

Order of worship on January 21, 2024

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

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 39 God of mercy, God of grace
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 367 Jesus, the very thought of thee

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Mark 1:14-20
- Second reading: Psalm 62:5-12 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Jonah 3:1-10
- Sermon: Wisdom to listen, Courage to change.
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 592 I, the Lord of sea and sky

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

God our rock and our salvation.

We will not be shaken!

Trust in God at all times, O people.

We will pour out our hearts to God, our refuge.

Today, let us turn to God and accept the good news.

We will listen for Christ's call and follow him.

Praise song – BOP 39 God of mercy, God of grace

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Lord Jesus Christ, you have called us together as your people, and invited us to follow you.

Your church has grown from scattered homes in ancient times – to a worldwide community, embracing men and women, young and old, from many nations and cultures.

We marvel at the miracle of your church, and we praise you for our place among your people.

Your love keeps drawing us closer to you and to each other, and so we offer you our wonder and praise with millions of those who also gather in your name this day, our Saviour and our Lord.

God of mercy and mystery, we confess your mercy can disturb us. We sit in judgment on what we hear, and cannot imagine offering forgiveness for dreadful actions. We prefer to think that

your judgment matches ours. Forgive us for presuming we see as you see, and understand all that you understand. Have mercy upon us, O God, when we give up on the power of mercy.

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 mercy of our God is from everlasting to everlasting. Friends, hear the good news of the Gospel. In Jesus Christ, God's generous love reaches out to embrace us. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free to begin again. Let us give thanks for God's most generous love.

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 367 Jesus, the very thought of thee

Prayer for Illumination:

God of new life, your Word can change lives with mercy and purpose. Send your Holy Spirit to help us hear your Word with its potential to change our lives as we follow Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

- First reading: Mark 1:14-20
- Second reading: Psalm 62:5-12 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Jonah 3:1-10

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

Sermon: Wisdom to listen, courage to change

Today, I think I will begin by reading a poem.

This poem is by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, named Loss and Gain.

When I compare / what I have lost with what I have gained, /
what I have missed with what attained, / little room do I find for pride.

I am aware how many days have been idly spent; how like an arrow the good intent has fallen short or been turned aside.

But who shall date to measure loss and gain in this wise?

Defeat may be victory in disguise; the lowest ebb is the turn of the tide. +

In this poem, Longfellow writes the uncertainty of life. It seems going well, but in the inside, it maybe not. It seems it's all ruined, but it might be the beginning of turning the situation.

The prophet Jonah was called by God to speak for God to the people of God. God specially chose him and gave him a special mission. He was overwhelmed and he was excited.

But, what was the message?

Jonah 1:2, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.”

We all know the story of Jonah. He didn't like it. Nineveh was an enemy to Israelites. Jonah didn't like God's plan to save the people in Nineveh. So, he ran away. But, the Lord called him back and gave the same mission one more time. This is today's passage.

Jonah still didn't like what God told him to do. Nineveh was a large city; it took 3 days to walk across the whole city, but Jonah went across the city in one day.

Somehow, he obeyed, but he did not put his heart to it. He did what God told him to do, but it is obvious that he didn't want the people to be saved by God. His message was this, **“Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”**

By whom? And why? And Who is this stranger in the city?

God prepared everything before Jonah went to Nineveh. It was God's decision to save the people of Nineveh, for sure, as we can see. But, here, let us take one step away from this story. When we see the whole picture of the story, **where is the focus of God?** God focuses on saving the people of Nineveh? That's what happened, but it seems like it's not the whole point. Isn't it Jonah that God wants? Isn't it Jonah that God focuses on?

God could have sent another person to give this simple line to Nineveh. But, God did not give up on Jonah. In chapter 1, God sent a storm when Jonah ran away. It was a message to Jonah and the people around him. Because Jonah ran away from God's commandment, God chased him. God brought him back to his presence. Whether Jonah put his effort or not, God worked. God showed his miracle.

What is this telling us today?

Sometimes, we don't feel like to worship God. Sometimes, we don't like to go to church. Sometimes, praying to God, reading his word seem to be boring and meaningless. Sometimes, we disagree with God and disobey. We go our own ways, just like Jonah.

In our passage, where do you want to focus? Who would you relate to yourself?

The conversion of the people of Nineveh is important and great. The miracle of God is something beyond our power and understanding. But, God's approach to Jonah, God's care for Jonah, God's interest in Jonah, God's love for Jonah is something we need to focus, we need to ponder upon how God loves an individual whether she or he obeys God or not.

For example, in school setting, let's say that they went to a field trip. But, one student was be lost. Then, what do we do? For the efficiency and productivity, do they proceed their plans and forget about the one lost student? No, they sacrifice their plans sand they adjust their schedules, and they look for the one lost student.

What about the one lost sheep. Jesus gave a parable. There was one hundred sheep, but one is lost. Jesus rightfully said that the shepherd would leave 99 sheep alone on the mountain, and go to look for the one lost sheep.

If we don't have personal relationships with each individual sheep, one lost sheep is just a lost fortune. A little loss of money. But, if the shepherd had a personal and intimate relationship, it's

a different story. It's a disaster. If we have 5 children, but one lost. Are we gonna be okay without finding the lost one? We will surely look for the one until we find.

Jonah could be a lost sheep or a lost child. He went his own way. God waited, and he guided him in the right way, in God's way, in God's timing.

Have you had any experiences going against God's plans? It's like this. Because you like your own ways, you didn't have God in your mind. I have. I pursued my own interests. I was blinded and didn't ask God what he wanted. If that happens to our children, what do we do? In a big picture, we already know that our children's ways are wrong. Of course, to teach them through experiences, we wait. However, if they are not able to realize, then we let them know. We guide them in right ways. Sometimes, God sacrifices many to teach one. God let the people of Nineveh wait while Jonah was experiencing storms and the time in the fish's belly.

The shepherd who lost one sheep. He leaves 99 sheep in the middle of the mountain. Taking risks. But, for the shepherd, the one lost sheep is important. He cannot give up. Jonah was the one lost sheep. Sometimes, I am the one lost sheep. And sometimes, in the course of your lives, you could be the one lost sheep.

This God we are serving is focusing on the one lost sheep.
I titled today's sermon, **Wisdom to listen, courage to change.**

God speaks to us through situations, people around, sermons, and inspirations from the Holy Spirit. Do we have the ear to listen? Are we relying upon our own wisdom? Or can we acknowledge God's wisdom? Obedience comes only with two parts. Realization and action. When we first realize what the right way is, action does not come naturally. At night time, when you are sleepy, you are lying down on your bed. You feel cozy, comfortable, and so warm. Perfect for your sleep. But, one thing, the light is on. You realize that you have to turn off the light. But, you don't want to give up this perfect condition. That is the realization. That is the wisdom. If you know that you have to turn off the light, you gotta get up and turn off the light. That is the courage to take the action.

Last week, the Rev. Dr. Jim shared the message of the gospel. Go, share, and invite. Now we know what to do. And now we know where God focuses. One person. One lost soul. Each person here. You and me.

First, please take good care of your soul. Stand before the presence of God daily. Listen to God and fill your hearts with his wisdom and love. Make God's wisdom and love fill your heart first, and let it overflow from you, so that you have enough courage to go, share, and invite.

May God shape you like he waited and guided Jonah to do his mighty works. And let God's amazing love and grace and the light displayed through your life.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Prayer for the people:

Patient God, loving God, you shape your own people in your own ways and in your own timing. Sometimes, your ways don't align with ours. Sometimes, we struggle because we are not patient like you, because we cannot understand your ways. Sometimes we complain to you out of our limited wisdom. Thank you for the story of Jonah. We can relate to what Jonah was experiencing. In the Bible, Jonah was not changed. You are still working for him. Whether we

are young or old, wise or simple, you are still working in us faithfully. Let us quiet down all our surroundings and stand before your presence and meet you face to face. Let us have our person time with you, so we really listen to your wisdom and fill our hearts with your love. So, we become confident because of you, not because of anything else, so that we can courageously follow your ways.

We pray for our church. You purchased this church with your precious blood. You are the Head of this church. You are the King of this church. You are the Lord of each of our lives. Open our hearts and ears for your truth and wisdom. Let us embrace your love with our hearts. Fill us with your presence and love and confidence and courage, so we can rise up and take a step for you.

We pray for individuals who are having difficult times because of the physical and mental challenges, relationship struggles, financial problems, and all other matters. You are the Lord and you are the King, so God, embrace us in your arms. Comfort us and make peace in our hearts and within our community.

We are yours. You made us and you lead us. Be glorified and be worshipped through our lives. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: Jesus asked his first disciples to answer his call with their lives. We offer the fruit of our lives in answer to this same call. Consider what Christ can accomplish through the gifts you offer today. Let us praise God and honour him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

Lord Jesus, you called ordinary men and women join in the work of God's reign on earth. We offer you our gifts to share in the work you began through them. Bless our gifts and work through us, so that the world may know that your love is still active among us all. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. 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. God used Jonah to save the entire city, but Jonah was not that different from us. What does this mean to you? Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart. Let this be our confession and let us obey God's commandment. Let his love and grace overflow from you. As you follow the calling of God, Go and make disciples.

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.