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” 18 And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Reflection

During Jesus’ earthly ministry He was surrounded by followers, or disciples, and over the two to three years a number of these followers were trained up by Jesus to continue the ministry of the Kingdom. Luke’s Gospel is most likely written in chronological order, and so we find a progression of this training. In chapter 9 he tells us how Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach about the Kingdom and heal the sick, and now in chapter 10 it is the turn of the 72 (or 70) to be sent out. They are given the command to “heal the sick… and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” (v.9) This is the preparation for Jesus coming to these areas in person, as we also see at the end of chapter 9.

It is actually very interesting that Jesus sends out 72 followers to share the task of ministry, especially as there are manuscripts that suggest the number is 70. This should put us in mind of the elders of Israel who God tells Moses to allow to assist him in administering and judging the people of Israel (Numbers 11:16-17). There were 70 of them, and their role was very important as Moses could not do all that needed doing by himself. This suggests that Jesus should be seen as the second ‘Moses’, but much greater still. The law came through Moses, but it’s fulfilment came through Jesus Christ.

This progression is to continue beyond the First Century to today because in Christ we are all sent to proclaim the Gospel to others, preparing the way for the second coming of Jesus in glory. Scripture speaks to us of a new priesthood made up of all who believe in Jesus, and because the Holy Spirit dwells within each of us there are no exceptions. It is not just a select few who are sent to share the Gospel, but rather all of us. In verse 1 of our reading we should note that they are sent out “two by two”, and this is a good example for us to follow. If we proclaim the Gospel in twos we will have the immediate support that we might need.

In verse 2 Jesus says to His followers that “the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.” In other words there are many people who are ready to hear the Gospel message and respond with faith. However, there are not that many folk ready to go and do that essential Gospel work. We might want to ask ourselves whether this is still true today, living in the kind of world where faith is often pushed to the margins of society. How open are folk outside our churches to the Gospel message? Perhaps they are more open than we think they might be? Certainly the 72 did not have this as an excuse that they could use to disobey Jesus!

In fact, Jesus pre-empty any such complaints by saying, “Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.” (v.3) Do we pray to God, asking Him to send more workers to bring in the harvest of salvation amongst the people of this world? That is the example that Luke presents to us in our Bible reading, and I believe it is one we can and should follow ourselves. It does not guarantee success, as we will go on to hear over the next few verses, but it is the right approach.

Jesus continues His teaching to the followers by giving them various practical instructions about what to take with them, what to say and what to do while they are out preaching the message of the Kingdom. Again there is much we could learn here about following Jesus today. Perhaps of particular note here is what Jesus tells them to do if people will not listen to the message and respond. We may think that Jesus would tell them to keep on speaking the message, but find different ways of explaining it, because that is what many in the Church today seem to do. However, Jesus tells them to move on, shaking the very dust off their sandals as a witness against them. God wants us to use our time and opportunities well.

The three towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum are mentioned by name in our reading. All are condemned because they did not believe the Kingdom message spoken by the 72. It is essential that people hear the Gospel message today, but we cannot make them believe and repent. The very act of unbelief is what condemns them before God and the same is true for people today. Salvation is only found through faith alone, by God’s grace alone in Jesus Christ alone. That is the Gospel message and that is what we are all called to proclaim to the world around us.

Although our Bible passage shows us the judgment that some will face, it also shows us the joy of people coming to faith in Jesus and being added to God’s family. The last few verses tell us of the celebrations with which the 70 returned to Jesus, and so there should be similar rejoicing in the Church today over those who were lost, but now are found in Christ. Jesus says, “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you… rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” In other words, it is more important that folk come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, than miracles are performed or good works done. Our focus needs to be first and foremost on the proclaiming of the Gospel so that people come to faith in Jesus. Amen!

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for revealing the good news of the Gospel to each of us and granting us the gift of faith in Christ. We thank You also for the witness of Your Word and the faithful service of other Christians which have pointed us to You and helped us to grow in our faith. Use us, we pray, in the places where You have put us so that others may hear the Gospel of grace and be saved by Your goodness and grace We thank You, Heavenly Father, for the incredible privilege and responsibility of being Jesus’ representatives here on earth. May You help us all to be careful to share the good news of the Gospel of grace with love and sensitivity. Thank You for the many blessings that You have showered upon us, day by day. How we praise and thank You that by grace through faith in Christ, we, the Body of Christ, are one with Him and that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!

Benediction

Send us out, O Lord, in love, joy and peace to serve this world in which You have placed us. Grant to us strength and courage to keep on following You and to proclaim the glorious Gospel of salvation to all. May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and rest upon us each day, amen.