Home Service Sheet for Sunday 13th March 2022

Call To Worship: 1 Peter 1:13-16

13 preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father we thank You and praise You today for the wonderful hope that You have set before us in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Your grace and mercy towards us is truly amazing and it is only because of what You have done that we can know You and be adopted into Your family. Thank You, O Lord, that You have also sent Your Holy Spirit to dwell within us and be conformed to Your perfect and holy ways. Help us now to hear Your Word carefully and respond to it with faith, love and obedience as our spiritual act of worship. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

Hymn: I know not why God’s wondrous grace by Daniel Webster Whittle

https://youtu.be/6lOHM6IfBww

I know not why God’s wondrous grace

To me He hath made known,

Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love

Redeemed me for His own.

But “I know Whom I have believed

And am persuaded that He is able

To keep that which I’ve committed

Unto Him against that day.”

I know not how this saving faith

To me He did impart,

Nor how believing in His word

Wrought peace within my heart.

I know not how the Spirit moves,

Convincing men of sin,

Revealing Jesus through the Word,

Creating faith in Him.

I know not when my Lord may come,

At night or noon-day fair,

Nor if I’ll walk the vale with Him,

Or “meet Him in the air.”

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: Hebrews 7:11-19

11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. 13 For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

15 This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is witnessed of him,

“You are a priest forever,

 after the order of Melchizedek.”

18 For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

Reflection

When the Bible speaks of being perfect, or perfection, God is referring to holiness. It is about being like God in actions, thoughts and words, and as we know it is not something that any human being is capable of achieving. The moment we think negative thoughts about someone, we have become less than perfect. The occasion where we allow ourselves to say something that isn’t quite true in order to save face, we have sinned. Biblical perfection is not something that can be switched on and off, but is rather a permanent state.

Our reading today begins with the reminder that perfection cannot be attained by us human beings, even through the service and mediation of the priesthood of Levi. It is for this very reason that God stepped into history, sending His only begotten Son to be the one true mediator between Him and humanity. The Levitical law required perfection from us, but we could not make that standard, and God knew that when He gave the law. So why then did the Lord give His people a law that they could not keep, and which could not bring them salvation? It’s difficult for us to understand, and yet unless we ‘get’ this we will not be truly thankful to God for all that He has done for us.

The law that God gave to Moses helps us to see our hopelessness and helpless before God when we use our own efforts, as good as they may be. We quickly learn that our own attempts will not keep the law or make us right with God, and that is the purpose of the law – to show us our need for someone else to step in and do something. Into this comes our great High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. With a change in priesthood must also come a change in the law (v.12). This new Priest is not one who requires our perfection, but rather one who uses His own perfection and sacrifice to bless us, as did Melchizedek bless Abraham.

Verses 16 and 17 point us towards the fact that Jesus was never created or died, but rather always is alive. Jesus’ divine life is truly indestructible, and yet He died for us at Calvary. However, this is not the kind of death that all others die, because death could not hold Him. He was without sin, being both fully man and fully God. Jesus also fulfils the prophecy of the Psalms, which speaks of Him being a priest in the order of Melchizedek forever. For all time, before He returns to judge the living and the dead, Jesus our High Priest is interceding for us before the throne of His Father in heaven.

We are then reminded that the old punishment, decreed in the law, is set aside for us because of what Jesus has done for us. The price has been paid, and the judgment we deserve has been set aside so that we may enjoy eternal salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. However, it’s not simply a case of getting rid of the old laws and commandments. Rather they have been replaced by something even more wonderful.

Verse 19 speaks of a ‘better hope’ being introduced. This hope is not a theoretical one that cannot be reached, but is rather a real one that is graciously offered to us through Jesus, our great High Priest. This better hope is entirely reliant on the actions of God through His Son. It does not require our deeds, or continuing sacrifices, but simply the perfect once for all sacrifice of Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God. This hope simply requires our faith in Jesus by which we make Him our Lord. Our lives will grow and mature, displaying the fruit of righteousness, but it is not the fruit that saves us, but rather the work of Christ. What an amazing ‘better hope’ is set before us by Jesus, our great High Priest! Amen!

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God, we thank You for the simple way that You help us understand the truth of Your Word. Sometimes we try to complicate things instead of looking to the Scriptures. Help us to see the pictures You paint in Your Word, which point us to Christ. Thank You, that Jesus is not only our Heavenly King and High Priest, but is also the eternal Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, and the perfect Redeemer and Mediator between fallen humanity and You, our holy God. Lord, we praise You because by Your grace You cut a New Covenant through the blood of Christ Jesus, who has become our Redeemer. Thank You that through Him we can draw near to You, by faith in His sacrificial work. Thank You that we have a new and better hope through faith in Christ and an eternal home in heaven. In Jesus’ Name, and to Your glory, we pray, amen.

Benediction

Send us out today with the wonderful hope of the Gospel set before us. May we rejoice in the obedience of the Son. May we wonder at the glory of the Father. May we be empowered by the indwelling of the Spirit. In Jesus’ Name we ask this, amen.