**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 6th February 2022**

**Call To Worship:                Deuteronomy 8:1-3**

**1**“The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. **2**And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. **3**And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every wordthat comes from the mouth of the Lord.

**Opening Prayer**

Loving God, we thank You and praise You today for giving us Your Word, the Bible. We thank You also for helping us to understand it and apply it in our lives. Help us to distinguish good from evil as we live our lives each day. We thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit to live within us and guide us into all truth. Heavenly Father we also recognise that we are sinners, in need of Your grace and mercy. Forgive us our sins and help us to walk in Your ways. Thank You for Your wonderful salvation in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank You for adopting us into Your family. Amen!

**Hymn:**                                  **Guide me O Thou great Redeemer!**by ***William Williams***

[***https://youtu.be/ZAN4EojeF0Y***](https://youtu.be/ZAN4EojeF0Y)

Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven
Feed me till I want no more.
Feed me till I want no more.

Open Thou the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream shall flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer
Be Thou still my strength and shield.
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell’s destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee.
I will ever give to Thee.

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:                  Hebrews 5:11-14**

**11**About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. **12**For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, **13**for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. **14**But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

**1 Peter 2:1-5**

**1**So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. **2**Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— **3**if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

**4**As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5**you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

**Reflection**

Two of our most basic human needs are food and drink. We can only survive without water for a few days, or without food we can survive for a few weeks, as long as we have a good supply of water. However, it’s very clear that it is not possible to live without both for more than a very short period of time. Even then we would become weak without regular food and drink. Our Bible readings today share a common theme of spiritual nourishment, speaking of milk and meat, comparing the two and showing us our need to graduate from one to the other.

Before we get to that, though, I want to draw our attention back to Deuteronomy 8:3, where we read “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every wordthat comes from the mouth of the Lord”. These very words are also quoted by our Lord Jesus Christ during His temptations by Satan in Matthew 4:4. Jesus shows us that as important as literal food might be to us, God’s Word is even more important. Without literal food we will physically die, but without spiritual food we will be separated from God forever in hell.

So, as all people require spiritual nourishment to live to eternal life, where are we to look for it? Clearly we are to seek it from God’s Word, the Bible – “every word that comes from the mouth of God”. However, reading it without understanding and applying it will not get us very far. The Apostle Peter puts it like this, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation”. (1 Peter 2:2) We need spiritual milk to receive salvation from God. This strongly suggests that he is referring to the Gospel basics of believing in Jesus as the Son of God who died to pay the price for our sins, and repenting of them. We need to know who Jesus is, and who we are (sinners in need of forgiveness) in order to be saved.

Yet, if this is where we stay, something is very wrong. The letter to the Hebrews shows us the problem, “you have become dull of hearing… by this time you ought to be teachers” (Hebrews 5:11 & 12). The believers to whom the letter is written had to all intents and purposes switched off, stopped listening to God’s Word and become content in their relative ignorance. They were still spiritual babies, but as disciples of Jesus they should have been growing in faith, understanding and Christian living. Perhaps we need to hear this same challenge today. How are we doing in our understanding of God’s Word and our walk with Jesus? Are we still drinking spiritual milk, or have we progressed on to spiritual meat?

The picture that both Peter and the author of the letter to the Hebrews use is one that most of us know really well. Babies cannot eat solid food, but need milk for the first few months of their lives. It gives them what they need at that early stage of development, but after a while they naturally progress on to solid food. Spiritual development and growth is similar in that we need the basic building blocks of faith to bring us to salvation in Jesus Christ, but from that point on we are to grow and mature in faith so that we can feed on spiritual meat.

I believe that there are two aspects to this. Firstly we need someone to help us understand the basics of the faith. Hebrews 5, verse 12 says this, “you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God”. Our natural minds, without the insight of God’s Holy Spirit, need help to understand Gospel basics, and that’s absolutely fine for new believers. However, that should just be the initial stage of faith. Secondly our knowledge and understanding of God’s Word should expand as we grow and mature as Christians. We don’t need to understand everything, but we should be growing in our knowledge of God, and our love for Him.

Looking at where Peter begins chapter 2 of his first letter we see some of the practical applications of growing in faith. “So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” (v.1) The better we understand God’s Word the more our actions and attitudes will look like those of Jesus. Sin should decrease, and our obedience to God should increase. Our understanding, with the help of God’s Spirit, should also increase. Our reading from Hebrews shows us what this looks like in verse 14, “solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”

Can we distinguish good from evil, even when society says something different? Do we look to our politicians, celebrities and other influencers, or do we look to the Word of God? Our answer to questions like this should give us a good indication as to whether we are feeding on spiritual milk or meat. If we still need spiritual milk, then let us seek to be nourished by that so that we would grow up and mature in Christ. If we are already taking nourishment from spiritual meat let us continue to do so, with God’s help, and let us apply that knowledge day by day. Amen.

**Pastoral Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your goodness and grace towards us and to all people. Thank You that we have been born again, united with Christ, and have a living hope in Him. Thank You that we also have an inheritance, kept for us in heaven. Keep us from all malice and evil speaking, hypocrisy and ungodly attitudes. Grant us a thirst for the milk of Your Word, so that we may grow in grace and in a knowledge of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Lord, we are amazed and deeply grateful to know that the Lord Jesus, who is the Chief Cornerstone of the Church and the Precious Foundation Stone upon whom our faith is founded, was chosen by You to be our Saviour. Thank You that He was willing to come to earth and be despised and rejected by men, for our sake - so that by faith in Him we might each become members of His Body and living stones that are being built into a holy Temple for Your glory. Help us to live out our lives in ways that honour You. This we ask in Jesus' Name, amen.

**Benediction**

Gracious God we ask now that You would help us to seek our spiritual nourishment from You and from Your Word alone. Help us to grow in love, faith and knowledge that we might honour You more each day. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen!