

## **Sunday Order of worship on October 29, 2023**

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Stephen Knowles)

### **We Gather**

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 374 Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 1 How blest are they, who, fearing God
- Prayer with children

### **We Listen**

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Leviticus 19:1,2, 15-18
- Second reading: Matthew 22:34-40
- Third reading: Psalm 1 (Refrain 2)
- Sermon: Like a tree planted by streams of water
- Prayer for the people

### **We Respond**

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830 Praise God from whom all blessings vs. 1) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 376 Lord, the light of your love is shining

### **We Serve**

- Benediction

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### **Responsive Call to Worship**

The Lord has been our dwelling place in all generations.

**From everlasting to everlasting God is God, and so we come to worship.**

God satisfies us every morning with steadfast love;

**Let us rejoice and be glad all our days.**

Tell of God's glorious power and praise God's holy name.

**We will offer God the work of our hands and praise from the depths of our hearts.**

### **Praise song – BOP 374 Oh for a thousand tongues to sing**

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

God, our God, You are gracious and loving, holy and eternal; your love is steadfast, your presence ever near. Your wisdom is older than time and as fresh as the morning dew.

Your name has come to us through the centuries, yet you can always do a new thing to draw us back to you. God, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, we offer you our prayers and praise this day in humble expectation; surprise us in this time of worship and refresh our readiness to serve you.

God, our God, You know our hearts, the times we truly loved one another and the times we merely tolerated each other. You know our minds, the times we truly focused on you and the

times we pursued our own purposes. Forgive us those times we went our own ways, and renew our commitment to live lives marked by your 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**

Friends in Christ, we are forgiven people, set free from past failures, to make a fresh start this day and every day. The Holy Spirit empowers us to love God and to love others. Thanks be to God for such everlasting grace!

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

### **Praise Song: BOP 1 How blest are they, who, fearing God**

### **Prayer with Children**

#### **Prayer for Illumination:**

Lord God, as we listen to the Scriptures this day, send your Holy Spirit so we encounter the words as your Living Word. Open our hearts to respond in love and service for Christ's sake. Amen.

- First reading: Ezekiel 37:1-10
- Second reading: John 15:1-11
- Third reading: Psalm 1 (Refrain 2)

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

### **SERMON: Like a tree planted by streams of water**

Today's sermon title is **"Like a tree planted by streams of water."**

What is the first impression of this title? Peaceful, abundant, satisfied, and blessed. Through this Psalm 1, God is calling us to the life of blessing.

I hope and pray that everyone can listen to the invitation of God and live in the abundant blessings of God.

First, this is the opening psalm of the whole songs. There are 150 psalms. When you put something in the front, usually, it is something very important. First item on the list is usually what we value the most. The theme of the first message is blessing. Who are they? Who are to receive the blessings from God?

There are three conditions of the blessed:

- 1) **They do not listen to the advice of the wicked.**

- 2) **They do not take the sinners' path.**
- 3) **They do not sit in the seat of the scoffers.**

It is the progress of someone falling into sin. For an extreme example, someone is getting addicted to drug. First, by curiosity, they **talk to people** who do drugs. Then, they try out, just a little bit. And then, they give in their whole life to drug.

Do we have some friends or people around who have a huge influence on us?  
Or are we giving some influence upon some other people?

**Genesis 12:1-2, "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.'"**

God called out Abram, even before God changed his name to Abraham. God invited him to **listen to God and follow his path**. This calling is about to abide with him. Then, what's the result of it? It is that Abram becomes a great nation. Eventually, God promised to make Abram a **blessing**.

When someone has impact on us, are they a blessing to us?  
When we influence others, are we becoming a blessing to them?  
I hope and pray that all our relationships are blessings.

<<PAULSE>> And what else is the condition to be the blessed people in Psalm 1?

**V2, "Their delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law they meditate day and night."**

It is clear that, like Abram was with God, the life of blessed people are filled with God's word. In other words, **the true blessing is to be with God.**

How close are we with God in our daily life?

When I was with youth, I used to ask this to them.

**Stretch your hands**, this one end is you and the other hand is God. Stretch out as much as you can. That is the farthest. Now, show how close you are with God. How much is your heart fulfilled with the presence of God? How often are you present in the presence of God?

We are created in the image of God. Therefore, we have the likeness of God.

**Genesis 1:27-28, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them."**

God blessed them after creating them. Genesis 1 teaches us that God blessed us. Psalm 1 teaches us that **God blessed us.**

**Then, what is blessing?**

**Genesis 1:28 continues, God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'**

Abundance. Be fruitful.

And the image of today's psalm, **A tree planted by streams of water.**

Full. Lack nothing. Contentment.

**ARE WE EXPERIENCING THAT?** In our daily lives?

One day, the Great King Alexander went around the town taking care of his own people. In front of one shabby house, a man was sitting down leaning on the wall. So, Alexander, with a compassionate heart, with kindness, asked him. “What can I do for you?” Then the man with poor looking answered. “Can you step beside, you are blocking the sun. I am trying to enjoy the sun. That’s all I need right now.”

Enjoying the sunshine was all he needed at that moment. He was free and content. It’s an extreme example, but you know what I am trying to say.

When was the last time we experienced the true contentment, true freedom, true abundance?

If we make hundreds of thousands of dollars, will this make us happy and free? If our children are doing well, it’s a grateful thing, will it make us free and satisfied with our lives? Of course, these help us feel happiness and contentment. But, the core of my question is, “**Are these the images of a tree planted by streams of water?**”

What is your image of the tree planted by streams of water?

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

The image of the tree planted by streams of water is the condition that **the God-shaped vacuum is filled with God.** This is what we are supposed to experience. This is what we are supposed to restore with all our hearts. This is our true identity that we are supposed to enjoy. Do you remember that our purpose is to enjoy God and glorify him?

And, as God promised to Abram, to help others fill the vacuum with God is how we become the blessing to the people around us, and to the world.

Here is a **laptop**. I press the power button, but it does not turn on. Why is this happening? Because there is no battery. If I plug this power cable to this laptop, what’s going to happen? Because now this laptop has the power source, it will turn on. It’s got the power.

Does anyone have cellphone? When you use your phone one or two days, you will see the empty bar with **a red mark on your screen**. Some may beep. What do you need to do? Connect the phone to the charger. Otherwise, you won’t be able to use it because it’s powerless.

What about us? Are we connected to the source of our power? Are we charging regularly?

“**John 15:5**, Jesus is saying, “**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.**”

Like this, if we are not connected to the power source, we are going to be dried up. Our life will fade away. We cannot last our life. So, like a tree planted by streams of water, abide in the presence of God. Live with God. Love the word of God. Fill your hearts with him.

If we do that this is what will happen. **Ezekiel 37:7-10**, “**So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bone came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come**

**upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.”**

God can make dry bones a vast multitude. God can use us to do this. Be like a tree planted by streams of water. Be with God. Stay with him. Have his words and laws in your hearts. Meditate on them. And fill the God-shaped vacuum with God. That’s how we are created and this is the natural way. Let us become the trees, planted with our roots deep in the Lord.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

**Prayer for the people:**

You are the Sovereign I am. Your name is holy. You are the pure spotless Lamb. You are the Almighty One. Your name is holy. We come before your presence with humble hearts. In awe, we stand before you with praise and worship. Glorious God, fill us. Fill our hearts with you. You are the true Blessing and abiding in you is the best blessing we can ever experience. Like the image of the tree planted by streams of water, we want to be in the picture. We want to rest our souls, hearts, and minds in you. Gracious God, as you called us to be in this image, and as we have you and your likeness and character in our hearts, restore our true identity. This image of the tree is your promise. God, hold our hand, capture our hearts and walk with us. Live in our daily lives.

With this image, we want to bless the whole world. There are miserable situations around the world. Shootings, violence, hatred, fear, sadness, emptiness, selfishness, greed. Wars. Selfish ambitions. Loving God, God the Father, they are your children too. Abandoned, depressed, desperate, discouraged, destroyed. Have mercy upon them.

Let us take a few moments of prayer for the world. Think about the wars in Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Russia, and the places of violence, sadness, and disasters. Let us pray for them.  
(1 minutes of prayer)

God of love and grace, we imagine your loving hearts holding the whole earth, crying with us, and caring for us. Help us open our eyes to see you and open our ears to listen to your love message for us.

We remember our church. Next week is our anniversary. Thank you God for your faithfulness. Please continue to walk with each person in your church. Renew us, so that we can live as your blessings. Thank you. We praise you and we love you. In Jesus’ precious name, we pray. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering:** As members of Christ’s body, the Church, we draw on the gifts of many other followers of Jesus, offered to him over centuries of service. Our gifts join theirs so that God will be praised and Jesus’ love spread in this generation and those still to come. Let us praise God and honour him with the Doxology BOP #830.

**Doxology 830 & Offering prayer:**

Generous God, you are both faithful and fruitful as you embrace each new generation. Bless our gifts and make them fruitful beyond our imagining. Keep us faithful in this generation so that the inheritance we have received in Christ will continue in generations yet to come. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

**Song for the Journey BOP 376 – Lord, the light of your love is shining**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Make sure that we are connected to our power source. Make sure that we fill God-shaped vacuum with God. God called us to become blessings to the whole creation. Let us plant our hearts to the Lord and live as blessings.

**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.