**Home Service Sheet 5th November 2023**

**Call To Worship                 Psalm 85:4-9**

Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
    and put away your indignation toward us!
Will you be angry with us forever?
    Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
Will you not revive us again,
    that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your steadfast love, O Lord,
    and grant us your salvation.

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
    for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
    but let them not turn back to folly.
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
    that glory may dwell in our land.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we thank You and praise You for speaking Your words of peace to us. Your peace is not the peace for which many strive but is rather peace between You and humankind. This peace can only be ours because the blood of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was shed for us at Calvary and for that act of love we thank You. Grant us the peace that we receive through the forgiveness of our sins. Help us to live in peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ and through be good witnesses for You in this world. Teach us how to live as Your people each day through Your Word. In the Name of Jesus we ask this, amen.

**Hymn                                     The Church’s One Foundation**by ***Samuel John Stone***

<https://youtu.be/w1YBYrJ8Hzg?si=JYm19vqmENcJ5_zs>

The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;

She is His new creation by water and the Word:

From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride;

With His own blood He bought her and for her life He died.

Elect from every nation, yet one o’er all the earth,

Her charter of salvation one Lord, one faith, one birth;

One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,

And to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

‘Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war,

She waits the consummation of peace forevermore;

Till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,

And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,

And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won;

O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,

Like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee.

**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                   Ephesians 4:1-7**

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

**Reflection**

It is important for Christians to have right beliefs, and this has been Paul’s focus in the first half of the letter to the Ephesians. However, these beliefs need to motivate us to live like Jesus in practice too, and that is the focus here at the beginning of chapter 4. In verse 1 Paul uses the language of walking “in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called”. In other words, the way we live should be consistent with what we say we believe. Christ died for our sins that through faith in Him we might be saved, and His Holy Spirit comes and lives in us to make us more like Jesus.

If we talk with some people about why they have not become Christians, or why they don’t attend a local church fellowship, we may well hear something negative about Christians they know. Our witness, or the way that we live our lives, matters because that may be the only example that some people see of what Christians are like. Do we live out our lives in ways that reflect our calling to follow Jesus and serve Him? What does it look like to live like Christ?

Paul goes on to give us some practical advice in verse 2, urging Christians to live “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love”. You may recall that we recently referred to the fruit of the Spirit, from Galatians chapter 5, and in that list of attributes we find love, peace and gentleness. There is significant cross over, which is no coincidence because both are the work of God’s Holy Spirit. We are to put Jesus first, others next and ourselves last. Sometimes we need quite a lot of help to live that way, bearing with each other in love.

Perhaps keeping that mutual peace between one another is one of the most difficult of things to do as Christians. Naturally speaking we are all different, and have our preferences and approaches to all kinds of things in life. If you have two people working together who have different ways of working there is likely to be tension and disagreement some of the time. Yet, because we are all one in Christ Jesus we need to work together in peace and love for one another. This can be very hard on occasions, but with the help of the Spirit it is possible!

Paul emphasises the importance of unity between Christian brothers and sisters, reminding us that we all follow the same Lord, Jesus. We are all saved by the same faith in Christ, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have the same faith and purpose and a common calling to proclaim the Gospel to others. For the good of our witness, and to the honour of God, we must work together in unity despite our differences. We ultimately have more in common than we do have things that separate us. The best foundation for our unity is found in Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

Paul concludes this section with a slightly less clear statement in verse 7. He writes, “grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift”. What does this mean? An interesting comparison could be made with what Paul writes about the gifts of the Spirit in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). “All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (1 Corinthians 12:12) The meaning of this giving of grace to each person individually points to the fact that God gives each of us the same salvation, but different gifts to live out the Christian life. We all have our own roles to play in the life of the Church, but we all work towards the same purpose. Amen.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the wealth of spiritual blessings that You have lavished on us, by grace through faith. Lord, we desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus and to walk in humble dependence and humility of heart before you, all the days of our lives. Help us to put off the old-self and to live as You desire, to Your praise and glory. May we each walk in a manner worthy of Your calling upon us through the Gospel. Lord, grant us patience and love to work together for Your glory, even when personal differences make this hard. Fill us with Your Spirit that we might bring You the praise and glory You deserve. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Benediction**

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your amazing grace and for Your undeserved favour to all Your children. Lord, we honour and bless You for Your great gift of salvation through Christ and pray that we may live humbly, righteously, and in the fear of God all the days You give us. This we ask for Your greater honour and glory, in Jesus' name, amen.