

Worship on May 7, 2023 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)
(Welcoming Elder: Robert Revington)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 350 To God be the glory
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 662 Those who wait on the Lord

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: John 14:1-14
- Second reading: Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Acts 7:55-60
- Sermon: Do not hold this sin against them
- Communion, the Apostles' Creed

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 425 We praise you, O God vs. 1) & 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

God is our Rock and our Fortress.

In God, we find refuge and strength.

God's house has many dwelling places.

We will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Christ himself has gone to prepare a place for us.

For us, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

So let us worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

Praise song – BOP 350 To God be the glory

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Steadfast God, you are our refuge in times of trouble, our shelter when we are afraid, and our dwelling place forever. In you alone, we place our trust, for you set the way before in Christ Jesus and your Spirit gives us courage to follow him. And so we offer you our worship and love as the Source of life for the world, as the Son who preached the truth of grace and mercy, and the Spirit who guides us this day and always.

Steadfast God, we confess Jesus as the way, the truth and the life for us, yet we often fail to follow him, too often gone our own ways, distorted the truth and misguided the lost. Forgive us for falling short of your purpose for our lives. Give us courage to follow Jesus, who continues to show us the way.

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, Do not let your hearts be troubled. Know that, in Christ, you are forgiven. Accept God's grace and forgiveness this day, and extend it to others for Jesus' sake.

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

Prayer for children and youth

Faithful and loving God, we come before you with our hearts' desire. Listen to our prayers for our children and youth. Cultural flow is going away from you these days. And our next generations are swept away for today's culture and trend. After high school, it is extremely rare for youth continue to worship you. You are the Lord of all generations, you are the God of all culture and trends. Restore your fame in today's trend. Bring back your glory in this world. Rebuild your temple in the hearts of young generations today. Reconnect our precious children and youth to your everlasting and unending love. O God, you alone are God and Master. Please pour out your presence, your love, your grace, your wisdom, your glory, and your greatness upon this generation. Lord, help us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Praise Song: BOP 662 Those who wait on the Lord

Prayer for Illumination:

Gracious God, send us your Spirit to guide our understanding as we listen to the Scriptures so that we may follow you more closely, know your truth more fully, and share in your gift of life more abundantly, through Christ, your Living Word. Amen

First reading: John 14:1-14

Second reading: Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 (refrain 1)

Third reading: Acts 7:55-60

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

SERMON: Do not hold this sin against them.

Today's sermon title is **"Do not hold this sin against them."**

Today's passage is very striking. If we could have vivid picture of what's happening. There are a lot of mixed emotions. Anger, hatred, divisiveness, conflict, misunderstanding, on the other hand, joy, love, compassion, mercy, and sadness.

Acts 6:8-11, Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. 11 Then they secretly instigated some men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.'

The Jewish leaders falsely accused Stephen for blaspheme which he did not. When Stephen was arrested, he was given a chance to give a speech. Stephen delivered a lengthy sermon, which covered the entire history of the Jewish people, with the purpose of emphasizing the divinity of Jesus Christ.

But, at the core of his message, he accused the people for killing Jesus on the cross, urging them to come back to God.

Acts 7:51-53, "51 'You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are for ever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. 52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. 53 You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it.'

At this message, people raged. **V54, When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen.**

There was a pastor named **Jack Hyles**. He ministered at First Baptist Church for about 40 years from 1959. His message was like Stephen's. His message penetrated the hearts of people. Therefore, it was said that they had to install bulletproof panels for pulpit because of the same reason why crowd killed Stephen.

Anger. This is why crowd killed Stephen. Then, what caused them to be angry so much? For a message of a pastor, why people get mad and they had to install bulletproof panel in front of the pulpit?

It is from the confrontation of oneself. What's in them? Sin. That is, they encountered their honest sinful self. People disguise themselves and comfort themselves from the consequences of their sins. They avoid it. But the word of God brings them in front of their true selves. **THIS IS WHO YOU TRULY ARE. YOU HAVE TO FACE YOUR SIN.**

At this, we have only two choices. We humble down our hearts and worship God. OR we deny. In the denial of our own true sinful selves, how we respond would be different. But, surely, one of the big one is anger and hatred toward someone who caused them to face it. That was Jesus, Stephen, and the pastors like Jack Hyles.

I hope and pray that you also face your honest self as we worship God together. Humble your hearts before God and confess your desperateness. We cannot get rid of our own sins neither the consequences of them. We need Rescuer, Deliver, and Saviour.

Then, we have a question. Are we the crowd or Stephen?

Who do we want to be? What kind of life would you live?

In 50 years, when our descendants read about our lives, what do we want them to know about us? Do we want to be remembered as one of the people who stoned a person boldly telling the truth of God and brought people in front of the truth or the person who spoke the truth of God?

I want to be like Stephen. I want to be like Jesus obeying what God wants. I want to be like the pastor who were threatened his life for his truth telling sermons.

Then, how do we do it? How can we become courageous like this?

Have you shared the good news to non-church people? Your friends, family members, or neighbours? From my old church, I learned evangelism. There are many tools like **The Four Spiritual Laws, The Bridge to life, Evangelism Explosion gospel presentation.**

When I went to libraries with my team to preach the gospel, how successful I was?

Well... not too great. I got a lot of rejections. People are too busy to take care of this current life. But, there are people who respond to the invitation of God. Some received the good news and became believers.

Remember that people are pursuing the truth. Philosopher Pascal said, **“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”**

But, ironically, people reject to fill their God-shaped vacuum to be filled fill with God. Why not? Because they do not have the wisdom. Because they do not have the courage to deny themselves. They were holding their own values to try to fill the gap. They are still trying, but can't. But, they do not want to admit it. They have to face their inability, desperation. But, research proves that we need to hear the message at least 7 times before opening our hearts to something. A lot of marketing business have done research about the human heart. In order to close a deal, one needs about 7 times of reassuring some product. In the same way, we need to hear the good news to accept it in our hearts.

God promised to us. **2 Corinthians 5:17, if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passes away; behold, new things have come!**

It is not an addition to the old you, but rather, a completely new self.

We can never go back to our old selves. The old you is dead, and the person you are today is a brand-new creation. As the Bible assures us, we are a child of God, clothed in God's righteousness. **Isaiah 61:10, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.”**

As Galatians 5:24 says, “The flesh with its passions and desires” has been put to death.

Colossians 2:13-14, “And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, where he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with his legal demands. He sets this aside, nailing it to the cross.”

What great news we have heard now!

We are created to be like God according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. We have the desire to reflect God more and more. It is a natural thing and we are created in this way.

John 15:5, Jesus is saying this to you. **“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”**

Through today’s message, what did you hear? Our God is not a small God. For Stephen, while he was stoned, his heart was filled with glory and love of God. There is a reality of pouring stones upon him, but his heart was beyond this world. We have to live in our every day reality. But, we are given God’s Kingdom. Face everyday challenges, but do not be captured by it. Do not be overwhelmed by it. Live beyond. And invite your loved to the life beyond.

This is the word of the Lord for us today.

Communion At The Lord’s Table This is the time for Communion at the Lord’s Table. Jesus said, I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never be hungry, and those who believe in me will never be thirsty. No one who comes to me will I drive away. Come to the table. Jesus is welcoming all with open arms.

Let us confess our faith with 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: God of promises, you are the vine and we are the branches. Apart from you, we can do nothing. You are our source of life and strength. You share your life to us. We praise you and worship you for your life giving love. Help us share this love and invite our loved ones in your love and truth. With hope and expectation, with all the created being in the past, the present, and in the future, we join in 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 God. You are the most holy God. You are the most loving God who sent your only Son Jesus Christ to give us life, to deliver us from the power of death, to display your goodness

to the whole world through us. Lord Jesus, thank you for saving us and thank you for sharing our joy and sorrow. As we celebrate the friendship with you, **we proclaim the mystery of faith:**

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

L: Indwelling Holy Spirit, teach us your wisdom. Give us courage to follow your steps. Here we offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to you. In your mercy, accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Fill us with the joy of eternal life, that we may be your faithful people until we feast with you in glory. Through Christ, by 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 – 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:

I am the vine and you are the branches. This is the promise of God for us. Thank you Jesus for calling us into your presence and thank you for inviting us into your life. Thank you for giving us life and thank you for sharing your life with us. The life we have now is not our own, but it's yours. Help us live your life. God the Creator is with us. Help us live beyond our little small reality.

Help us have the courage like Jesus, Stephen, and many of your disciples in the Bible and in the history and in the stories in our everyday life. Lord Jesus, encourage us with your promises. Let our hearts receive your promises as they are. Strengthen our faith and give us wisdom, so we live the life beyond this reality, so we experience the abundant life that you have promised to us.

We remember those who are struggling with life's issues. Gracious God, first of all, knit our hearts together, so we may experience your love within our relationships and connections. Build us your house full of love and care and understanding and encouragement.

We remember those who are physically sick. Help them be healed. Use the medicines and doctors. Encourage their hearts and their families. Also, there are people who have difficulties in their hearts and emotions and relationships. Lord Jesus, you said, it is finished. The consequence of sin cannot overwhelm us any longer because you removed all our sins from us. Help us establish our own selves upon your love. Help us build our relationships with your love. Help us restore our broken selves and relationships with your help and guidance. Heal us Lord. Also, God, there are many other issues that we are praying for. Listen to our desperate hearts and grand us our prayers.

Through this worship, we long to be with you. We desire to confirm your promises in our lives. Show us your power in our lives. Help us experience your love and grace in our daily lives. We worship you and we love you. In Jesus' precious and awesome name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering While the season of Easter unfolds, the gifts of spring also remind us of God's generosity in Christ and in creation. May our gifts reflect our gratitude to God, and our generosity share with others the abundance we know in Christ Jesus. As we offer our gifts, let us praise God and glorify him.

The Doxology (BOP 425)

Offering prayer:

Generous God, we bless you for life renewed through Christ's love and through springtime growth in fields and gardens. Use the gifts we offer to bring hope and renewal to the world you love in the name of Jesus Christ, our Risen 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. The people you meet every day are searching for the real value. They are desperate for the truth. Share what you have. God loves you and God helps you. God gives you wisdom and courage. Be encouraged with God's promises for you.

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.