

Worship on January 15, 2023 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)
(Welcoming Elder: Robert Revington)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 290 Immortal, invisible, God only wise
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 177 Christ, whose glory fills the skies

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Matthew 3:13-17
- Second reading: Psalm 29 (refrain 2)
- Third reading: Acts 10:34-43
- Sermon: What is the good news for you?
- The Prayer for the People of God

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 399 Spirit, Spirit of gentleness

We Serve

- Benediction

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

Responsive Call to Worship

O Lord, open our lips,

And our mouths shall declare your praise.

O Lord, open our eyes,

So that we may behold your presence.

O Lord, open our ears,

So that we may hear your call to follow.

O Lord, open our hearts,

So that we may offer you worship in love and joy.

Praise song – BOP 290 Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God, our Creator and Redeemer, your faithfulness endures forever. You offer us new life in Christ Jesus and call us to follow him. You challenge us to bring life and hope to the world you love. In you we find strength and courage to face every challenge, until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ arrives. And so we offer our praise and gratitude to you, O God, with Christ and the Spirit, one God, now and always.

Faithful God, you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost yet it's hard to admit that we have lost our way. We seek the next new thing instead of your gift of new life. We follow the trends of our culture rather than Jesus' example. Wash over us with your cleansing Spirit, and renew our commitment to follow your purposes revealed in Christ Jesus.

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, Let us rejoice, for God has put a new song in our mouths! Trust in God's enduring love and mercy, washing over us every day. Know that forgiveness is yours through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord be with you. Let us take few moments to greet each other and share our peace.

Prayer for children and youth

Glorious and Almighty God, we praise you and worship you. And we thank you for allowing us to have children and youth holding in our hearts and praying for them. Help us gather our hearts together and offer them up to your faithful and loving hands. Lord God, you are saying to us, you are so precious, you are so valuable, I love you so much. Let our children and youth accept this from their hearts. Through their relationships, studies, plays, and all experiences in their lives, the message of your love be immersed in their hearts. Build confidence in them because they are loved, because they are cherished, because they are supported by you. Be their solid foundation, be their strong fortress, be their refuge. Open their hearts and pour out your love. Let them trust you all through their lives. Be with them. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Praise Song: BOP 177 Christ, whose glory fills the skies

Prayer for Illumination:

Holy One, you have blessed your people with wisdom over the ages. We seek your wisdom today. Send your Holy Spirit now, to give us understanding through your Word read and proclaimed this day. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

First reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Second reading: Psalm 29 (refrain 2)

Third reading: Acts 10:34-43

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

SERMON: What is the good news for you?

Today's sermon title is **"What is the good news for you?"**

Have you heard a name **Cornelius?** **He is a centurion of the Italian Cohort. He was a devout man who feared God with all his household. (Acts 10:1-2)**

One afternoon, he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, **“Cornelius, your prayers and neighbourly acts have brought you to God’s attention. Here’s what you are to do. Send men to Joppa to get Simon, the one everyone calls Peter.”**

So, Cornelius sent men to invite Peter. Meanwhile, an angel of the Lord went to Peter and gave a vision. He saw the heaven opened and something like a large blanket coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. **Every kind of animal and reptile and bird you could think of was on it. Then a voice came: “Go to it, Peter – kill and eat.”** Peter said, **“Oh, no, Lord. I’ve never so much as tasted food that was unclean. These are profane.”** The voice came a second time: **“If God says it’s okay, it’s okay.” (Acts 10:15)** This happened three times, and then the blanket was pulled back up into the heaven.

Peter was puzzled trying to figure out what it all meant. At that time, Cornelius’ men came knocking on Peter’s door. Peter was told to come to Cornelius.

Next morning, with Cornelius’ servants, Peter went to Cornelius and he preached. That is today’s scripture.

Peter’s preaching is this: **v34, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality.”**
“It’s God’s own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favourites! It makes no difference who you are or where you’re from.
If you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open. The Message, the Good News he sent to the children of Israel – that through Jesus Christ everything is being put together again – well, he’s doing it everywhere, among everyone.

This is the very important moment. Jewish man spoke the message of God to non-Jewish people for the first time. What is the opening statement? **“God shows no partiality.” “God plays no favourites!”**

God does not have favouritism. God does not divide people in groups.
God treats every one equally with his faithful love and grace.

You know, I have three children. One friend of mine sometimes asks me. **Who’s your favourite child?** When I was asked first, I said, I love them equally. But, this question remained in my heart and I asked myself. Oh.. I have favouritism, I realized. Among relationships, we have favouritism.

When Peter first encountered Cornelius, he had struggled because **Gentile vs Israelite** was a very sensitive issue. They did not talk to each other. **Genesis 43:32 “Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.”**

Eating with somebody should be a pleasant experience. But, there is a big wall between two people like Gentiles and Israelites. Then, the origin of division is Egypt? Is it their fault? NO.. **Naturally, people isolated themselves from others.** People find their identity within a group, and fear that they will lose that identity if they do not guard their separateness. People find it difficult to relate to and associate with those who are different from themselves. People have a sense that they will lose their status within their own group if they dare to reach out to those on the outside. **Prejudice runs deep within us.** This is our human nature.
If you are not same as me, you are not valuable.
If you are not in our group, you are not meaningful.

If you are different, you are not precious.

These are the messages we have deep inside our hearts.

Look at Peter, when God gave him a vision, he answered no to eating unclean foods. Even Peter did not understand God's universal salvation plan. He did not have that concept. God was only for the Jews in Peter's mind.

But, God's nature is different. God broke religious rules to extend his love to all people. Peter, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, realized it by God's intervention. Only because God intervened, Peter comprehended that no human being can be called unclean.

Deuteronomy 10:17, God "is not partial and takes no bribe" in executing justice for the orphan and the widow. Peter's new discovery is that God's impartiality extends to people in every nation who fear God and do what is right. Through this event, **the salvation of Israel becomes universal salvation**, because God's impartiality extends to the whole world.

God is willing to accept all who turn to him. God sent the message of peace through Jesus Christ. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power. God continued to be with Jesus throughout his ministry. God raised Jesus after people had put him to death. God enabled Jesus to appear to those whom God had chosen as witnesses. God commanded those to whom Jesus appeared to preach to the people. God embraces us through Jesus Christ. His death on the cross is for all people who turn back to God.

This different nature of God which God shows no partiality teaches us how to treat each other.

Peter repeatedly asserted that no person is beyond the care and concern of God.

I don't know why, but in my heart, one sentence "you are so precious" is stuck. I hope you stop having partiality or favoritism.

Because God does not see us in that way.

This is how God sees us.

You are so precious. You are so valuable. You are so beautiful. You are so lovely. You are so adorable. You are so delightful. You are so special in your own unique ways.

What hinders you to accept this good news?

Put your hands on your chest. Or wrap around your shoulders. And repeat after me, but put your own name.

"Soong, you are so precious." **"Soong, You are so valuable."** **"Soong, You are so beautiful."**
"Soong, You are so lovely." **"Soong, You are so adorable."** **"Soong, You are so delightful."**
"Soong, You are so special in your own unique ways."

God blesses you. God loves you. God cares for you. Whether we like our situations or our conditions, God concerns us. God helps us. God holds our hands and walks with us.

Open your hearts, open your eyes. And remove all the obstacles blocking you accepting the lavishing love of God.

This is the message of the Lord for us today. Let us pray.

Prayer for the people of God

Thank you for your love for us. Thank you that you see us without favouritism. In other words, every single one of us is your favourite. Thank you for your encouragement.

Please remove our distorted prejudice on our own selves or on others. So, let us accept your love as it is. Let your amazing love, let your unfathomable love fill our hearts.

You are holding the whole earth. You are governing this whole universe. You are the Creator and Ruler of all beings. We sometimes hear that this Mother Nature is angry at us. We have been using resources abusively. We did not consider the condition of our nature, but we only cared for our profit and our comfort. We are sorry God. You called us to be good stewards of your creation, but we did not good job. Help us remember who we are, what we need to do. And help us know that taking good care of creation is eventually for us. Help us act upon recycling, saving water, saving energy, reducing waste, and many clever ways to save environment.

Also, God, we pray for peace. In every one's heart, there is hatred, frustration, and selfish desires. You are the Prince of peace who came down to earth for us and died for us. You washed all our human nature in our hearts. Help us have you in our hearts and follow you. Help us not turn back to our human nature, but be filled with your nature restoring our original created image. Make us like you. Make us your co-creator and good stewards of your creation.

To us, you are saying, you are so precious. Open our hearts and ears and help us really listen to what you are saying to us. Good News. You have no favouritism. Good News. We are so special. We are so precious in your eyes. Help us make these our own good news.

Be with all the congregants in our church. Protect them and guide them in their own situations.

Be praised and be worshipped. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. God has given us a new song in our hearts, a song of thankfulness and praise. So we bring our gifts with thanksgiving and hearts cheered by God's goodness. As we offer our gifts, let us praise God.

The Doxology (BOP 830)

Offering prayer:

Gracious God, we offer you our gifts with humble hearts. Each gift seems small on its own, so bless each one and those of your people throughout the Church. Through the work of your Holy Spirit, surprise us with all that our gifts can accomplish, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 399 Spirit, Spirit of gentleness

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. You are so precious. You are so valuable. Shine your light with your joy, so let your joy be overflowing from you 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.