**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 7th August 2022**

**Call To Worship:                1 John 4:16-21**

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannotlove God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

**Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father Your love for us is truly amazing and beyond compare. Even while we were still dead in our sins You sent Your only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this world to die in our place that our sins might be forgiven. We praise You and thank You for Your grace and mercy towards us in Jesus. For all the many blessings that You shower down upon us we give You thanks. Loving God help us to listen carefully to Your Word today, and may Your Spirit help us to apply it in our lives. To You, O Lord, belongs all the praise, glory, honour and blessing! Amen.

**Hymn                                     For the fruit of all creation**by ***Fred Pratt Green***

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

For the fruits of all creation,

thanks be to God;

for the gifts of every nation,

thanks be to God;

for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,

silent growth while we are sleeping,

future needs in earth's safe-keeping,

thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,

God's will is done;

in the help we give our neighbour,

God's will is done;

in our world-wide task of caring

for the hungry and despairing,

in the harvests we are sharing,

God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,

thanks be to God;

for the good we all inherit,

thanks be to God;

for the wonders that astound us,

for the truths that still confound us,

most of all that love has found us,

thanks be to God.

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 3:12-17**

**12**Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **13**bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14**And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. **15**And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. **16**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**17**And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Reflection**

One of the criticisms some people level at Christians is that we are very negative. We’re against this and anti that, and so on. Clearly there is some truth in that because God is against sin and anti-injustice, and He calls us to be like Him. However, if that’s all that we are known for I would suggest there’s something missing. As Christians we need to be pro the Gospel, for holiness and in favour of justice. If we simply talk about what is bad and wrong in the world, ourselves and others we miss the wonderful transforming message of the Gospel which God has revealed to us in His Word.

The Bible reading we looked at last week spoke of the kinds of sin that we used to commit before Jesus saved us from our sins. Paul instructed us to put to death those things. However, that’s not where Paul finished as he went on to write about the positive characteristics that should be seen in the life of everyone who places their faith in Jesus Christ. The way that Paul writes about this strongly suggests that we have a part to play in displaying these positive characteristics. We cannot live right by God’s ways in our own strength alone, but that is not an excuse to think that it has nothing to do with us. God helps us to live right through the work of His Holy Spirit within us.

The Colossian believers were instructed to put on various things in verse 12. We put on clothes or accessories or armour, and that is the kind of picture that Paul paints for us here. He begins by writing about “compassionate hearts”. In other words, this is an attitude that should underpin what we do, showing love and compassion to other people as we relate to them. To be truly compassionate means to suffer with other people when they are suffering. Jesus was truly compassionate because He went through all the trials and temptations that all human beings face, and yet He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). We are to care for others, but not make excuses for their sins. The call to have compassionate hearts comes alongside the call to be holy.

In many ways the list of characteristics that Paul goes on to list is quite similar to the fruit of the Spirit that he writes about elsewhere (Galatians 5:22-24). There is talk of kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness and love, amongst others. The key here is to read it in context. We mustn’t forget the call to holiness earlier in the same chapter of Paul’s letter because it goes alongside this. The kind of love that Paul writes about is true love that wants the very best for the other and living in unrepentant sin is never a good option for anyone! Equally, forgiveness should not be given in a way that enables people to just keep doing the same sinful things.

So how do we love one another and let the peace of Jesus rule in our hearts? If we simply try to love people with our own human efforts we will likely get it very wrong, either not loving people enough to challenge harmful habits, or simply giving up and focusing on ourselves alone. Christian love is costly and needs to be informed by the Word of God with the help of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (v.16). True Christian love leads us to encourage, help and challenge each other to follow Jesus every day. We are to look out for one another and share the teachings of God’s Word with each other so that we may all grow in faith.

The Christian life needs to be lived as well as believed. That is the bottom line here. If we simply believe the right things, and we do need to do that, its only part of the call of Jesus. Our faith should lead us to live differently as the family of God. Paul concludes this section of his letter with another call to do everything for the sake of Christ. As we go about our daily routine we need to focus on doing so as Jesus calls us to live, that we might bring Him the glory that He deserves. If the Gospel message does not make a difference to how we live then we have not properly heard it, understood it or applied it. We cannot truly believe in Jesus and be the same as were before we believed in Him.

We should also note that Paul emphasises the importance of giving thanks to God. This helps us to recognise that all good gifts come from God, and not from our own efforts. It is through Jesus’ death and resurrection that we can become Christians and enter into eternal life. Salvation is the gift of God, and not down to any hard work of our own. Our ability to live in love and peace is entirely the work of God’s Holy Spirit within us. We need to both recognise the truth of this and thank God for it. To Him alone belongs all the praise and glory - amen!

**Pastoral Prayer**

Gracious God, we pray that Your peace may rule in our hearts with thanksgiving and praise today. If there is anything in our lives that hinders Your peace from guarding our hearts today, show us and help us to change. May we honour You in all we say and do and may we all grow to be more and more like the Lord Jesus in every way. Heavenly Father, help us to live in accordance with Your ways every day of our lives. Keep our eyes looking to Jesus and our hearts ready to do His will. Thank You Father that we are called by His name. Thank You that You who started a good work in us will complete it in the day of Christ Jesus. In His Name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

May the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the peace of the Holy Spirit be with us all today and forevermore, amen.