

Worship on December 20th, 2020

Order of worship

We Gather

- Prelude (Paul T.)
- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP# 389 – Breath on me, breath of God
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- Sermon: new

We Respond

- Prayer for the people
- Offering
- Offertory Hymn – BOP# 591 – I, the Lord of sea and sky

We Serve

- Benediction
- Postlude (Paul T.)

Ponder Upon Questions

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us live right now and those who are worshipping God on your own time through this video. This worship is for Sunday, December 27th, 2020. It is the last Sunday of this year. May the grace of God be with us as we worship God.

. In this circumstance of lockdown, I don't think it is a good idea to continue personal visitation. Instead of in-person visit, I will give you phone calls or let us meet via Zoom. If you want to talk to me, please feel free to reach me.

. The Purpose Driven Life Bible study will start on Thursday, Jan. 21st, 2021 @ 7pm – via ZOOM – link will sent through email. If the majority of participants need the book, we might be able to consider buying it together. So, let me know.

. Thank you for your offerings. Through our giving to the Lord, may the world become better place with his love and grace.

As we come into the presence of our God, let us calm down our hearts and minds, and focus on our Lord.

Responsive Call to Worship

One: Praise the Lord!

All: Praise the Lord from the heavens!

One: Praise God in the heights!

All: Praise God, all you angels!

One: Praise God, all you heavenly host!

All: Let us all praise the Lord!

Praise song – BOP #389 – Breath on me breath of God

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God of grace and glory, we praise you from the heights and from the depths; in the heavens, on earth and from the seas; in the courts of power and from the sidewalks of our lives. Your splendour shines from a manger, where the Light of the world was born to pierce the darkness. In fragile of flesh, you are revealed to us face to face. And so we gather with all people in every place who have glimpsed your salvation and grace to rejoice in your love born for us. Together we worship and praise you as Creator, Son and Spirit; Source of life, Glorious light, Wisdom of the ages.

Source of all hope, you invite us to live in the light and discover the splendour of your glory. We confess we often choose to remain in the darkness instead. We allow our fears and hurts to hold us hostage. Our expectations of life prevent us from seeing new and real possibilities. You offer us unconditional love, but we expect others to earn our love. Forgive us. May the new life born in the manger awaken new life in us and allow hope to dawn in the year ahead.

This time, we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers at St. Andrew's, Here is the good news of the Gospel: Jesus Christ is our light and our salvation. In him we are made new. Let us give thanks to God, and be at peace with ourselves and with one another.

Before we read today's scripture, let us pray for the illumination of the Lord.

Prayer for Illumination:

Holy God, in the ancient words of the scriptures, let us hear afresh your eternal message of peace, salvation and reconciliation. Send us your Spirit to open our minds and hearts to receive your truth through Christ, your Word made flesh. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (NRSV AND MSG)

This is the Word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.

Title: NEW

New.

Today's title is one word, "new." How do you feel about this word, NEW?

We use NEW for new year, or new school year in September. And this situation is NEW as well.

As of yesterday, there is new Corona virus Ontario wide lockdown.

What do you feel when you hear the word NEW?

What kind of emotions do you have when you think of something NEW? Mixed emotions.

New is good when it's a something we know very well – such as new iPhone, new computer, new clothes, new car.. getting new products from old.. very exciting one.

New is a kind of adventure – new place for trip, new restaurant, new menu, new dish, new school, new friend. We don't know what it is like, YET.

OR New is a little worse than an adventure. Somewhat scared feeling. New leadership, new country for immigrants, new jobs, new church, new worship style like this, zoom live stream.

NEW brings various interesting emotions and experiences in our lives.

Today's scripture talks about new as well. It's talking about new way, and new identity.

Verse 16. It says we had the older way and we now have the new way of looking at things.

It says, **"From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way."**

In other words, we became different. Different from old. We became NEW. How did people look at the world before? And why is the perspective of people changed?

The reason is in v17. **“So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”**, NRSV

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

ESV – my favorite – **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”**

The Message: V16-17, **“Because of this decision we don’t evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don’t look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons!”**

Whoever is in Christ, he’s a new creation. Whoever follows the way of Christ, has a new beginning.

New creation? We are already created, we are already here. But, the Bible says that we are new creation when we are in Christ. When we accept the way of Christ and live in His ways, our old life is gone, the new way, the new life begins.

This means that we are reconciled people. The reconciled people means that we are restored. Something was wrong, something was broken, something was not right, but it was changed. It became different. It is fixed. It became new.

The wrong became right. The broken became the whole. This is what reconciled means.

God reconciled the world through Christ Jesus. This changed the perspective of people. And God invited all people to come to faith through revealing the glory through Jesus Christ. And this is Christmas. Jesus came to us to reconcile us, to restore us, to give new life to us.

Today’s scripture tells us two things.

One, as we just looked so far, we are the new creation and, now, we know it because of Jesus Christ. We are new creation if we are in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour.

Two, I am going to talk about this from now.

V18 to 20 – **All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

This is this.

“God reconciled us. God restored us. And now we know God. Because we are restored and because we know that God wants us to go out and talk about God’s love and power to reconciliation, we are telling you this. You too, like us, be reconciled to God. You need to be restored in your inner being. You need to be healed. You need God’s love embracing you and the love pouring upon you, your inside and out, through and through... God knows you. God loves you. God accepts you, just the way you are. God forgives you. God embraces you. Know this love. Know his power. Know his goodness.

Knowing the love of God, knowing the burning heart with love for you, we are the ambassadors of Christ. God is making his presence through us. I beg you. Know God. Know his love...

This is who we are. We are the display of God. We are representing God.”

Trusting someone who is unseen is not easy. But, trusting someone whom you love is not that difficult. Look at your surroundings. Was there anyone who showed the love of God to you? Was there anyone who became the ambassador of Christ in your life?

And one more time, think about your surroundings. And think about the people to whom you can show the love of God. The Bible declares that we are the ambassadors of Christ To whom can you represent God? In fact, not knowingly, we are representing God everywhere in our lives. When we drive, when we go shopping, when we line up at Tim Hortons. My wife always tells me that be nice to everyone. No one knows who will come to our church. Now, when the church is online, no one know who will worship God through the video I am posting on YouTube.

However, many many times, the people who are representing the Christ are weak. Look into your hearts. Think about our honest desires. Very selfish, many times, too shameful to share with anyone. We fall a lot.

But, at the same time, try to look at our hearts one more time. There’s love of God. There’s our deepest desire to love God. Our desire to be good. The reconciliation of God is there. And look back our faith journey, there might be some backsliding, but gradually, we are growing in God. We are becoming more like Christ. We are gradually becoming the ambassadors of Christ.

My first point, we are new in Christ, already, whether we realize or not. If we are in Christ, we are restored. If you are still searching for God, still have difficulties to accept yourself, in God’s

time, God will make everything clear. So, hang in there. But, know that if you are here and worshipping God with us LIVE or one your own time, you are in Christ. And you are a new creation in Christ.

Second point, when we know who we truly are, we are becoming active ambassadors of God. The process might not be as fast as you want, but hang in there, even though it's slow and unnoticeable, we are walking on the journey becoming the ambassadors of Christ. Through us, the people around us will know God and they will come to God.

This is the last Sunday of year 2020, very different and difficult year for many. But, I wanted to end this year's last message with hope. NEW. Look beyond our weakness. Christ is holding our hands. Christ is walking with us.

So, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. God is not irresponsible. He accepted us and he will carry us as well.

NEW. As we are beginning the new year, know that you are new in Christ in faith.

I will end my message today with a famous poem, Footprints.

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belong to him, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints.

He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it:

“Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.”

The Lord replied:

“My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”

Let us pray.

Father God, the Bible taught us that our identity. We are the new creation in you. And the Bible taught what to do. We are to show your love. We are to become the ambassadors of your love. We know that we are weak. We are not worthy to contain your love in our lives. All kinds of selfishness and wickedness are in us. But, still, with a small whispering voice, you are calling us “my precious child. My love.” Thank you. And when we need you the most, you hold our hands firmly. You are the Lord, Immanuel, God with us. Thank you for being with us all the time.

Give us courage and wisdom as we witness your love and grace in our lives. In Jesus’ precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for the people:

Faithful God, like a children song, you’ve got the whole world in your hand. Even though there is Corona Virus and many are suffering because of it, you are still faithful God and we come to your presence seeking your face and mercy. You are the most holy God and all we can do is to worship you. Have mercy upon us and give ears to listen to you and give us wisdom to know you.

On this last Sunday of 2020, thank you that we can interact through technology. We are the church now. Even though we are in our own places, we are together as your church. Thank you for bringing us together in your presence We pray for our church. There are people who don’t have access to this. They are holding on to written worship script. And there are people who are worshipping you in their own time through YouTube. In any means we are worshipping you, be present among us and come into our hearts as we seek your face. There are different ways of worship. May this bring more people to you. There are more opportunities to witness your love. Give us wisdom and give us courage. We are not selling you, but we are showing love and life. As your church, help us stand firm wherever we are.

We pray for our congregants. In our everyday life, help us know you and help us live in your presence. And there are people who are suffering from difficulties. Physical pains, depressed hearts, lost loved ones, hurt, worries, discomforts, financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. At this time Lord, like the poem Footprints, carry them and help them through. Show your grace and love to them and come into their hearts and give them peace.

We also pray for this Lockdown. As it prolongs, we lose the urgency and seriousness of this situation. There are many who don’t care, still. Give us wisdom and give us alertness. Help us be safe and end this virus.

Also, we pray for the earth you created. We use this earth recklessly. We produce too much pollution and there will be nothing left for our next generations. You called us stewards. But, instead of taking care of what we are given, we took it granted and we are careless. Help us learn from our experiences to cherish our environment and help us hand down good earth to our children and children’s children.

It was a difficult year. Yet, because we have you, we try to have hope. Help us walk with you faithfully and live your ways boldly. Be praised and glorified through our lives. In Jesus' precious and beautiful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time of offering. In the season of Christmas, we celebrate God's gifts to us in Christ Jesus and express our love for each other in the gifts we exchange. Our gifts today express our love for God and our gratitude for all we have received in love this year. Let the Lord's offering be received.

Offering – BOP # 592 – I, the Lord of sea and sky

Offering prayer: Good and gracious God, your love overflows in the goodness we have met even in this challenging year. As one year closes and another begins, help us trust your goodness. Bless the gifts we bring to you so that they may provide others with the hope we know in Christ Jesus and the love you share with the world through him.

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. We are new in Christ. We are ambassadors in Christ. We are blessings to our surroundings. Experience the love of God in your everyday life. And let it overflow to your surroundings.

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.

Ponder Upon Questions:

1. Read the Poem Footprint once more. God was carrying you in most troublesome times.
2. Am I holding on to any of my "old" habits? How can I embrace "new" ways of Christ next year?
3. Is there anyone who is waiting for me to share the goodnews of God?