

Worship on July 9, 2023 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)
(Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 652 Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Zechariah 9:9-12
- Second reading: Psalm 145:8-14 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30
- Sermon: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me
- Prayer for the people of God

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 79 Praise God from whom all blessings vs. 1) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 687 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

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 gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love.

God offers compassion to all creation.

With all God's creation, give thanks to the Lord.

With all God's creatures, great and small, we will bless the Lord.

In worship let us speak of God's glory and tell of God's wonder.

We come to praise God and seek God's peace in Jesus' name.

Praise song – BOP BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

You, O God, are overflowing with love, infinite in kindness, and incomparable in glory.

There is no other like you in all our imagining. Your presence breaks into our lives in the beauty of summer and refreshes us like a gentle breeze on a still day. You renew us to meet life's changes and challenges. In this time of worship, we offer thanks in our prayers, praise from our hearts, and honor with our lives, to you, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, this day and every day, now and always.

Wise and patient God, You offer us peace, yet we confess that life often feels frustrating and unsettled. You offer us courage, but we are resentful when life is challenging. You offer us a mission with meaning and purpose, but we are preoccupied with our own plans and desires. Forgive us, O God, and draw our attention back to you.

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

Jesus said, Come to me all you are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gifts to you this day.

Be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit that moves with you into your daily lives.

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

God of grace and love, we thank you and praise you for your faithfulness in our ups and downs. As we worship you and as we come before your presence with our prayers for our next generations, hear our prayers and pour out your generosity and blessings upon our precious children and youth. As they have a vacation from studying, renew their minds and refresh their hearts. And work on their brains, so connect all the neurons and make some organization. So, they are able to make the learning materials theirs. Also, as they participate various activities and camps, provide them good teachers and friends, so they are able to make meaningful and valuable experiences. Be with the children, so let them learn the good faith from us. Have mercy upon us, God. Help and guide our precious children and youth all the time, so they may build intimate relationship with you all through their lives. Thank you for being with us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Praise song – BOP 652 Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go

Prayer for Illumination:

Spirit of wisdom, be our guide as we listen for God's Word speaking in the Scriptures. When we are puzzled, grant us clarity. When we resist hearing, open our hearts. Renew our understanding through the grace of Christ, God's Living Word. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

First reading: Zechariah 9:9-12

Second reading: Psalm 145:8-14 (refrain 1)

Third reading: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

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

SERMON: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me

Today's sermon title is "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me."

In the Bible, there are some loved or very famous verses.

For example, **Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**

Whenever someone is in hardship, we try to encourage them with this verse.

“It’s okay. Have faith in him, he will help you. You can do this! You can get through this.”

I know it’s from good intention. But, sometimes, the true meaning of this verse could be misunderstood. We need to know the context, what’s happening before and after.

What did Apostle Paul write before this verse?

Philippians 4:12, “I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, or having plenty and being in need.

Then, **13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**

Paul went through downs and ups already. After experiencing his difficult times, after learning to be content in any situations, now he finally confesses v13. **After going through bad and good times, now I learned that with him, I can do it. // Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.**

This teaches us the importance of knowing the full intention of certain Bible verses.

In the same sense, we have one of the most loved verses in today’s passage.

Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” This sounds so great. We feel like Jesus will take good care of everything for us. What is the image of today’s scripture. **(pic)**

How nice! Peaceful, restful, encouraging, comfortable in our body and mind. This is so great.

But, again, **what’s the context?** When we read the Bible, we shouldn’t take one verse or one phrase. We need to know what’s before and after.

Let us take a look at **v29, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”** **V30, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”**

Jesus invites us to take his yoke upon us. **What is yoke again? (PIC)** Yoke is a wooden frame connects two animals together in pulling a plow or carrying a load. **(PIC)** We talked about God telling Jeremiah to take the yoke upon him. He had to carry the yoke.

What I am saying is that Jesus calls us to rest, but we need to carry **the yoke of Jesus. (PIC)** Resting. What’s your image of resting? Like lying on the bed all day long and watching Netflix? Going to a vacation and enjoying the sun and the beach? Or buried in the couch cushions and do nothing. Sounds great, aren’t they?

But, the rest Jesus is talking about is nothing like that!

Jesus is inviting us to take his yoke.

(PIC) When you are yoked to Jesus, you are not yoked to restlessness, strife, or worry. Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of Jesus.

Our old yoke is our responsibilities, obligations or burdens of our daily life. Jesus’ yoke is the way of life and discipleship that Jesus offers. This is about love, grace, and deepening relationship with Jesus. We are to walk in obedience to the teachings of Jesus, trusting in his guidance, and finding true rest and purpose for our own souls.

This discipleship to which Jesus invites us not only offers us rest but also guarantees us persecutions, difficulties, and hardships.

(PIC) When Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was dead, they wept.

John 11:33, “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he (Jesus) was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34 He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ 35 Jesus began to weep. 36 So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’

There is a huge difficulty. Death. The power of death took over the life of Lazarus. Mary and Martha were overwhelmed. They couldn't do anything but crying. **When they cried, Jesus cried also. What's the importance of this?** In our troubles, Jesus shares the pain, the sadness. Jesus is not far away from our daily lives. Jesus is with us feeling together what we are experiencing. He knows our hearts.

This Jesus calls us to come to him and carry his yoke. He can take care of all our difficulties, but he is telling us to come and take his yoke.

(PIC) As our children grow, especially when they are young, they want to do everything by themselves. They want to carry their own bags. **(PIC)bag**

We know it's too heavy for them. But, we still give them to carry the bag. But, with one hand, we hold up the bag. So our children do not have to carry all the heaviness of the bag by themselves. Why do we do it? To protect them. Because we know their abilities, we help them. What is this? **This is love.**

When Jesus is calling us to carry his yoke, doesn't he know what we can do and what we cannot? He knows our abilities all too well.

When Jesus rose Lazarus, he knew that Lazarus would still experience difficulties of life. But, why did he give him life again? Because of love.

V29-30, Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Why is it light? Because parents hold up the bag from their back. Why the yoke of Jesus is light and easy? **(PIC)** Because Jesus is carrying his own yoke and he invites us to join.

For a regular backpack, which is easier to carry when you hold it, by yourself or with your child? Of course, carrying a backpack by yourself is easier. When carrying it with a child, we have to carry the bag and the child at the same time. But, why do we do it? Because of love.

Because of love, Jesus is calling us to come and join him to carry his yoke together.

If you carry the backpack and the child at the same time, what would your child experience?

Your power. For them, almighty power. Everything is possible.

When we join Jesus, what are we going to experience? The power of Jesus, carrying his yoke, as well as us.

Back to Paul. **Philippians 4:13. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.** Because Jesus is carrying us. In difficult situations and plentiful situations, Paul learned that Jesus was carrying him all along. Then, he was able to say this, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and

humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” V30, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

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

Prayer for the people of God

Jesus the Son of God, why do you care for us? We are always trying to satisfy our own desires. But, you keep calling us. You never give up. How wonderful is your love. This is our foundation of hope and our life. Thank you for teaching us your love once more today. In the same way we love our children, you care for us and you teach us and you accept us and you love us. Thank you for watch over us with your loving kindness. Teach us who we are and who you are, so we live with you and in you.

With your love poured upon us, we want to embrace this world. There are too many sad stories around. Shootings. Distorted love. Selfish desires. Jealousy. Hatred. People hurt each other. The stronger destroy the weak. We seek power, but we don't know where we are heading. That's why you told Jeremiah to carry the yoke to show we are enslaved. To free us, you are inviting us continually to be with you, to embrace your love, to hold your hand. Help us carry your love, your light. Help us become like salt. It lifts us the true taste of food. Likewise, help us bring out the true meaning of life. Help us teach your truth to our surroundings. Help us carry your yoke together, so we live not by our own power, but with your power. Help us know that this world is waiting to be freed. Use us. Help us free this world. Teach us your merciful and loving heart for them.

This time, we remember your church. A small cut of a finger makes our whole body sick. Likewise, one of our members goes through difficulties, then we all embrace the pain together. There are people who are suffering with physical illnesses. Gracious God, help them. Heal them. Provide the most needed help from medication, medical treatment, encouragement, and love from around. Not just heal their bodies, but heal their hearts as well. There are struggles with relationships, life's challenging situations. Because you are carrying us, help us be peaceful. With your wisdom, help us discern what to do and what not to do. And give us courage, so we walk your steps holding your hands. As well as you are present with each member of our congregation, be with your church. We like to see energy, uplifting vibes here when we gather together. We like to see new faces. We like to see each other loving, serving, praying for each other. Gracious God, pour out your power upon us. Lead us with your strong and all powerful hands. Provide us not what we want, but what we need to display your love and goodness to this world, the community of Aurora. We confess your awesomeness. We praise you for your faithful love and guidance for each and every one of us. Continue to be praised and worshiped. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. We see God's abundance in our sharing love and friendship. We witness God's great power when we step out of our comfort zones. Offer our gifts is like walking into the unknown territories. Trust God and let us plunge ourselves into his almighty hands. As we offer our gifts to God, let us praise God and glorify him.

The Doxology (BOP 79 Vs. 1)

Offering prayer:

Gracious God, receive our gifts as confession of our faith for your goodness and love and guidance and grace and mercy for us. Bless our gifts and our lives so that we become the witness

telling and showing and shouting your glory to the whole world. You are an awesome God. We praise you and we lift you up with all we do in our lives. In Jesus' precious and beautiful name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 687 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

From today, we are going to sing a song after the benediction. In this way, there can be personal prayer time and reflection time. The words will be on the screen.

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. As we walk out to this world, we are not alone. Imagine we are carry a backpack, a heavy one. But, who is holding up the backpack? Our God the Father. The invitation of carrying the yoke of Jesus is the invitation to accept his care and love for us. Live your life with confidence. Why? Because you are not alone.

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.