

Worship on March 20, 2022 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)

(Welcoming Elder: Edwin Webster)

Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 37 O God, thou art my God alone
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Prayer for our children
- Praise song – Amazing Love (I'm Forgiven)

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: Psalm 63:1-8
- Sermon: Straining forward to what lies ahead (Lent 2)
- The Prayer for the people of God

We Respond

- Offering & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say

We Serve

- Benediction

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us today. This is Sunday, March 20th, 2022. God prepares a feast for us. That is this worship. Be in his presence and experience his love.

. Rev. Soong will have his office hours on Wednesday from 9am-12pm. He can talk to you on the phone or meet and talk to you in person. Please let him know.

. Prayer is unseen, yet powerful. If you have prayer needs, let us know.

Cheryl Daddis @ cheryl@pathcom.com or Soong @ revsoonghuh@hotmail.com

. Ukraine needs our prayers and our resources. If anyone wants to make donation for Ukraine, please do so. This money will go to PWS&D.

. Also, because of Pandemic, we stopped helping with food pantry. Let us start again by collecting food and money to support the Aurora Food Pantry and Food Bank.

. Thank you for your continuing support with your gifts. As we offer our gifts to the Lord, let us give our hearts and our lives to the Lord as well. May God be in the centre of your hearts.

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: Seek the Lord while God may be found. Call upon God who is near.

All: We will return to the Lord our God.

One: God's thoughts are not our thoughts. God's ways are not our ways.

All: We come, seeking new paths to follow.

One: As the heavens are higher than the earth so are God's ways higher than ours.

All: We come as pilgrims on the journey, praising God along the way. Let us worship God with thankful hearts!

Praise song – BOP 37 – O God thou art my God alone

<u>Vs. 1</u> O God, thou art my God alone, Early to thee my soul shall cry, a pilgrim in a land unknown, A thirsty land whose springs are dry	<u>Vs. 2</u> Yet through this rough and thorny maze I follow hard on thee my God Thy hand unseen upholds my ways I safely tread where thou hast trod
<u>Vs. 4</u> Better than life itself, thy love Dearer than all beside to me For whom have I in heaven above Or what on earth, compared with thee?	<u>Vs. 5</u> Praise with my heart, my mind, my voice, For all thy mercy I will give My soul shall still in God rejoice My tongue shall bless thee while I live

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God, our Creator and Sustainer, in you we live and move and have our being.

In your depths we find meaning; in your heights we find light and joy.

You are the source of peace and hope for all who turn to you.

You alone have been our help and our guide; you give us strength and courage when we face challenges.

In you we find rest and welcome along the way.

We praise you, O God, for your steadfast love. Draw near to us once more in this time of worship. Reveal your purposes for us and prepare us for the days ahead so that our lives may witness to your mercy and grace as we follow Jesus.

God of grace and mercy, we confess that our thoughts are so often not your thoughts; our way are rarely your ways. Our tempers are short and we fail to act with kindness.

Our confidence is weak and we treat others without respect. Our faith falters and we lose track of you. Forgive the many ways we fail you, and inspire us to follow you more faithfully.

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, Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ – And Christ died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. By Christ's mercy, we can make a fresh start as we follow him.

Prayer for children

God of love and grace, we thank you for this beautiful day. Thank you for the March break. Thank you for the school. From tomorrow, we are told that we can go mask-free. There might be some confusions. Some will keep masks, and the others will remove their masks. Help us embrace each other and understand each other with God's love. Protect students and teachers. And help these precious children and youth establish meaningful relationships with their friends and teachers, so they experience and exercise your love and grace. Guide their steps and fill their hearts with hope. Hold their hands and walk with them. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Praise Song: Amazing Love (You are my King)

I'm forgiven because You were forsaken

I'm accepted You were condemned

I'm alive and well Your Spirit is within me Because You died and rose again

Chorus

Amazing love How can it be that You my King would die for me

Amazing love I know it's true it's my joy to honor You

In all I do I honor You

Bridge

You are my King You are my King Jesus You are my King Jesus You are my King

Prayer for Illumination:

O God, we turn to the Scripture to seek your wisdom and your truth.

Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to receive your Word for our lives and our times. Equip us to follow Jesus Christ, your Living Word. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 63:1-8

1 O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

3 Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

4 So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

5 My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips

6 when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

7 for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

8 My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

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

SERMON: Joy Every day

Today is the third Sunday of Lent. Last week, we talked about overcoming our past and looking ahead of the days in our future. How was your week? How hopeful are you?

Today's sermon title is "Joy Every day."

JOY. Do you have joy in your hearts?

There's a song.

I've got the joy joy joy joy down in my heart. down in my heart. down in my heart.

I've got the joy joy joy joy down in my heart. down in my heart to stay

I am so happy, so very happy, I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

I am so happy, so very happy, I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

This children song says that the source of joy and happiness is the love of Jesus.
Simple and easy

Do we have the love of Jesus in our hearts? If yes, do we have joy in our hearts?
Two questions, but, in fact, these two questions are asking one thing. Is the love of Jesus in your heart give you joy?

Today's Psalm is written by David. King David loved God. He chased after God's heart. His focus was on God and his desire was pleasing God with his life. God blessed him so much. But, David had to go through a lot of ups and downs in his life. But, his Psalms constantly praise God regardless his good or bad situations. His Psalms never lose the focus from the love of God. He never stops praising God. He never loses his joy from the love of God.

This Psalm 63 was written when David was running away from his son Absalom. Absalom rebelled. He organized his own army secretly. **2 Samuel 15:13-14, "A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the Israelites have gone after Absalom." Then David said to all his officials who were with him at Jerusalem, "Get up! Let us flee, or there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Hurry, or he will soon overtake us, and bring disaster down upon us, and attack the city with the edge of the sword."**

David was not prepared for his own son's rebellion. All he could do was to run away. The king David was running away from his own son. His own son tried to attack his own father and tried to take away everything from him.

If you were David, how would you feel? What would you say to God? What would be your prayer? Would you be able to praise God and worship God wholeheartedly? What would be the emotion? What kind of face expressions would you have on your face?

Fear. Sadness. Sorrow. Pain. Regret. Heartbroken. Misery.

But, listen to David's psalm.

V1 – O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. David still comes before the presence of God. He honestly expresses his desires. His dryness, his thirst for God. In difficult situation, David looks upon God. His heart seeks God.

V2 – So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. I look upon your power and glory, in this difficulty, I look upon you. I come into your presence.

V3 – Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. V4 – So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name. As if nothing happened, as if everything goes well, David's praise does not reveal his present suffering. This is his confession. Your love is better than my life. So, I praise you and take you my joy as long as I live. Wow...

V5-8, "My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me."

Imagine that you were one of King David's officials. If you heard his prayer and praise, how would you feel?

In this situation!? After experiencing all these things!? When our lives are in danger?

King David praises God with his whole heart? Is he okay? Is his mind sane?
Was the shock too much for him to take, so he became out of his mind??

These would be our natural responses.

But, David sings for joy in the presence of God when he is running away from his own son.

I am reading *Good Morning I Love You* by Shauna Shapiro. She's talking about MINDFULNESS, which helps us see clearly. She says, we build our natural way of life. Our brains build natural reactions according to what we do repeatedly. She says that our neurons wire together and build highways of our natural and habitual reactions. For example, if one has temper and let it burst repeatedly, this person's natural reaction is getting angry.

What we practice grows stronger. What we do become natural for us, more and more. We build our own highways of our instinctive reactions. HOWEVER, Shapiro says that we can change it. We can set the directions of our highways of natural reactions in our brains. We can change our accustomed natural habits by training. This might sounds like far from Christianity, but, on the other hand, this scientific study of brain supports our faith.

David has been worshipping God and praising God for all through his life. Following God's heart became natural for him. He built the highway of loving God. His accustomed response and reaction is leaning toward God's ways. In hard times, he was able to see God. His eyes were fixed upon God. His heart was depend upon God, not his own strengths nor what he had. He took his joy not from his situations, not from his possessions, not from where he was situated, but from God's faithful love for him.

Do you want to build the habit of loving God? We DO have the love of Jesus in our hearts. Whether we feel or not, the love of Jesus is poured upon each of us. The path of intimate loving relationship with God is opened for us already. David fixed his thoughts and his eyes on the love of God, so he built the habit of loving God, thanking God, and praising God.

Lent is the time of thinking of God's love. Lent is the time of refreshing our trust in God. Let us build the highway of joy, the fullness of our lives, by fixing our eyes on the love of Jesus already poured upon us.

Jesus prayed early in the morning. He teaches us the importance of putting God first. Shapiro titled her book, *Good morning I love you*. She highlights the first input of the day: it is love. Jesus encountered God first in the morning. David did the same. **Psalm 5:3, NLT, "Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly."**

We can practice seeking God first in the morning by simply saying, "Good morning God, I love you." If you are somewhat too shy to confess your love to God, then just say God, "Good morning God" as you wake up. Through building this simple habit, you will be able to gradually grow the relationship with God deeper and deeper.

Accept the love of God, remain in the love of God, and have joy in everything because of his love for you.

This is the word of the Lord for us today.

Prayer for the people of God

God of love and grace, thank you for your love. Your love surrounds us. Your love is all around us. Sometimes, we feel your love, but, sometimes, we have to confess that we feel distant from you. Whether we feel your love or not, we know that your love for us never changes. You are pouring out your love lavishly upon us. Thank you. Like David was able to praise you and worship you in his lowest moments, we want to do the same. Help us worship you and love you. Help us have joy in our hearts because of your love. Fill our hearts with never-ceasing love of yours.

Father God, we are grateful that we are able to worship you together in-person and online. We are able to connect to each other. We are able to enjoy the connectedness with you and with each other. Lord, our God, we pray for your mercy upon us. There are many things we have to take care for our church. We thank you for the people who are devoted. Fill their hearts with your wisdom and peace. Refresh their hearts and empower them. Take good care of their lives, their families, their relationships, and their inner beings. Let your Holy Spirit dwell in their hearts and guide them step by step. Also, help us invite you in our hearts, so we become your hands and feet, making differences in our daily lives.

Help us look back our lives and see how you led us and how you protected us. Open our eyes and hearts to your works and help us experience your love in our everyday lives.

Lord, we pray for our congregants. Whatever the situations they face, be with each of them and help them remain in your love. Strengthen them and guide their steps.

The government decided go mask-free from tomorrow. As our children and youth go back to school mask-free, protect them safely. Give us wisdom, so we can provide our students and teachers the best for them. There might be some confusions, but in all these, be present upon them. Help them embrace each other with love and understanding.

Gracious Father God, where is this Russian and Ukraine war heading? It has been over a month already. We pray over the prayer of Pope Francis for the war in Ukraine:

Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners.

Lord, Jesus, born under the bombs of Kyiv[keev], have mercy on us.

Lord, Jesus, who died in his mother's arms in a bunker in Kharkiv[kaar.keev], have mercy on us.

Lord, Jesus, sent at 20 years old to the front, have mercy on us.

Lord, Jesus, who still sees armed hands in the shadow of your Cross, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, Lord, if not content with the nails with which we pierced your hands, we continue to drink from the blood of the dead torn apart by weapons.

Forgive us, Lord, if these hands that you created for care have been transformed into instruments of death.

Forgive us, Lord, if we continue to kill our brothers, if we continue like Cain to remove the stones from our field to kill Abel. Forgive us if we continue to justify cruelty with our toil, if with our pain we legitimize the cruelty of our actions.

Forgive us the war, Lord. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, we implore you: Stop the hand of Cain. Enlighten our consciences, let not our will be done, do not abandon us to our own actions. Stop us, Lord, stop us. (Pause...)

In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering.

God has given us life and breath, and created a world of beauty and order.

In Christ we know God's generous mercy. Our gifts are tokens of gratitude for all that we have received in Jesus Christ and in creation. May our gifts speak for our thankful hearts this day.

Offering prayer:

Loving God, accept these our gifts, we pray. Bless them and use them to inspire peace in places of unrest, love in places of resentment, joy in places of fear, and hope in places of loss, all for the sake of Jesus Christ, our friend and Saviour. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say

<u>Vs. 1:</u> I heard the voice of. Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest; lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast!" I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad; I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.	<u>Vs. 2:</u> I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give the living water; thirsty one, stoop down, and drink and live!" I came to Jesus, and I drank of that lifegiving stream; my thirst was quenched, my soul revived and now I live in him.	<u>Vs. 3:</u> I heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am this dark world's light; look unto me, thy soul shall rise, and all thy day be bright." I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun, and in that light of life I'll walk till traveling days are done.
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Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. The source of our joy is the love of Jesus Christ for us. We want to have true joy in our daily life. Desire joy in your daily life. Have the love of God in your heart. Accept it, it's already for you. Come to God first thing in the morning and build intimate relationship 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.