

Worship on May 2, 2021

Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship
- Praise song – **BOP #746 – What a friend we have in Jesus**
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination – prayer
- Scripture: Romans 5:6-11 (NLT)
- Sermon: Friendship with God
- Praise song – Friend of God (with guitar) **
- Communion

We Respond

- Offering (invitation and prayer first)
- Offertory Hymn – BOP # 434 – For the Beauty of the earth

We Serve

- Benediction

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 Sunday. May 2nd, 2021. Let us worship God with whole hearts. There will be the Lord's Table during today's worship.
- . Next week is Family Sunday, bring your children and we will have a family worship :) Since it has been so long that we saw each other's face, let us have virtual refreshment time after worship.
- . For Bible study with discussion questions, please stay after the worship. We will share and pray for each other.
- . Annual meeting for 2020 is on May 19, after worship. Stay after worship for annual meeting.
- . If anyone wants to volunteer to participate in worship, please let me know.
- . Thank you for your support with your gifts. May God use us and our gifts for his kingdom.

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: We gather with joy, for Easter continues.

All: Like spring crocuses breaking through the earth, the power of resurrection breaks through in surprising ways.

One: Like the vine that supports blossoms and fruit, God's Word upholds the church in strength.

All: Like an attentive gardener, God tends the needs of all creation.

One: Let us worship God who makes all things new.

All: We will praise our God who brings growth to each and every life.

Praise song – BOP #746 – What a friend we have in Jesus

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, you are the vine, and we are the branches. Your love is our strength. Your energy is our joy. Your attentiveness is our hope. Your power can transform even the most difficult situations. You nourish our faith and imaginations so that we can bear fruit in many ways. You promise that we can dwell in you because you are dwelling in us. We gather today to offer our praise to you, and bring glory to God our Father, through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Fill us with the love you know as God, ever Three and ever One, so that our love will honour you each and every day.

God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, we confess that there are so many ways we fail to love you faithfully and fully. Forgive us for our lack of reverence for the earth and for using up more than our share of its resources. Forgive us for ignoring the cries of others who know pain or discrimination which we dismiss as mere complaint. Forgive us for seeking praise from others yet failing to encourage them in their struggles. Forgive us, O God, and root our lives more deeply in your love.

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 in Christ at St. Andrew's, apostle John records that God is love, and that God's perfect love casts out fear. We are promised that those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. Claim your hope in this good news: God's perfect love abides in you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer for Illumination: Let us pray for the wisdom of God before reading today's scripture. Holy Spirit, move in us and among us as we listen to the scriptures be read and interpreted. Open our minds and hearts to receive the Living Word, so that we may be transformed to live as your beloved people. We long to be with you. Pour out your wisdom upon us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Romans 5:6-11 (NLT)

6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.

10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. **“This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.”**

SERMON: Friendship with God

Today’s sermon title is “Friendship with God.”

Friend. What kind of images you have when you think of friends?

My first image is fooling around together, wasting time together, and playing together.

With a small thing, we laugh together. We share our own inside jokes. Sometimes, people come and ask why we are laughing, but we cannot explain. That’s friendship.

The relationship God wants from us is like this. The relationship we can share inside jokes.

When we think about the relationship between God and us, what kinds of relationships are we thinking? What are the images we have about God?

God? Creator, Maker, Lord, Master, Judge, Redeemer, Father, Saviour, and many more.

This BIG God is reaching out his hands FIRST to be our friend.

In the Garden of Eden, we see God’s ideal relationship with us: Adam and Eve enjoyed an intimate friendship with God. There were no rituals, ceremonies, or religion – just a simple loving relationship between God and the people he created. Unhindered by guilt or fear, Adam and Eve delighted in God and God delighted in them.

We were made to live in God’s continual presence, but after the Fall, that ideal relationship was broken. It was lost. Only a few people in Old Testament times had the privilege of friendship with God. Moses and Abraham were called “friends of God,” David was called “a man after God’s own heart, and Job, Enoch, and Noah had intimate friendship with God. BUT, fear of God, not friendship, was more common in the Old Testament.

Then Jesus came and changed the situation. When he paid for our sins on the cross, the veil in the temple that symbolized our separation from God was split from top to bottom, indicating that direct access to God was once again available.

Friendship with God is possible only because of the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus. **“All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends.” (2 Corinthians 5:18 TEV)**

The door is open in front us. Jesus’ hand in right in front of us waiting for us to take.

“Come into my presence.” “Take my hand.” Jesus is calling us.

When I do Benediction, I include word INTIMATE. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the INTIMATE fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

The friendship with God is the reason why I include a word INTIMATE. Just like we desire the intimate relationship with God, God longs for it too. God longs for the intimacy with us more than we do. Knowing and loving God is our greatest privilege. Remember David’s psalm, what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?

How can we maintain this amazing privilege from God?

The Book, The Purpose Driven Life, introduces 6 methods. We will take a look at two of them today, and four in two weeks because next week is Family Sunday. Please bring your whole family next week.

So, how do we become a best friend of God,

FIRST – through constant conversation.

To share our private inside jokes, we need to know each other. How do we get to know each other? We spend time together, a lot. It is important to attend church once a week and to have a daily quiet time with God, but intimate friendship with God does not grow with them. We can only build intimate fellowship with God by sharing all our life experiences with him.

The author of the book fell in love with his wife and this is what he did. I introduced it few weeks ago. **“When I first fell in love with my wife, I thought of her constantly: while eating breakfast, driving to school, attending class, waiting in line at the market, pumping gas – I could not stop thinking about this woman. I often talked to my self about her and thought about all the things I loved about her. This helped me feel close to my wife even though we lived several hundred miles apart and attended different colleges. By constantly thinking of her, I was abiding in her love. This is what real worship is all about – falling in love with Jesus.”**

This is how we stay connected with God all the time. Constantly thinking about him. We love God and we desire God. HOWEVER, it is not easy to stay in the excitement of his love all the time. So, we need practice and training. One way is to use “Breath Prayer” throughout the day. We choose a brief sentence or a simple phrase that can be repeated to God in one breath. You can also use Bible verses.

“You are with me.” “I receive your grace.” “I’m depending on you.” “I want to know you.” “I belong to you.” “Help me trust you.” “For me to live is Christ.” “You will never leave me.” “You are my God.”

Practicing the presence of God is a habit and a skill. So, we can develop it through this Breath prayer or constantly thinking of God.

Second way of How do we become a best friend of God, is through continual meditation.

When we think about a problem over and over in our mind, that’s called worry.

When we think about God’s word over and over in our mind, that’s meditation.

Yet, if we don’t know what God says, we cannot think about God’s word over and over.

Knowing the Word of God is important because that’s how we know God and God’s thoughts.

Living in God’s presence is not feeling or emotion. But, it is our continual awareness of the reality that God is always with us. That is the lifestyle of worship.

To have intimate friendship with God, we need to know God’s mind. And, the way to know his mind is to know his words.

Think about a baby. My little boy Benjamin just turned 1 year old last week. He says mommy mommy mommy. He calls mommy constantly. Does he know what his mom thinks? Does he know what his mom wants by just calling her repeatedly? NO. he needs conversation.

We need both way communication. Back-and-forth communication.

Prayer lets us speak to God AND knowing the Bible and meditation lets God speak to us.

Let us build the intimate friendship with God by talking to him and by listening what he says to us.

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving Father God, we thank you that you are mindful of us all the time. You want us. You desire intimacy with us. What are we that you love us so much? It's beyond our thoughts. Help us accept your unending love for us even though we cannot understand. It's amazing that your love never changes. Many times, it is hard for us to love our own selves. But, your love never changes. We rely upon your love and your faithfulness. We pray for intimate friendship with you. Guide us and walk with us. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Song: Friend of God

The Lord's Supper – Communion

"I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." This is the Lord's Table. It is the time that we are reminded that we are in our Lord. We are with our Lord Jesus Christ. He invites us to remember who we are and to whom we are belong to. As we remember and celebrate our Lord, let us offer our lives to him once more. Taste and see that the LORD is good.

*(Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:) (Please say **BOLD** print together)*

L: The Lord be with you. **P: And also, with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts. **P: We lift them to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **P: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

L: Holy God, Creator of heaven and earth, you are the most glorious God. You are praiseworthy and all the glory and honour and power and wisdom are due to you. We are amazed that you called us friends. The most high God cares for the mere human, us. How can this be. How can you be mindful of such small and weak creature of yours. Thank you for calling us and embracing us in your arms. At this time of worship, we lift our hearts in joyful praise.

(Sanctus) Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of Your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

L: We praise you, most holy God. You gave your Son for our life. Thank you. You cleansed our sin and opened the way to God, the most Holy. Thank you for bearing all the pains in the place of ours. Thank you for giving up your life for ours. And we praise you that you overcame death and you rose to take over the world from death. You are the friend of sinners. We trust you to overcome every power that can hurt or divide us, and we believe that when you come in glory, we will celebrate victory with you. So, we remember your mighty acts as we take this bread and this cup and we give you praise and thanksgiving as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

P: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

L: Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours, almighty God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Breaking of the BREAD and Pouring the WINE

When we break the bread, it is a sharing in the body of Christ. (BREAD)

"This is the body of Christ broken for you." (Let us take it)

When we bless the cup, it is a sharing in the blood of Christ (CUP)

“This is the blood of Christ shed for you.” (Let us drink it)

Prayer after Communion:

I am the vine and you are the branches. Jesus, we are so thankful that you called us. We are the branches. We are attached to you. This image of branch gives us confidence because we are not our own, but you are with us. Thank you for this bread and wine. It proclaims that we are yours. It confirms that you are in us. Lord Jesus Christ, by your sacrifice, we have life. By your death, we live. We long to abide in you. We know we are already abiding in you, but sometimes, we live in our own ways. Because we have you in us, and you are in us, guide our steps so we can reflect your presence in every step we make.

It's already May. We've been in world Pandemic over 1 year. We lost many of our friends and family members during this time. We remember them this time. Sad one-year anniversaries past and are coming soon. Heavenly Father, branches are attached together. Our lives are linked together. As we remember the loss of our loved ones, help us share our hearts and love each other. Because we cannot be physically together, there are not many ways to show our togetherness. So, help us pray for each other and try to show our love for each other in safe ways. And Lord, be with all the families filling their hearts with peace and hope. Encourage them and hug them, with your love.

We also pray for the people who are suffering. There are people who are with physical pains. At this time, we pray for your healing power. Be with them and be merciful to them. Heal their bodies and fill their hearts with joy and wonder.

May is family month. We are planning to gather together next week with our family members in worship. As we gather together, fill our hearts with gladness to meet each other and fill our community with joy and love for each other. Let us be a worshipping community and we want to be joy and pleasure in your heart. Lord, God, you are our Lord and King. Be glorified through our lives. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. While the season of Easter unfolds, the gifts of spring emerging around us also remind us of God's generosity in Christ and in creation. As we present our gifts to God, may our generosity reflect God's goodness to us and our hope for abundant life in Christ Jesus. Let us pray.

Offering prayer:

Gracious and generous God, we bless you for your gift of life renewed through Christ's love, and through springtime growth in fields and gardens. Bless the gifts we offer you. May they bring hope and renewal to others as we serve in the name of your greatest gift, Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen.

Offering – BOP # 434 – For the. Beauty of the earth

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. God calls us friends. He wants to share our lives. He wants us to talk to him constantly and he wants us to know his thoughts. Coram Deo, let us live in the presence of God and let us be with God.

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. What is the best moment spent with my friend?
2. What's my image of God? And how have this been affecting my life?
3. Can I become a friend of God, with all my heart?