

**Worship on August 27, 2023** (CCLI: License Number #3156883)  
(Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

### **Sunday Order of worship**

#### **We Gather**

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 757 Come sing, O church, in joy!
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 635 Brother, sister, let me serve you

#### **We Listen**

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Isaiah 51:1, 6-8
- Second reading: Psalm 138 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Romans 12:1-8
- Sermon: Be transformed by the renewing of your minds
- Prayer for the people

#### **We Respond**

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 79 Praise God from whom all blessings vs. 1) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 630 When we are living

#### **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 give thanks to the Lord with all our hearts,

**for God's faithful love endures forever.**

We sing praises to the Lord, with all our strength,

**for God's promises declare God's goodness to all the earth.**

We place our trust in in God with full confidence,

**and so we come to worship with hearts full of praise.**

**Praise song – BOP 757 Come sing, O church, in joy!**

#### **Prayer For Adoration and Confession**

Eternal God, you are the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and yet you come to us afresh each new day. You breathe new life into what has grown tired and discouraged. You offer healing for what is worn or broken. You restore hope when things seem impossible. You are the source of life and love for all your creatures, and you renew us to put our love for you into action for the wellbeing of your creation. And so we worship you, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, offering our prayers and praise to you, eternal and ever-present God, now and always.

Merciful God, we confess that we have strayed from your purposes. You set a path for us to follow, but we conform to the ways of this world. You give each of us gifts to use for the work of your kingdom, but we wait for others to do the things we need to do. Forgive us for taking the easy way out. Renew in us the eagerness and energy to serve.

**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**

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ – and Christ died for us. Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by God's generous grace and love. So let us make a fresh start today!

**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 mysterious God, thank you for your love for us. And thank you for this time of prayer for our children and youth. When we think about our children, it is amazing that how we love them. We are amazed by how much we can love them. When thinking of your love, your love is beyond our imagination. Your love cannot be fathom. With your love, God, please hold the hands of our children and youth. You wrote in the Bible that you have their names in your palm. Pour out your love like pouring out water in a dry land. So, their hearts may receive you. Their hearts may be filled with your love. Their hearts be wide open to your truth and love. Change their hearts, so they are not following the streams of this world, but follow your steps. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

### **Praise song – BOP 635 Brother, sister, let me serve you**

### **Prayer for Illumination:**

Source of all wisdom and understanding, amid so many competing voices, let us hear your word for our times. Send your Holy Spirit to help us discern your will and follow the path Jesus sets for us as your Living Word. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

### **First reading: Isaiah 51:1, 6-8**

### **Second reading: Psalm 138 (refrain 1)**

### **Third reading: Romans 12:1-8**

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

### **SERMON: Be transformed by the renewing of your mind**

Today's sermon title is **“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**

Apostle Paul urges by the mercy of God. **v1: “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”**

This first verse is the conclusion of today’s passage.

**Sacrifice.** What is the first image of sacrifice? We have somewhat negative understanding for this word. **“Employees are asked to sacrifice raises or benefits when a company falls on hard times. A heroic soldier sacrifices his life to save his comrades.** This sacrificial soldier might have died or had severe injury. The word sacrifice has a negative connotation. We imagine the feeling of loss, pain, or discomfort. This is the understanding of the people at Paul’s time. Paul used this word intentionally knowing how they would understand. Paul wants to change their understanding of the word sacrifice.

**Then, what was the goal of Paul when calling out people to present our bodies as living sacrifice?** This passage is talking about very practical things, very tangible things. Paul is talking about something we can actually do. Intellectual acknowledgement is important, but without works, it’s nothing. **James 2:26, “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.”**

Our faith must go with works. When we learn something, when we realize something, or when we determine something, then, it is crucial to take actions.

Before taking an action, we need to realize what we should do. In other words, **Discern the will of God and live accordingly.**

What will be the application of God’s teaching? What can I actually do today?

**Do you know what the people of Israel thought of when they heard the word sacrifice? Worship!**

When they came to worship God, they brought the sacrificial animal. They knew that they couldn’t come to the presence of God because of their sins. So, in order to clean their sins, they needed to shed blood. They brought a sacrificial animal and the priest transferred the sin of the worshipper to the animal. With the sin, the animal died, shedding its blood. That was the process of atonement. Now we remember that **the Sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ, died on the cross and washed all our sins.**

**What was the reason they brought the sacrificial animal? To be clean before God.**

That is the purpose of sacrifice. So, Paul changes the understanding of the people from losing something, having pain or discomfort to be clean. **Consecrate yourself. Dedicate to the will of God and the works of God. This is why God equipped each person with different gifts.**

**V6, “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.”**

We are equipped to do the will of God, to be the vehicles of God.

**V4-5, “For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.”**

**In MSG paraphrase Bible, “In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we’re talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn’t amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvellously functioning parts in Christ’s body, let’s just go ahead and be**

**what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.** Long paragraph, but worthwhile to read.

The purpose of different gifts we have is to become members one of another.

Paul is reminding all of God's people of the common need for one another. Some people have outstanding and visible gifts, but they are given the gifts to constitute the body of Christ. We are all members of one body of Christ. We are attached together. This is beyond church, beyond time and space. We have our own special gifts not to glorify ourselves, but for the health of the community, the body of Christ.

Therefore, what we are to do is to change our perceptions. **What this world teaches us is different from the way of Christ.** We are saturated with the ways of this world, aren't we?

What do we think the most in any given day? Do we worry more or thank more? Are we judging more or accepting more? Are we giving or are we trying to gain more?

**V2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

**With our gifts from God, how are we sharing the life of God, the love of God?**

**What are our gifts? What is our true and honest self before the presence of God?**

**How intimately do we come to God?**

**How do we discern the will of God?**

**How many times, do we think of God in a given day?**

**What kind of values does God want from our daily life?**

**How do we value our community?**

I am not asking you to do something for our church. I do not want to give too much pressure. If you are willing and if God is calling, then look for something you can do.

It sounds very abstract. But, it's like having a faith.

Faith is God's gift. God opens our eyes to see God's glory, God's greatness and God's awesomeness, God's value. When we experience God's greatness, then faith comes along.

For example, you found out that one of your close friends has 2 Billion dollars in her or his account, then you will trust your friend. "Oh my good friend, please help me." They will rely upon the great value she or he has.

**If you realize that there are tremendous value in something, then you won't give it up.**

**If you witness the love and grace of God and actually believe its value, then how can you look up to something else?**

Now, look into your mind. What do you have? What is the most important value in your heart? Look up to God and ask. "God, what do I have in me? What is my gift? What have you given me? God, Open my eyes and see your true value. And help me have faith in you. Give me the gift of faith.

In order to discern the will of God, this should be done first. **Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.** This is same as opening our eyes.

God, open our eyes and let us build your church. Let us carry on your will.

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

**Prayer for the people**

God of love, thank you for teaching us how to live. Thank you for guiding our eyes to you and your kingdom. Open our eyes and help us see the true value you have. Capture our hearts. Help us realize how great you are. So, we don't let you go. So, we hold on to you for all through our lives. Change our hearts O God. Make our hearts ever true. Help us become like you.

God, in our congregation, there are people who has physical pains. Please place your hands upon them and heal them and recover them. Encourage their minds and give peace and encouragement to their family members. Especially, recently, Kambiz and Behnaz had back surgeries. Be with each person in their recovery process. In the same way, be with all the people with their physical pains.

Also, God, there are struggles with our minds and relationships. Be the lamp unto our feet. And guide each step we are about to take. You are the light, and we will follow you.

Tomorrow, we will have our session meeting preparing our church's future steps. Gracious God, be with all the session members. Help us be transformed with the renewing of our minds and listen to your voice clearly. We will follow.

As everyone is getting ready for another beginning, be with us and fill our hearts with gratitude and love for our community. Watch over us through the week and be worshipped and glorified through our daily lives.

in all the people. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering:** This is the time for offering. Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us that we all have gifts to share. When we give, let us offer what we have generously. When compassion opens our hearts, let us share cheerfully, so that God's good work may continue. As we offer our gifts to God, let us praise God and glorify him.

**The Doxology (BOP 79 Vs. 1)**

**Offering prayer:**

O God, bless what we offer today as well as the time, talent, and concern we will offer you this week. We trust that, with your blessing, your Holy Spirit is able to accomplish more than we can ask or imagine. Use us according to our gifts. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

**Song for the Journey – BOP 630 When we are living**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Ask God to open your eyes and show his greatness. God always cares for you. God is always holding your hands. Wherever you are, and whatever you do, you belong to God. As a member of Christ's church, use your gift and embrace one another.

**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.