

Worship on September 3, 2023 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)
(Welcoming Elder: Trevor Preston)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 712 Arise, your light is come
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 211 Take up your cross

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Jeremiah 15:15-21
- Second reading: Psalm 26:1B-8 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 16:21-28
- Sermon: Take up your cross and follow me
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830 Praise God from whom all blessings vs. 1) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 592 I, the Lord of sea and sky

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

Give thanks to God and tell of God's gifts.

We will sing praises for all that God has done.

Let your hearts be joyful!

We will seek God's presence continually.

Call to mind God's wonderful works.

We will always remember the blessings of God and glorify God forever!

Praise song – BOP 712 Arise, your light is come

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Holy, Mysterious, Eternal and Ever-loving God, in you we live and move and have our being.

You are the beginning and end of all things. In your depth, we find mystery.

In your breadth, we know your tender embrace. We can only wonder at your love for us, we are just a small part of your whole creation. But, still, you care so much for us.

Especially, in Jesus Christ, we meet your generous grace.

In the Holy Spirit, you move with us to inspire our action and fill us with hope.

Our thoughts cannot fathom your wisdom, nor can our hearts understand your mercy.

And so we worship you in humble praise, Holy God, ever Three and ever One, now and always.

Faithful and forgiving God, we confess that we do not live out your love and mercy. We cling to old hurts and familiar habits. We nurse anger and envy. We are often so self-absorbed that we turn our backs on those in need. Forgive what we have been, amend who we are, and guide us toward who we may become according to your generous grace.

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

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. Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start through God's embracing grace.

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 love and grace, We are praying for our precious children and youth this time. Thank you for taking good care of all of us through the summer. We thank you and we praise you. Thank you for DJ that she was able to help out children and youth with biblical lessons and cooking activity preparing for the snacks after worship. Bless DJ abundantly. Fill her heart with your heart. Let her follow your steps faithfully. Guide her steps all through her life. Also, we pray for Anne. There will be Sunday school from next week. As Anne teaches the children and youth with your truth, give her wisdom and discerning heart. So, our precious children and youth be raised in your truth and in your love. Provide her with all she needs in you. Thank you for the good leaders for our children and youth. As they learn and grow in you, capture their hearts and let them walk with you all through their lives. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Praise song – BOP 211 Take up your cross

Prayer for Illumination:

God of wisdom, you teach us with love, you touch us with mercy, and you challenge us with truth. Send your Holy Spirit to help us grasp your love, mercy and truth in the Scriptures as we encounter. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

First reading: Jeremiah 15:15-21

Second reading: Psalm 26:11-8 (refrain 1)

Third reading: Matthew 16:21-28

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

SERMON: Take up your cross and follow me.

Today's sermon title is **“Take up your cross and follow me.”**

YOLO.
You Only Live Once.

This is the modern version of Carpe diem “Seize the day.” Because we only live once, we need to live life to the fullest. Some people take this, to enjoy life as much as possible. They do not give any focus on training, making difficult decisions, or put effort in relationships. Because we only live once, they think, they should do whatever they want to do.

What if this YOLO idea comes in our faith? Christ died for us already. Christ blessed us already. All we have is the eternal life. All we have is the love and grace of God. This is not wrong. But, is this all, really? All we need is to enjoy God?

We all tend to focus on the bright side. For example, our life’s final destination is death. We are heading toward death. But, we do not think about this in our daily life. If we truly know what’s coming for sure in our future, then we would prepare it. For example, when an airplane takes off, it must come down at some point. That is a nature of a flight. Life, in the same way, there will be a landing. It is the time to go back to our true home.

Life is truly a blessing. We have beautiful moments. But, no one experiences good moments only. A celebrity? Successful singers or actors and actresses, in some time, they are forgotten by people. Their fame, their popularity are never forever. When they are at their peak, they should get ready to come down, gradually, little by little.

In life, there are ups and downs. In faith, there are good moments and difficult times.

In the life of Jesus, **when Jesus began his ministry, crowd loved him.** The sick, the blind, the poor followed him with their whole hearts. They put their hopes in Jesus. But, after some time, **the same crowd shouted, “Crucify him. Crucify him.”** Why? Jesus did not satisfy their wants. Even Jesus experienced bright and dark sides of life.

Peter and the disciples committed their lives in following Jesus Christ. In the previous section of today’s passage, Jesus asked his disciples, **“Who do people say that I am?” They answered, “Some say that you are John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah. They think you are one of the prophets.”** Now, Jesus asked them, **“Then, who do you say that I am?”** Peter stood up and cried out, **“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”** To his answer, Jesus blessed him with the authority to become the foundation of the church. Jesus called Peter the rock. Jesus is going to build his church upon Peter. **“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”**

Peter is the first leader of church. A great blessing was poured upon him. He has the secret key to connect the earth and heaven. **How would he feel about this?** **“Oh God, I am too weak and small. Please take this huge responsibility from me?”** Well.. based on how Peter reacted to what Jesus said in today’s passage, Peter and the authority became one.

Jesus revealed his plan to the disciples. “I must suffer and will be killed, but will be rais.....”

“WHAT?!?!?” Peter might have stepped in even before Jesus finished his sentence. Peter stopped Jesus and took him to the side. **V22, “And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.”**

Peter was rebuking Jesus, but still he called Jesus Lord. There is a conflict.

Parenting is easy? What about **YOLO parenting?**

Parents, do we just give whatever our children want, so that our children can enjoy their lives to the fullest? NO. They want to have candy and jelly endlessly. We have to stop them eating too much sugar for the health. Candy is good. Jelly is great. YOLO! We only live once, so we are supposed to eat whatever we want? NO. That’s not going to happen. **To live our lives to the fullest, we need to learn how to control. We need to discipline ourselves in so many areas.**

In the same way, God blesses us abundantly. Our great God did not spare his one and only Son Jesus Christ for us. So, we already know God’s love and blessings for us whether it’s in our head or in our heart.

To enjoy all the blessings we have in our life, we need some discipline. To embrace all the blessings of God, we need to learn from Jesus.

Peter was rebuking Jesus, the Lord. At this, Jesus immediately responded. **V23, “[Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”**

Two opposite responses of Jesus to Peter in two adjacent passages. Remember, Jesus just blessed Peter with all kinds of great blessings from heaven and earth and gave him a huge responsibility of becoming the foundation of the first church. Peter is almost identical to the church now. But, now, when Peter exercised his authority, Jesus called him Satan.

Isn’t church the same as Peter now? Sometimes, church is great in the eyes of God. But, other times, church makes terrible mistakes, just like Peter now. Peter sought human things. He thought it would have been greater if Jesus did not suffer nor die. **He thought, “Long live the King” for Jesus. Jesus would take over the government and reign with his divine power.**

Human thought vs. Jesus’s thought.

Isaiah 55:8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

What are our human thoughts in our minds now? Have you experienced any conflicts from the teachings of the gospel? What are the wrongdoings of today’s church? Is what our church is doing really the will of God? We, church, are like Peter. We have blessings from God, but at the same time, we become Satan, setting our minds on human things, and becoming the stumbling block for the ministry of Jesus.

Then, **what does it mean to take up the cross of Jesus? What is taking up your own cross and following Jesus?**

First we need to admit that we are not God. God sees beyond what we see. God plans beyond what we can ever imagine or understand. So, trust God’s divine plan. With that trust, set your eyes upon the end. Our ultimate end is death, the moment we are encountering Jesus Christ our

Lord. What would we say to him? OR what would Jesus say to us? If we set the goal, then we will be able to know what to do and what not to do clearly.

Taking up your cross means to be willing to surrender our own pride, ego, status, comfort, and even life for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Take some time to examine your heart. What is meaningful to you? Are you holding your own desires or are you willing to let go of whatever God asks you to?

James 1:17, “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

Giving up might give us difficult feelings. So does stop eating candy. So, trust God. He gives us great and perfect gifts. **What is your cross that Jesus is leading you to?**

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

Prayer for the people

Loving God, thank you for the blessings you poured upon us. You gave your love for us. But, you don't let us do whatever we want to do, all the time. Sometimes, you stop us. Sometimes, you put us in difficult situations. Many times, we do not understand the reason why. But, we try to trust your promise. You have good intentions for us. You always want the best for us. Although, many times, we cannot see them clearly, give us faith to put our trust in you. Although we don't understand, we decide to trust you. We trust in your love and in your sacrifice for each and every one of us. Hold our hearts, so that in difficult situations, we do not give up our faith.

You said to take up our own cross and follow you. We don't even know what this means. Give us humble hearts and discerning minds, as well as, courage. Let both of our head and heart follow you.

God, sometimes, we don't know what to pray. Help us just be in you. Help us just remain in you. Help us cast all our worries and difficulties to you. In our person prayer times, gracious God, reveal your love and reveal your power.

We have our own needs. We come before you with desperate hearts. Listen to our prayers. Fill our hearts with you.

Watch over us through the week and be with every one with the new start of their schools.

In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. The Apostle Paul encourages us to let our love be genuine as we contribute to those in need in the world around us. Know that God will use us and our gifts for good things. Trust in his good intentions for his own creations. As we offer our gifts to God, let us praise God and glorify him.

The Doxology (BOP 830 Vs. 1)

Offering prayer:

O God, we offer these gifts to you in hope and thanksgiving. Use them to transform the world you love with the mercy and compassion we celebrate in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 592 I, the Lord of sea and sky

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Take up your cross and follow the steps of Jesus. Do not put your minds on the human things, but embrace the divine value in your life. Trust the Father of lights who does not have shadow of turning. God never changes. And this God loves you with his everything. Give your Lordship to him and let him lead your life.

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.