

Worship on January 24th, 2021

Order of worship

We Gather

- Prelude (Paul T.)
- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP# 461 – be thou my vision
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: Ephesians 1:11-12
- Sermon: It's not about you

We Respond

- Prayer for the people of God
- Offering (invitation and prayer first)
- Offertory Hymn – BOP# 400 – Spirit of the living God

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 through this video. This is Jan. 24, 2021. Do you know your purpose of life? From today on, we will look at The Purpose Driven Life together. May God reveal His good plans for each of us.

. For Bible study, we decided to have it after the worship service. So, please stay after the worship. We will discuss the Ponder Upon Questions together.

. Thank you for your offerings. With God's good and perfect plans, we will use us and our gifts.

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: God alone is our rock and our salvation. **All: We will not be shaken!**

One: Trust in God at all times, O people. **All: We will pour out our hearts to God, our refuge.**

One: In this time of worship, let us turn our lives to God and accept the good news.

All: We will listen for Christ's call and follow him.

Praise song – BOP# 461 – Be Thou My Vision

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Lord Jesus Christ, you have called us together as your people. You have called us your friends and invited us to follow you. And so your church has grown from scattered homes in ancient times—to a worldwide community, embracing men and women, old and young, from many nations and cultures. In our worship today, inspire us to wonder at the miracle of your church. Help us see the privilege we share to be part of your people across the ages and across the continents. It is your love that keeps drawing us to you and to each other, and so we offer our wonder and praise with millions of people who also gather in your name this day.

God of all the ages, we gather in worship week by week, hoping to encounter your presence. But we confess it's not easy to hear your voice. Sometimes we get distracted by what's happening around us. Sometimes we get confused by conflicting views of what you expect from us. Sometimes we feel challenged and resist a new word from you. We confess it is hard to turn our lives around when we think we already know where we're going. Lord, have mercy upon us.

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

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ at St. Andrew's, believe in the good news. God's steadfast love endures forever. Trust that God's forgiveness is for you. Be at peace with God, with yourself and with each other, in the name of Christ our Lord.

Passing the Peace

Prayer for Illumination: Before we read today's scripture, let us pray for the wisdom of the Lord.

God of new life, speak to us in the rich, ancient words of scripture. Send us your Holy Spirit so that we will hear your call, leave behind our old ways, and follow Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:11-12

11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. (NRSV)

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. (NIV)

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of

the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone. (MSG)

“This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.”

SERMON: It's not about you

“It's not about you.”

Many writers say that if they can find the right first word or the first sentence, they can write pages and pages. Finding the first sentence, opening their books, is the most difficult job, they say.

“It's not about you.” is the first sentence of the book we are going to look at for 40 weeks from today. It will be a long journey, but I decided to read this book together or introduce this book to the whole church in this time of COVID. The reason is that the world is changing. The things we are too comfortable are not any more. We need to adjust ourselves to the new changes. Whether it's old and comfortable or new, there's a direction we are heading. We are going to the direction of our goals. What are we aiming for? What is the direction we are going?

We chase our dreams. We try to listen to the voice from our inside.

Even when we come to church, what do we have in our minds? My plans. My joy. My dreams.

I am not trying to tell you that we need to have OUR plans, OUR joy, and OUR dreams. NO NO.

The point I am trying to make is that we are too self-centred.

It's not my plans or our plans, but it's God's plan for me or God's plan for us.

It's not my joy or our joy, but God's joy. It's not my dream or our dreams, but God's dreams.

We start our lives from us, the inner voice we have in our inside.

That is the foundation of philosophy, the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. In short, a quest of the purpose of human being. We ask these questions: What should I do with my life? What are my goals? My ambitions? My dreams for my future?

The author of the book, the Purpose Driven Life says, “focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose.” The Bible declares, **“In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.” (Job12:10)**

Who is in charge of lives? Who has our breath? God.

But, we are trying to find our own wants and needs, and the value of our lives from our inner selves.

Have we tried to listen to our inner voice? Yes. Many times. How's that working for you? It might work greatly. That's the whole point of self-help books. Listen to your inner voice and set the goal; try hard to make it. That is the way for success from the self-help books.

But, what about God? Where is God in our lives if we only listen to our inner voice and have a successful life and satisfactory lives? What if the Creator God does not give us credit for our successful lives?

Fulfilling our life's purpose and being successful are not the same issue.

We were made by God and for God.

I received a bunkbed from a friend for our kids. If I received it not knowing what it is, will I be able to figure out what it is? If there's no instruction, it would be extremely hard to assemble it. The assemble instruction was 40 pages long.

Our life is like a new invention we have never seen. We are given the life, but we don't know what it is for and we don't know how to use it. No one explained it for us. And many people even don't know who gave it to us.

We were made by God and for God. Life is about letting God lead us. Because we don't know what to do with the life we are given, all we can do is letting God use us for his purposes. But, many times, we are doing the opposite. Without knowing the meaning of life, we try to use God for our own goals and wants.

But, at the end of the day, what if God says to us, it's not about you.

Here, as we start thinking about the purposes of our lives, we must know first that it's not about us. It's not about our success. Two weeks ago, I preached Psalm 1 about a Successful Life. The Blessed is the man who does not walk with the wicked, stand with the sinners, or sit with the mockers, but delights in the law of the Lord. The blessed people's foundation is not people, but the law of the Lord, wisdom of the God.

Coram Deo is a Latin phrase translated "in the presence of God." This summarizes the idea of our Christians living in the presence of God, under the authority of God, and to the honor and glory of God. God is our starting point because we don't know about our lives nor how to use it. In the presence of God, we need revelation of God for our lives.

We can spend our lives seeking the meaning of life, trying to find it here and there. But, we won't be able to find it with our own wisdom. There is a philosophy professor. He wrote a letter to 250 best-known philosophers, scientists, writers, and intellectuals in the world asking the meaning of life. Some offered their best guesses, some admitted that they just made up a purpose of life, and others were honest enough to say they were clueless. In fact, many of them asked the philosophy professor to write them back and tell them if he discovered the purpose of life.

Like this, some people spend their lives try to find out the meaning and the purpose of their lives. But, we have our Creator and the instruction of our lives. (Bible)

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. (NIV)

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone. (MSG)

It starts with Christ. Our relationship to our Creator God is made by Christ. Holy God cannot be with sinners like us, but Christ cleansed us and made connection with God.

And God planned our lives in advance. God predestined us according to the plan and purpose of his will. He made us with his own plan. We were made by God and for God.

Because God designed us for eternity, our purposes are not just for this worldly life. Our purposes are in accordance with the existence of the whole creation in the past, present and future. We are designed for God's eternal kingdom.

Many times in our lives, we are short sighted. We only look at our immediate needs. But, I hope and pray that we will be able to learn that God has a certain purpose for each person, and he will guide us to fulfill his purposes in our lives.

Let us pray.

Father God, you created each person with your good plans. We trust that each of us is created by you with certain purposes. And we are eager to find out your plan for our lives. We begin our journey with you to find out the reason we are here. Heavenly Father, Faithful God, as we seek your wisdom, be with us and walk this journey with us, so we may fulfill our purposes of our lives and make you pleased and proud. As your beloved children, we want to make you proud of us. Thank you Father, help us and be with us. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for the people of God

Spirit of the living God, as we come before your presence and seek your face, reveal yourself to us. Help us see your face and help us listen to your voice. In our desires of many different areas of our lives, we are seeking your wisdom. Give us your heart and help us discern your voice from many voices from our inside.

Heavenly Father, we ask for the United States. New president Joe Biden inaugurated. Give him wisdom. Help him live in your presence in awe. Let everything he does may be done according to your purposes for his life and for the United States. Let your wisdom and power be seen as Joe Biden ministers the country and the world.

We pray for our people in our church. There are few who are sick and are hospitalized. Come into their hearts and give them peace and strength. With your healing power, heal their bodies and hearts. There are people with broken hearts, difficult situations, distorted relationships, and many other troubles of life. You are the God who knows us. You know our everything. Come into our lives and be the Lord. With your presence, may our chaos be transformed into order. And we are not able to gather physically. It seems like it will last for many more months. Even though we cannot meet, give us wisdom and courage, so we can find ways to connect to each other. Don't let this COVID disconnect our fellowship in spirit.

God of love and grace, we humbly ask for your wisdom and courage in our lives. Help us know who we truly are and who you truly are. So, we desire to worship you and praise you with our

lives. Be our Lord and be glorified through our lives. In Jesus' precious and beautiful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. Jesus asked his first disciples to answer his call with their lives. Our offering is one way we answer his call and carry forward his ministry in the world. Consider what Christ can accomplish through the gifts we offer today. Let us pray for the offering first.

Offering prayer:

Lord Jesus, you called ordinary men and women to follow you and join in the work of God's reign on earth. We offer you our gifts to share in the work you began through them. So bless our gifts and continue to work through us, that the world may know your love and grace is still active among us all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let the Lord's offering be received as we sing our hymn.

Offering – BOP# 400 – Spirit of the living God

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Each of us has a special purpose from God. Some of us may know it or the others are still looking for the meaning of our lives. This will be a long journey to find out our purposes of God and adopt the way of our lives pleasing to Him. Let us together walk this journey.

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) In spite of all the advertising around me, how can I remind myself that my life is really about living for God, not myself?
- 2) What do you think are implications of the first sentence of this book, "It's not about you"?