

**Worship on March 5, 2023** (CCLI: License Number #3156883)  
(Welcoming Elder: Kevin Johnston)

### **Sunday Order of worship**

#### **We Gather**

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 371 Love divine, all love excelling
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 400 Spirit of the living God

#### **We Listen**

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Genesis 12:1-4
- Second reading: Psalm 121 (refrain 2)
- Third reading: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
- Sermon: The sheer gift of righteousness
- Communion (with The Apostles' Creed BOP 539)

#### **We Respond**

- Offering, Doxology & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 349 My hope is built on nothing less

#### **We Serve**

- Benediction

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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**

L: Just as the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness,

**P: The Spirit sends us into places of uncertainty where we confront our weakness and insecurities.**

L: Even when our situation changes, we cling to the tried and the true.

**P: We insist that what worked in the past will work in the future.**

L: Yet, Jesus calls us to die to our old ways so that the new will emerge.

**P: He said that we need to be born again to see God's new realm.**

L: Embracing God's realm will mean accepting different principles that no longer feed our egos.

**P: It will mean putting the needs of others before our own.**

L: We know the depth of God's love, revealed to us in Jesus, God's Son.

**P: When we are reborn by God's Spirit, we will go where the Spirit leads us and love as God loves us.**

**Praise song – BOP BOP 371 Love divine, all love excelling**

**Prayer For Adoration and Confession**

God of majesty and mercy, Christ, both Lord and Servant, Spirit of new life, Your mystery embraces the vast reaches of the universe and yet you are present with us in the course of our daily lives. With even the tiniest spark of your wisdom illuminated the greatest complexities. With the smallest gesture of your love, you renew our hope. Deepen our sense of your holy presence this day. Assure us that your love will never let us go. And so we offer our praise and our prayers this day to you, Holy God, Holy One and Holy Three, with humble hearts and faith that seeks understanding.

God of mystery and mercy, we confess that we prefer simply certainty to seeking for deeper understanding. We settle for what we know, ignoring our doubts and questions. Forgive us when we give up our faith because what we think no longer satisfies. Open our eyes to the truth you offer to us in Christ, and give us courage to rethink what we have assumed about you and your love for the world.

**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**

Friends in Christ, The Apostle Paul declared, that from now on, we regard no one from a human point of view. If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away; look, everything has become new! Thanks be to God for love that gives us all a new start this very day!

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**

Loving God the Father, we are gathered before your presence longing to experience you. We stand before you longing to find peace in you. Lord Jesus, you said, come to me then I will give you rest. We trust your promise. Our biggest concern is our children and youth to live up to their possibility. Living up to your calling is our biggest responsibility when we raise our children. We rely upon you. We seek your help. We cannot do anything. We cannot control our loved ones. Pour out your love upon them and capture their hearts. Draw them close to you. Let them know you and let them give their hearts to you, so they live in your presence with your guidance. Be worshipped by them and be glorified by them. Shine your light through their lives. Give us faith to entrust our children and youth into your hands. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

### **Praise Song: BOP 400 Spirit of the living God**

### **Prayer for Illumination:**

God of Wisdom, we turn to Scripture to listen and learn. Send your Holy Spirit to help us listen carefully so that we hear what we have not heard before and learn to follow Christ with deeper understanding and renewed commitment. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

**First reading: Genesis 12:1-4**

**Second reading: Psalm 121 (refrain 2)**

**Third reading: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

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

**SERMON: The sheer gift of righteousness**

Today’s sermon title is **“The sheer gift of righteousness.”**

The core message of today’s Romans passage is that Abraham’s faith supersedes the law. The law here is the teachings of God handed down through Moses. It certainly is important for them. It was their identity and even pride. The Jews thought their faith is only expressed by observing the law. In Romans 2, Paul argues. **“17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God 18 and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, 19 and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, 21 you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You that boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? 24 For, as it is written, ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’**

This shows that the Jews are hanging onto their laws, but Paul is asking them, **“ARE YOU SURE THAT YOU ARE KEEPING ALL THE LAWS?”** We know what the laws from God. The Ten Commandments.

1. **You shall have no other gods but me.**
2. **You shall not make unto you any graven images.**
3. **You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**
4. **You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.**
5. **Honour your mother and father.**
6. **You shall not murder.**
7. **You shall not commit adultery.**
8. **You shall not steal.**
9. **You shall not bear false witness.**
10. **You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbour.**

All the LAWS for the Jews are originated from these 10 laws.

The Jews considered they were the descendants of Abraham and took the pride from it. So, their identity were the descendants of Abraham and the people of the Mosaic laws. The first part, being the descendants of Abraham, caused the division between them and all other nations. They had the mindset of the chosen people. They considered themselves somewhat better than others.

And the identity of the people of the Law resulted them to focus on their behaviours, not on their hearts. These two great blessings became the curse upon them. Being the chosen people to spread the Good News to all the earth made them proud and arrogant. Having the Mosaic laws, in order for them to realize the limitedness of human being, they lost the intention of God. God did not give the laws for us to pay our full attention to keeping the laws. **What is the purpose of the laws?** The laws show what beliefs and behaviours please God. By knowing the laws, we are to realize our weaknesses that we cannot meet the requirements of God to be righteous. It should tell us that **we are not enough in obeying all of his laws. This should guide us to come to God in humility.** But we lost our hearts relying on God, but **we disguise ourselves that we kept all the laws.**

This is why Paul cried out to the Jews in Romans 2. **21 you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You that boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law?**

Paul knew the true purpose of the law and deeply agonized by his own people being blinded with the desires to be righteous before the eyes of God with the law.

That's why Paul is writing Romans 4.

**V1-5, "What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' 4 Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5 But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness."**

Paul is shifting the focus of the people. "Yes, we are the descendants of Abraham. But, you know what, Abraham became our faithful ancestor not by his work, but by his faith in God. God considered Abraham righteous because of his faith, not because of his work. If we could become righteous before God with our works, with the law, then why would Abraham be counted righteous before God with his faith?"

**What is righteousness?** The traditional definition of righteousness has been **to live in a right relationship with God and with other people.** So, **all the laws are supposed to be applied to the relational point of view.** Therefore, when we want to address the issue of the word righteousness, the emphasis should be on the relationship it points to. **The relationship is with God, not God's laws.** Laws are useful in telling us what beliefs and behaviours please God.

**V15, For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. 16 For this reason it depends on faith.**

**Abraham's faith, not the laws, guarantees and activates God's promises.**

God's grace is the proof for us that God chose to love us. This determination of God set us in a right relationship with God. And this grace is brought to us in Jesus Christ. **Martin Luther**, who led the Reformation, tried to be righteous by his good works for a long time. It took him a long time to discover that **it is simply by faith that we enter into a right relationship with God.**

**Then what is faith?** Faith is a challenging word. Tradition definitions are: **trust in God, beliefs about God, and the way of life we are led into by faith. In Paul's heart, the faith for Abraham was a willingness to trust in God.**

Once we realize that we are chosen by God with his grace alone, then we are able to confess our willingness to follow God. This awareness is also the gift of God.

**Ephesians 2:8-9, 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— 9 not the result of works, so that no one may boast.**

The righteousness we have now is solely from God. We need to know that we cannot even control our faith. Faith, the willingness to trust God, is also from God. Our life in God became righteous by the sheer gift of righteousness from God. **We start from God and end with God. This is who we are.**

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

**Communion At The Lord's Table** This is the time for Communion at the Lord's Table. God is with you! And God is with us all. Open wide your hearts. We open them completely to the Spirit of God. May God's love nurture your wandering spirits each day. May God's light sustain your souls each night. Let us confess our faith by saying the Apostles' Creed.

**The Apostles' Creed (BOP 539)**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

**Amen.**

*(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: Blessed are you Lord, strong and faithful God. All your works, the height and the depth, echo the silent music of your praise. All of creation sing your praise. Thank you for giving us breath and speech, so we might lift your name with our praise. We worship you through our daily lives. For all your guidance and your great mercy and love, **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: How wonderful is your salvation work for us. As a mother tenderly gathers her children, as a father joyfully welcomes his own, you embraced your people and filled them with longing for a peace that would last, for a justice that would never fail. Jesus, through your sacrifice, your people received life. Death lost its power. You defeated death and raised back to your original place as the Lord of all creation. Holy God, holy Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, **we proclaim the mystery of faith:**

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

L: Eternal God, let your Holy Spirit move in power over us and over these symbolic gifts of bread and wine at this time. We may become one in Christ. We experience true freedom in you. With our whole hearts, with all your creation, we sing your praise and worship you. Through Christ, by Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, almighty God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Breaking of the BREAD and Pouring the WINE – prepare your Bread and Wine**

“This is the **body** of Christ, broken for you.” (BREAD)

Take, eat, remember, and believe that the precious body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (Let us take it)

“This is the **blood** of Christ, poured out for you.” (CUP)

Take, drink, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (Let us drink it)

**Prayer after Communion:**

God of love, by your grace and love and mercy, we are set righteous before you. Our sins, our weaknesses, our selfishness, could not block your love for us. Even though there are too many reasons we cannot be righteous, God, you removed everything through the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you, God, for your grace is poured upon each of us, we decided to live for you. Help us. Give us wisdom to discern what choices we should make to please you, and give us courage so we can live out what we believe.

We pray for Turkiye and Syria. The earthquake was a strong one, but their shoddy construction caused even more disaster. We are that selfish. Because of our selfish and irresponsible works, we won't be able to prevent disaster like this. Loving God, have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon them. They are in need. World should gather our hearts and help them. That is sharing God's love. Help us participate with what we have and with prayers. Restore their lives. Provide their needs and embrace them to your hearts.

We remember everyone who's having difficulties due to the snow. Please God keep everyone safe and protect them. Help all the snow plowing truck drivers. Give them good health and keep them safe.

We remember our church. We are gathering our sincere hearts before your presence. Please look down our love and passion for you. Lord, there are people who are going through difficult situations. Come into their hearts now. Embrace them with your arms and speak your love to them. Pour out your grace and love upon them, so their cups may be filled and let their cups be overflowing with your goodness, with your presence, with your amazing love and grace. Help us stand before you every day and experience your guiding hands.

Thank you God for this time of worship. Take pleasure in our worship. We praise you and we glorify you! In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering:** This is the time for offering. Our lives are blessed with the goodness that comes from God. Let us trust that goodness to sustain us and so offer God our gifts to share with the world in need with glad hearts. As we offer our gifts, let us praise God and glorify him.

**The Doxology (BOP 830)**

**Offering prayer:**

Generous God, we offer our gifts to you in gratitude for all that we have received in Christ and in creation. Bless our gifts and our lives, so that we can share in the building up of your kingdom in the world you love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Song for the Journey – BOP 349 My hope is built on nothing less**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. We cannot keep all the laws. We cannot please God with our works. God takes pleasure in our faith. God set up our individual relationships with him with his love. So, let us remember God's love all through our lives.

**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.