

Order of worship on December 31, 2023

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Edwin Webster)

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 141 Good Christians, all rejoice
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 811 Standing at the portal
- Prayer with children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Isaiah 61:10-62:3
- Second reading: Psalm 148 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Galatians 4:4-7
- Sermon: Perfect Timing
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830 with modified lyrics) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 650 He leadeth me

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens!

Praise God in the heights and the depths!

Praise God, all creatures of earth and sky!

Praise God, young and old, together!

Let us praise the Lord and worship God's holy name!

Praise song – BOP 141 Good Christians, all rejoice

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God of grace and glory, we praise you from the heights and from the depths; from the courts of power and from the sidewalks of our lives. Your splendour shines from a manger, where the Light of the World was born for us. In fragile flesh, you are revealed to us face to face reaching out to claim our love. And so we gather with those who have glimpsed that love to rejoice that you have claimed us in Christ. We offer you our praise, Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit; Source of life, Glorious light, and Wisdom of the ages.

God of our lives, we know you are with us through thick and thin, in times of great joy and at moments of disappointment. Yet, we can feel let down when the joy of Christmas Day has passed. Our hope gets folded away with the gift wrappings, our energy for the future feels a bit lost. Forgive us when our faithfulness flickers like a candle burning down.

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 of the Gospel: Jesus Christ is our light and our salvation. In him we are made new. Let us give thanks to God, and be at peace with ourselves and with one another.

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 811 Standing at the portal

Prayer for Illumination:

Holy God, your Word makes all things new. Send your Holy Spirit to refresh our minds and hearts, and embrace your truth revealed in Christ, your Word made flesh. Amen.

- First reading: Isaiah 61:10-62:3
- Second reading: Psalm 148 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Galatians 4:4-7

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

Sermon: Perfect Timing.

Today's sermon title is **“Perfect timing.”**

Our passage begins with the phrase, **“But when the fullness of time had come.”**

This indicates a change. It is the right time to make a change. Fullness of time could be understood as a tipping point. Tipping point is the moment that brings the change. For example, when we boil water, when it becomes 95 C, can we say it's boiling? No, we need that 5 more to make 100 C. That moment of becoming 100 C where the water can boil is the tipping point. That is the fullness of time.

So, “when the fullness of time had come,” who does what?
Are we the people doing something according to the scripture? No.
It is God sending his Son.

We all know what happened when God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to us. Jesus Christ died for us and rose again. We are going to think about why.

Why? The easy answer is because God loves us. Then, what is the LOVE?
We are going to think about love.

What is love? We might imagine pink hearts all over. A man and a woman holding hands and looking into each other's eyes with smile on their lips. Their hearts are full of love.
Then, is love a mere emotion?

Those who are married, do you love our spouses? Then, are your hearts full of the emotion of love all the time? Because you can say that you love your spouse, it means that your hearts are full of the emotion of love. But, this "but" gives you a relief.
Our hearts are not always full of loving emotion. We experience disappointment, disagreement, anger, frustration, sometimes regret.
Then, at that time, when our hearts are not full of loving emotion, can we say that we stop loving?
What about the love for our children? Is it always the same? Don't we experience the same various emotions toward them?
Then, as a parent, can we say that we stop loving our own children?

Love is not a mere emotion. It is determination. Love is our decision to embrace and accept. It is my own dedication to understand whether it is the spouse or children.
Love is not an emotion.

When the fullness of time had come, God did three things.
God sent his Son, made his Son born of a woman, and born under the law.
All these three things are against the emotion when comparing God's love for Jesus and us.
Jesus is God, God's own self. And we are creatures.
There are not the same example for this comparison, but the closest one I can think of is parents and children relationship.
Some parents claim that they love their children more than themselves.

Hmm,, when I wrote this part, I pondered upon my own love for myself and for my children.
In a situation of danger, will I save them by giving up my own life?
I would say yes. Then, I can say that I love my children more than I love my own life.

I wanted to leave this part because I wanted to show how my logic develops.

So, God, as our Father, loves us more than he loves himself. With that love, God did the three things: sent his Son Jesus Christ, made his Son born of a woman, and born under the law.

These are the acts of decision. God decided to do so because of love. Because of his determination to love us, God sent his own Son. We all know Jesus came to us to die. God knew when he decided to send his own Son Jesus Christ. Emotion-wise? I would look for some other ways? Is this the only possible way? Are there any other options? Because God's love for us, God had to give up his own Son.

Born of a woman. The Bible says Sin came into the human history through one man. That is Adam. The first person God created. So, all the descendants of Adam inherit the sin. If a child were conceived without the influence of Adam, then the baby doesn't inherit sin. Mary, Jesus' mother, was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is how Jesus is sinless from birth.

Born under the law. Jesus came to complete the law, not to destroy the law. Jesus kept all the laws and taught how to keep the law in God's ways. For example, on Sabbath day, a child fell in the well. By the law, no works should be done. So, will you violate the law or will you leave the child in the well and wait till tomorrow, so that you can save the child? The consequence of the violation of the law was huge. Sometimes stoning, burning, or excommunication. They could lose their life or their everything. But, does it look right? When Jesus was born under the law, that was the law. So, Jesus taught the love of God and the intention of the law of God, so that they have the right way of keeping the law.

Let's continue, **v5, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.**

I just explain this point. We have some house-rules for children. When they violate, what's going to happen? Are we stoning them? Are we kicking them out from the house? No... That's exactly how God felt about the people taking that law in a wrong way.

They were the slaves of the law, but their true identity is the children of God.

V6-7, and because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba!, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

What are the laws that made us slaves? Sometimes, our own stubbornness hinders us to be free. Our obsession stops us love. It destroys our true identity as the child of God. Can we come to God saying "Abba! Father!"???

When the Bible says, we have received the Spirit of God's Son into our hearts, so we can cry out to God Abba! Father!, we can take this as God's promise for us. Do you have the Holy Spirit in your heart? Can you call God ABBA FATHER?

God freed all of us from any types of slavery. We are freed by God.

When we say that we are children of God, this gives another promise that we are heirs of God.

We are to inherit what God has. We are not only loved by God, but also we are going to inherit what God has.

This is the decision of love that God had made. We easily understand that God saved us. God delivered us from death to life. But, we don't usually look deeper. When we are saved, when we are moved from darkness to light, then we are going to live a new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17, So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

18, All this is from God, whom reconciled us to himself through Christ.

Our relationship is reconciled from slaves to precious children.

Perfect timing is now. There is no such specific timing for God. When we come to God, when we accept God, when we have aha moment before God, when our hearts are freed from slavery, when we restore the true identity as the children of God, then that is the perfect timing.

Let us come to God with thanksgiving and joy for what he has done for us out of love.

As the children of God, who inherit the love of God, let us show and exercise God's love through our lives. In our relationships with our family, friends, church members, community, and all the people, let us decide to love.

Colossians 3:14, Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Let us love each other. Let us bound only to love in 2024. Let us build our church with our love.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Prayer for the people:

God of love, maybe it is too easy for us to mention your love. But, your love is not just natural or something easy to earn. To love us, you had to give up your life. To love us, you had to humble yourself. To love us, you paid a huge price. Your love for us is your dedication. Your love for us is your life giving decision. Your love for us is not free, but priceless. Help us know the weight of your love for us.

We cannot thank you enough for your love that poured down, and is pouring down, and will pour down upon us, always, because of your faithfulness.

Be gloried and be worshipped through this time.

Merciful Father, thank you so much for guiding our church and each member's life in 2023.

Because of your faithfulness, we have hope for tomorrow. We are now lifting up our year to your hands. Our happiness, struggles, questions. Good and bad experiences to your hands. Like the Bible says, the old had passes away. We turn from our old and turn to our new year.

God of love, let your wisdom be with us. Give us discerning hearts and give us courage to live according to our wisdom and faith. We want to be faithful to you. We want to please you through our lives and with our faith. Help us have you in the centre of our hearts.

We remember and pray for the people who need our prayers. We pray for those who are struggling with Corona virus. There are many viruses going around these days. Protect us and heal those who are suffering from viruses. There are people who are with other health concerns. Place your hands upon them now. Encourage them, embrace them, and heal them.

There are other prayer needs amongst us. We believe that you listen to all our prayers. You know all our needs. Fill our needs and protect us from all the things that hinder us from your love.

We will remember how we are loved and try to display your love through our daily lives.

Help us love each other and value and respect each other.

Let our worship be continued in 2024 with more love and passion for you and for your people. You are God and you love us and we thank you and we praise you and worship you. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: Christmas isn't over for us! We celebrate God's gift in Christ Jesus again and again. Grateful for all we have received, we express our love for God in our gifts this day, and affirm our commitment to share God's love with others in the year ahead. Let us praise God and honour him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Doxology 830

Praise God with songs that never cease,
praise God who fills the earth with peace,
praise God for love and joy within;
the Holy Child is born again!

Offering prayer:

Merciful and gracious God, your love overflows in the goodness we have met even in challenging times. As one year closes and another begins, help us trust your goodness. Bless these gifts so that they may provide others with the hope we know in Christ Jesus and the love you share with the world through him. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 650 He leadeth me

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. **If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!** Past is past. Look ahead. Perfect timing is now. Let us love each other with the love we have loved by God. Happy new year in the Lord.

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.