

Worship on July 23, 2023 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)
(Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 467 Praise my soul the God who crowns you
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 474 The love of God comes close

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Isaiah 44:6-8
- Second reading: Psalm 86:11-17 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
- Sermon: In the end (Weeds among the wheat)
- 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 675 Precious Lord, take my hand

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

We gather in the presence of God;

We have come to worship and praise God's name.

We gather in joy and expectancy;

We have come to encounter God in beauty and wonder.

Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening;

Speak your Word of life to us, O God.

Praise song – BOP 467 Praise my soul the God who crowns you

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Creator God, in you, we live and move and have our being: You have been with us through good times and hard times. You give us strength to face the challenges around us. You offer us rest for our bodies and souls when life seems too demanding. We turn to you for your wisdom this day, trusting we will find the peace and comfort we long for in your presence. We praise you for everything you offer us in your great faithfulness. Fill us with your Holy Spirit in this time of

worship. Open our minds and hearts, so that we may see as you see, we may love as you love, and we may follow your steps for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ever present God, you know our inmost thoughts and see our thoughtless actions. We confess that our impulsive reactions, when we spoke before we thought, and now, we ask forgiveness if we have hurt others. We confess our stubborn attitudes, and ask forgiveness for refusing others mercy. In your kindness, O God, forgive who we have been, amend who we are, and direct who we shall be through the grace of Christ, our Lord.

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

Remember that God is slow to be angry and quick to forgive; kind and gracious to all. Know that your sins are forgiven through the grace of Jesus Christ. Forgive those who have sinned against you, as Christ teaches us. Thanks be to God.

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

Glorious and holy God, thank you for your love and thank you for your creation around us. As we see the magnificent nature, we praise you and worship you for your greatness. At this time, God, we are coming before you with a prayer for our next generations. Please listen to our prayers and grant this prayer. Our next generations are the future of your church, your kingdom. God, you always take care of your people. You are timeless. You are faithful. In different cultures, you have been faithful and steadfastly guided your people. We believe that you will take care of our next generations. Give us faith and help us raise our precious children and youth in your love that you have poured upon us. Let us together worship your holy name. Always be with us and guide us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Praise song – BOP 474 The love of God comes close

Prayer for Illumination:

God of wisdom, your thoughts are not our thoughts, your ways are not our ways. As we listen to the Scriptures, send your Holy Spirit to grant us understanding of what you desire and give us courage to follow your wills. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

First reading: Isaiah 44:6-8

Second reading: Psalm 86:11-17 (refrain 1)

Third reading: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

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

SERMON: In the end (Weeds and the wheat)

Today's sermon title is "In the end (Weeds and the wheat)"

Today, seed is a key metaphor. Last week, when a sower sows seeds, we didn't have to think about the quality of the seed. We assumed that all seeds are good.

But, today, there are two kinds of seeds. **V24-25, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away."**

Now, there are two kinds of plants.

One is good plant, wheat. The other one is weed. It is **bearded darnel**, so called **tare**. (PIC) Before wheat is ripe, young tare and young wheat look identical. So, the nickname of tare is "cheat weed." Ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing.

If it's only the look, this could be a small problem. However, tare roots surround the roots of good plants, sucking up precious nutrients and scarce water. Therefore, it is impossible to root it out without damaging the good crop.

Botanical version of parasite. Like a false prophet. This tare is a false wheat.

The servants asked the master, **v27-29, "And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slave said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them."**

What does it resemble? This false wheat is like our sin. A small sin is planted in our hearts, but it sucks up all our attention. For a month or so, I am not drinking coffee. I am trying to cut down my coffee. I am a coffee lover. But I felt like I was drinking too much, I was depended on coffee too much, so now I am doing an experiment. First, I had some headaches. I didn't think I would be able to survive without coffee, but I am okay with that. Like coffee addiction, or too much love for coffee, when we are dependent upon something too much, it is hard to stop. It is difficult to root something out from our life. Like alcohol, smoking, coffee, caffeine, energy drink, or even drug. Once we are addicted, it's nearly impossible to get rid of it.

Or the materialism saturated culture. That is, **Money is king**. Isn't this true to many moments in our lives? Deep inside our hearts, even if we don't admit it, we cannot get away from this idea. Because the only true King is God, we shouldn't take money as king. But, what's the reality of our life, our culture, our education system, politics, even science! Nothing can be free from the power of money. **Money should be neutral in value**. It's a means of our life, but it becomes the purpose of our life. That's materialism and that is sin.

Materialism is a great example of today's common sin. How deep, in our hearts, is this idea of materialism rooted? How deeply is this materialistic thought occupied in our daily lives?

In the midst of a wheat field, the sinful weeds are spread out. And this botanical parasite captures the core value, the root of the wheat. We need nutrients, but the weeds are taking our source of energy, our source of life, our full attention. We are surrounded by materialism. **Think about what we are surrounded with**. Are you surrounded with love, faith, hope, honesty, sincerity, patience, forgiveness? Or are you surrounded with greed, competition, lie, disguise, selfishness, hatred, betrayal, lustful desires, or ignorance?

How can we pluck out these messages of sinful nature?

We want to pluck them out from us. Like the servants, we love to see the weeds gone.

V29, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” “Should we pull the weeds out?” But, the householder replied. “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.”

What does this mean!?

Sin is too closely attached to God’s people?? So, God cannot separate weeds from good plants?

God did it already.

John 1:29, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Hebrews 9:26, “[Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Shepherd gathered all the sheep. Shepherd protects the sheep, provides good pasture and streams of water, and shelters them. Although God takes good care of us, we are like sheep gone astray.

Isaiah 53:6, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Numbers chapter 21, when the people of Israel exiled from Egypt, they walked wilderness, the desert. There was no water, no food, but scorching sun in the day, and freezing cold at night. They complained against God and against Moses. God was angry and sent poisonous snake among the people. They were bitten and many died. So, people came to Moses again pleading to pray to God.

Numbers 21:7-9, “The people came to Moses and said, “we have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.’ So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.”

God’s people are supposed to be under the reign of God, but, in reality, we are under the power of our own sinful nature. In Numbers’ story of bronze serpent, **would you look at the serpent and live when you were bitten by a poisonous serpent?** If so, would you look at the bronze serpent on the pole with humility and sincerity, in faith? OR would you just take a glance of it because there’s nothing to lose?

Like last week, the sower sows his seeds in all kinds of soils because our God does not neglect anybody. God shows his love and grace to all people including evil ones.

Here, in our passage, the house master is God. And we think the field is the world. But, what if the field is a heart of one person. What is my heart is the field. What if your heart is the field.

Romans 7:14-15, Paul writes, “For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

Sometimes, our life is like the infested field, with weeds and wheat intertwined, in our souls, in our hearts, in our minds, and in our thoughts and actions.

Matthew 13:9 and 43 are exactly the same. When Jesus explained his parables, he finished his teaching with this. **“Let anyone with ears listen!”**

God's grace, love and patience are poured upon all people, but not everyone understands it. Not everyone can listen to the teachings of Jesus. But, at the same time, anyone can turn back to God.

Psalm 145:8-9, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."

Did the householder separate which one is which and root out the bad ones? Not yet. Not just because it's hard to tell. He left both because he might want to give the opportunities.

God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. He waits. He is patient. So, we can turn back to him. The Lord is good to all. Not just people who faithfully obey, but also the people who don't even care about God. The Lord is good to all. The Lord loves all. The Lord waits for all.

Why don't we trust his love? Why don't we trust God's steadfast patience for his people? Our God sows good seeds everywhere as well as our God waits till the end, so we might have a chance to turn back to God.

Psalm 145:8-9, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."

Let us trust his grace and compassionate heart for us.

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

Prayer for the people of God

Precious Lord, we thank you for your faithfulness and steadfast love for each of us. It is a wonderful mystery that you love us. Creator God cares for mere human, me. Thank you for coming to us and thank you for the invitation to build one-on-one relationship with you. Like Paul's confession, we have good and evil in our hearts. Intertwined. We cannot help ourselves. We need your power. We need your grace. We need your deliverance. Compassionate God, help us know that you poured out yourself for us. You did not spare your one and only Son Jesus Christ in order to love us, to give us life, to wait for us, to be patient for us, to hold your anger upon us. Precious God, help us love you back. Help us follow your steps faithfully, not with our own power, but solely with your power.

We thank you for our church. We faithfully come before you and we try to live before you. Lord, watch over each member of our church. Be glorified through our worship and through our daily lives. Heal our sick members. Restore their hearts and bodies. Restore broken relationships in our midst. Renew our brokenness. Help us fix our eyes upon you alone.

As your precious child, we will follow you. Let us be your light shining to the world and let us spread the love we have received. Be with us and walk with us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. We give gifts to express our love to each other and to say thanks for a kindness someone has shown us. So we give our gifts to God to show our love and gratitude for God's gifts to us in Christ and in creation.

As we offer our gifts to God, let us praise God and glorify him.

The Doxology (BOP 79 Vs. 1)

Offering prayer:

Gift-giving God, we are so grateful for all that we enjoy in the world around us, and in the assurance you love us all. Bless the gifts we offer today, that they may express your love for the world itself and to all who need to know you care, through Christ Jesus, your greatest gift.

Song for the Journey – BOP 675 Precious Lord, take my hand

After the Benediction, 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. We are going to fall. We are going to fail. We might wonder why we have good and evil in our hearts at the same time. Remember God who's waiting for us patiently. **“The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.**

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.