

Sunday Order of worship on November 26, 2023

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Robert Revington)

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 274 Crown him with many crowns
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 474 The love of God comes close
- Prayer with children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Matthew 25:31-46
- Second reading: Psalm 100 (Unison) (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16
- Sermon: I myself will search for my sheep.
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830 Praise God from whom all blessings vs. 1) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 685 How firm a foundation

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

One: The Lord is the first and the last, our beginning and our end.

All: **Holy, holy, holy is the Lord our God, who was and is, and is to come.**

Blessing and honour, glory and majesty be to our God, now and evermore. Amen.

Praise song – BOP 274 Crown him with many crowns

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God most holy, You are known to us as the Almighty, Eternal Ruler and Lord.

We call you our Shepherd and Guide. We praise you with many names, but you are beyond our imagination, so much greater than our words. We know you in the stories of Jesus and in him, we see your love in action, reaching out to the world. You move in us and through us by your Holy Spirit, drawing us to you, sending us to live out your word. God most holy, Three in One and One in Three, we praise you with our lips and with our lives to offer you honour and love, now and always.

God most merciful, We confess that we have failed to love fully or forgive wholly. You offer us freedom but we settle for the familiar. You offer us hope but we prefer knowing what will happen next. Teach us to give up cautious faithfulness, so that we can offer you our whole lives, and commit to following Jesus into the future you are creating.

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. God's compassion never fails. God's loving kindness is steadfast. Know that you are forgiven by the grace of Jesus Christ. Forgive each other, and live in peace and harmony.

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 474 The love of God comes close

Prayer with Children

Prayer for Illumination:

God of mystery and majesty, your thoughts are not our thoughts; your ways are not our ways. Send us your Holy Spirit, speaking through the Scriptures, so that our thoughts be transformed as we encounter your Living Word, in Christ, our Lord. Amen.

- First reading: Matthew 25:31-46
- Second reading: Psalm 100 (Unison) (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16

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

SERMON: I myself will search for my sheep.

Today's sermon title is **"I myself will search for my sheep."**

When we read today's passage, we think of the image of Psalm 23, the shepherd leading his own sheep on a green pasture. Sheep roam around the shepherd peacefully and satisfied. We can think of this worry-free image.

But, how is the tone? Somewhat different. **V11, "I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out."** What caused God to say this to his own people?

V2, "Mortals, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: ... Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? V4, "You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them."

With the shepherd image, the Israelites admired King David. Likewise, they are supposed to follow the good example. They knew what they should do. Like a common sense, we know when to help others. We know when we are to intervene and help.

But, out of selfishness or convenience, the people with power did not take good care of the less powerful. They did not seek the common good, but they only sought their own selfish desires.

Being fed up with them, God finally stepped in. **V8, “because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherd have not searched for my sheep, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them.”**

Next week is the first Sunday of Advent. The time we celebrate and remember the birth of Baby Jesus. Why did I bring today’s passage at this time? Christmas is coming. Everyone should be happy? Everything should be accepted and understood?

As Christmas is approaching, we really need to think about the foundational message of Christmas. We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Why did he come? What’s the beginning and what’s the end?

Why did the Creator God have to come into the mere body of His own creature, human?

Some people might say, why do you talk about this kind of not happy thing close to Christmas? Why do you have to talk about death of Christ when we celebrate the birth of baby Jesus?

In the whole world and in the entire history, there is only one person who came to this world with the purpose of dying. Even sacrificial animals, they are not chosen before their birth. After their birth, worshippers should examine their condition. Is this pure and spotless?

Jesus is the only One who was appointed to be our Sacrificial Lamb. Jesus came to earth to die. Jesus came to earth for us.

There is a praise song, That’s why we praise him. The first verse goes like this.

“He came to live, live a perfect life. He came to be the living word, our light. He came to die so we’d be reconciled. He came to rise to show His power and might.”

We cannot deny that Jesus came into his creation to love us. Jesus came to live a perfect life to be the blameless and pure spotless sacrificial Lamb for us. Jesus came to us to die in our place. Jesus died and descended to the dead. Some translation states, Jesus descended to hell. Jesus went through our judgment process as a sinner. But, Jesus rose on the third day. He defeated the power of death. That’s how he was able to rise from the dead, overcoming the power of death.

We are the people of God. After creating the whole world, God entrusted his creation to us. We are to take care of God’s creation. This means that God called us as partners. God wants to work with us. If we say that God is a shepherd, we are his partners. God invited us. God holds our hands.

There is a hope when Jesus finally decided to come and end the suffering of his own people. Now, he’s going to stop the oppression and help us. **This is God’s salvation.**

God entrusted the creation to us. What did God have in his mind?

Doesn’t he know our ability? Yes, he does. But, still, God wanted us to have the freedom and power. But, once we acknowledge that authority and power, we began to use it for our own selves. But, the question is this. **Didn’t God know what we would do?**

Is it like this? God first thought and trusted us to do well. Just like God is faithful and good, God expected us to be like him. So, God entrusted so much to us?

No. God purposefully gave us opportunities to experience who we are because only then, we will be able to accept who God is.

In other words, we tried, but we failed. We realized that we cannot. At that time, God saves us.

This theme runs through the whole Bible.

Romans 10:9-10, MSG. You're not "doing" anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That's salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: "God has set everything right between him and me!"

2 Timothy 1:9, [God] "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace"

Do you see how God is working?

Relating to this, God gave us laws. **The Ten Commandments.**

1. You shall have no others gods before Me.
2. You shall not make idols.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet.

Are we keeping all of them faithfully and sincerely, all the time?

Can we really keep these laws?

NO. No is the right answer and God knew that we cannot keep them all.

Then, **why did God give the laws to us?** We first try to keep them, and we are supposed to realize that we cannot. We cannot save our own selves. Salvation only comes from God.

Jesus told his disciples that he's leaving.

John 14:26-27, "26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

When you have a dog, when she or he knows you, then, when you go to a park, she runs far away but not worried or fearful because she knows that you are behind her.

When you stay around her, she has freedom. Just like a shepherd and sheep, when there is a trusting relationship, there is peace, comfort, freedom, and the sense of belongingness.

It's the same with little children.

Are we free and peaceful when we are with our Jesus? Is Jesus becoming your shepherd? Or are you still trying to take the control of your own life?

Jesus is saying I myself will search for my sheep! That's us. That's why Jesus came to us.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Prayer for the people:

That's why we praise Jesus. That's why we sing for him. That's the reason why we praise and worship God. Thank you Jesus for coming for us. Thank you Jesus for dying for us. Thank you Jesus for taking care of our lives. You are the true Shepherd. You are good and we trust your goodness for us. Thank you for being our God. Thank you for the salvation and the joy we have in our hearts. Please, God, let your love and grace fill our hearts and let them brim over through us to our surroundings. Let us reflect your light to our daily lives.

God, we pray for our church. We are under construction. We are not complete yet. We are growing in you every day little by little. Hold our hands and help us live in your presence. We are going to try a new thing next week. We are going to have a café church. We will have something to nibble with tea or coffee when we worship you next week. Help us be free from our own experiences and fixed ideas. Thank you for the courage trying a new thing. Help us glorify you with new experience and help us enjoy you. Give us discerning spirits so we are ready to follow your steps, not our own thoughts or experiences.

Also, as we are about to finish up this year, help us have time to reflect on how we did and how God worked in our lives.

You are a good Shepherd knowing every one and knowing our every need. Faithful God, work among us and walk with us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: God has blessed us in Christ and in creation with all that we need to thrive. But because of human limitedness and sinful nature, look around the world. There are so many needy people. Let us become the hands and feet of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through our offering, may God's love and goodness be spread out and may people experience God's goodness. Let us praise God and honour him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Doxology 830 & Offering prayer:

Glorious and gracious and loving God, you envision a world where the hungry are fed and strangers are welcomed. Use us and use our gifts. We are yours. Guide us and walk with us all the time. Thank you. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 685 How firm a foundation

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. We follow Jesus. We walk with Jesus. Jesus is our true Shepherd. Give your heart to Jesus daily. Jesus is not going to give up on you. So, be free, peaceful, and confident like a dog with her master, like sheep with their shepherd, and like a child who's walking with her parents.

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.