Home Service Sheet for Sunday 8th January 2023

Call To Worship: Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God we thank You that we can approach Your throne with confidence because of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and all that He has done for us at Calvary. We praise You for Your grace, mercy and love that You have showered down upon us. Thank You for calling us to follow You and making us Your children through faith in Christ. Help us to hear and understand Your Word today, and by Your Holy Spirit enable us to respond to You with faith and obedience. This we ask to Your praise and glory, amen.

Hymn I Know that my Redeemer Lives by Samuel Medley

https://youtu.be/2tMqpruzpv0

1 I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this sweet sentence gives!

He lives, He lives, who once was dead; He lives, my everliving head!

2 He lives triumphant from the grave; He lives eternally to save;

He lives all-glorious in the sky; He lives exalted there on high.

3 He lives to grant me rich supply; He lives to guide me with his eye;

He lives to comfort me when faint; He lives to hear my soul's complaint.

4 He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears;

He lives to calm my troubled heart; He lives all blessings to impart.

5 He lives to bless me with His love; He lives to plead for me above;

He lives my hungry soul to feed; He lives to help in time of need.

6 He lives, my kind, wise, heavenly Friend; He lives and loves me to the end;

He lives, and while He lives, I’ll sing; He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.

7 He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death;

He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there.

8 He lives, all glory to His Name! He lives, my Saviour, still the same.

Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives: I know that my Redeemer lives!

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 Reading: Romans 6:1-14

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Reflection

Our Bible reading, from Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome, points us towards the wondrous realities of the Christian life. First, Paul focuses on the meaning of baptism, and then secondly he writes about the ongoing practicalities of the Christian life. Baptism is not the ultimate aim of our faith, but rather an important milestone on the way to eternity in the nearer presence of Christ. Paul shows us that baptism is an outward sign and witness of an internal reality that the Spirit of God does in the life of the believer. It is a turning away from one way of life that leads to eternal death towards a new way of life in Christ that leads to eternal life.

Often in his letters Paul contrasts these two ways of life using the language of ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’. He is not saying that one way is just physical and the other is spiritual, or non-physical. Rather, he is contrasting a life dedicated to human desires with a life dedicated to pleasing God. This is what repentance is all about – turning away from a life governed by human, selfish desires towards a godly life lived to please and glorify God. Paul begins chapter 6 by showing us that God’s grace, or underserved favour, is not something to be taken for granted or abused. He poses the question, “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (v.2)

This is perhaps one of the more challenging questions of the Christian life. Through faith in Christ as our Saviour, with repentance, we are forgiven our sin and adopted into God’s family. We are called ‘new creations’ and are called to no longer live in sin. Yet, the reality is that we do still sin – break God’s law. The Apostle John’s first letter explains this really clearly, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10)

Before we die, or Christ returns in glory, we will continue to sin. God’s Word tells us this, as does our own life experience. Paul tells us how the act of baptism, being immersed in water, represents us dying to our old, sinful self. It is a witness to Jesus’ death on the cross for us, and just as He was raised again to life in the resurrection, we also rise from the waters of baptism, which is a sign pointing to our new selves as God’s children. However, whereas Jesus was perfect both before His crucifixion and after His resurrection, we will not be perfect until we are raised again to life at the end, when Christ returns.

Elsewhere in Scripture, Paul helps us to understand how we can be new creations who have put to death the sinful self, and yet still sin. Let me quote from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, “do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Notice how Paul refers to these people who will not inherit the Kingdom of God, or eternal life. They are not described as people who do this or that. Rather they are described by their sin – it is what defines them because they do it continuously. Those who do not have faith in Christ Jesus are still in bondage to their sin and have their identity defined by their sin. Those who are in Jesus are defined by Him, and although they may still make mistakes and fall into sin, it is not that which defines them. It is one thing to lie on one occasion, be immediately convicted of your sin, repent of it and ask for God’s forgiveness. It is quite another to be defined by your sin as a liar who keeps on lying, only being concerned about being caught out.

As believers we should be grieved by our sin and convicted of it by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. The good news that Paul writes about is this - we can repent of our sinfulness and be transformed by God’s Spirit through faith in Christ. Paul shows us what the Christian life should be like in verse 12, with a call to holiness, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.” May that be our prayer today and in the days to come. With God’s help, through the urging of the Spirit, let’s not allow sin to define us or direct us. Rather, may we seek to be made ever more like Jesus in His death and resurrection. Amen!

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank You for Jesus dying on the Cross so that we may be forgiven of our sins. Thank You for identifying with our sinfulness so that we may be identified with Your holiness. Help us to keep all that is not honouring to You nailed to the Cross, that we may live godly lives each day in Christ Jesus. Heavenly Father, thank You that by faith in Christ we have received new life in Him. Thank You that at justification we became new creations and members of Christ's Body. May we continue to grow in grace and faith in the truth of Your Word so that we may live that out every day. Loving Father, thank You that Christ not only died for our sins but has died unto sin so that the power of sin no longer has power over us. Help each of us to make the right choices to follow You and listen to Your Word day by day. In Jesus’ Name we ask this, amen.

Benediction

Heavenly Father, make us to be evermore formed into the likeness of Your dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. May we speak like Him, behave like Him and have His mind within us for we ask this all to Your praise and glory, amen.