

Order of worship on February 18, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 363 All hail the power of Jesus' name
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 367 Jesus the very thought of thee
- Prayer for children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22
- Second reading: Psalm 25:1-10 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Mark 1:9-15
- Sermon: Repent, and believe in the good news
- Praise song – BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 634 Will you come and follow me

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

One: On this first Sunday of Lent, we find Jesus in the wilderness, facing temptation. And forty days in wilderness is a long time.

All: We too experience wilderness times of temptation, challenge and change.

One: Yet even in the wilderness and among the wild beasts the angels cared for Jesus.

All: As we make our way in the wilderness, we hear the good news that we are not alone – that the reign of God has come near in Christ.

Praise song – BOP 363 All hail the power of Jesus' name

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God, our Creator and Companion, Your love is as fresh as the new day, rising like the sun to guide us. In Jesus Christ, you walk with us to challenge and encourage us, revealing our weaknesses but offering us hope. We praise you for such gifts! In this time of worship, open us to the new possibilities you create for the world you love. With the power of the Holy Spirit, energize us to embrace the future, trusting in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God our Creator and Companion, you created us to be your partners in creation, but we confess that we're not happy being mere partners. We prefer to have our own ways. We like to manage

the world without your guidance. We want our own ways. We are tempted to satisfy our own desires without counting the cost to others, or to the earth itself. Lord, forgive us; have mercy on us. Give us wisdom to listen and courage to let go.

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 Word of Grace. Please know that you were ransomed not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish. Jesus gave his life, so we can have his life. As we remember and celebrate the love of our Jesus Christ, may his love fulfill our hearts and overflow to our surroundings.

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 children

Prayer for Illumination:

O Lord, grant your people grace to enter into the season of Lent as a people consecrated to you, that we may live through it in love and passion which no trouble may disturb; through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns together with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

- First reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22
- Second reading: Psalm 25:1-10 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Mark 1:9-15

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

Sermon: Repent, and believe in the good news

The Gospel of Mark is like a snap shot of Jesus' story. In today's passage of the gospel of Mark, there are three snap shots. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Then, Jesus was led by the Spirit of God and was tempted in the wilderness. After that, Jesus came back to Galilee and spread the good news.

We have begun this year's Lent. Lent is the time we remember the sacrifice of Jesus and celebrate the love of God for us. Because Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days, we remember that time. So, we take 40 days to remember and participate the suffering of our Lord.

Last Wednesday, February 14th was Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. And Easter Sunday is March 31. When you count the days, that's 47 days. But, wait. I just told you that we take 40 days for Lent. Among those 47 days, we do not count Sundays. WHY NOT? What so special about Sundays?

Sunday is God's Holy Day. Sabbath. We are to worship God and separate this day. We keep Sabbath Holy for the God of the whole universe and who gave his one and only Son Jesus Christ for us. So, we don't count those 7 Sundays.

So, on Sunday, on Lord's Day, please remember the true meaning of LIFE and JOY we have in our hearts. Jesus came and died on the cross for what? For me to live like today? For our worship like this, he gave his life? For our weekday lives, which, many times, we don't even think about God? We are the reason why Jesus gave up his life. So, let us, wholeheartedly, live with our Lord Jesus Christ with true life and joy.

Today's sermon title is "Repent, and believe in the good news."

Do you believe in the good news? What is the good news again? Jesus gave his life to purchase our lives. Then, **our life is equally valuable to the life of Jesus Christ.** Right? So, do you live out the gospel? Do you display that value in your life?

If you have not desired to live for the glory of God, then you have, not yet, never truly believed the good news, because we are living the life of Jesus Christ! If you have not wanted to live for God, then, you have not encountered Jesus Christ from your heart. You need Jesus Christ.

Before, you were so passionate to live for God, you were so eager to use your life for the glory of God, and for the kingdom of God. So, you might have married to your spouse who could share the passion and love for the Lord and for the Kingdom of God. But, unknowingly, as time goes, your passion faded away from God, but you focus on your spouse, and your children. Your family became your passion for your life. Not knowingly, your passion is turning away from God, for something else. Where is your passion for the kingdom of God you had in your youth, where is the burning desire for the love of God? What happened to your eagerness for the glory of God? If this describes your present life, then what you need is not anything else now, but one thing you need now is Jesus Christ.

The Bible calls us sinners. **Hamartia**, that's sin in Hebrews. The Biblical definition of sin is the status of being away from God. **The arrow that missed the target.** The arrow fell far from the bullseye. We are far away from God's purposes and goals and plans. So, the terminology sin is not to judge us, but it is calling us to come close to God. It is the language of invitation. It is the language of love.

Repent! And believe in the good news.

To repent is to come back and is to turn back. If we were an arrow, we missed the target, by far. So, we need to turn back to the right target. We need to adjust our focus, re-direct our destination.

And second part, believe in the good news.

What is the good news for you?

I found something from Instagram. When I first saw it, I recorded it to share it with you. It's from Instagram named "Betteryouliving."

I asked God to take away my habit. God said no. It is not for me to take it away, but for you to give it up.

I asked God to grant me patience. God said no. Patience is a by-product of tribulations. It isn't granted, but patience is learned.

I asked God to give me happiness. God said no. I give you blessings. Happiness is up to you.

I asked God to spare me from pain. God said no. Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me.

I asked God to help me to love others as much as he loves me. God said, Ah, finally, you have the idea.

What is the good news here? God taking away our bad habits? God granting us patience? God providing us happiness? God sparing us from pain? God granting all our prayers including our selfish ones?

If we believe that God is our Father, then listen to this. **Matthew 7:7-11. “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”**

God is our good Father. But, God said so many NOs. Why? Because God does not love us? Because he has no power? God said no for our own good. If a child asks for a knife, would you give it to your 3 year old baby? When we go to some family restaurants, some have really sharp knives. Everyone gets one set of cutlery. My 3 boys get sharp knives. Then, what do I do? I collect knives from them. Do they want their own knives? Of course, they want! They think they are old enough. But, they play around. So, for their own safety, I collect knives when the knives are really sharp. I say no to them when they want their own sharp knives. If we say that the boys pray for knives, then my answer is no. But, is this good for them or bad for them? I take away, I say no, to protect them for their own good.

When God says no, that’s because he wants to protect us.

Repent, turn back to God.

And believe in the good news. If you get NO from God, look at the situations with different perspectives. You might be nagging or pressing God for a sharp knife.

The possibilities of God’s answers are only three. One, yes. Two, no. Three, wait.

If you get YES, that’s great. You are ready.

If you get NO, God wants to protect you.

If you get WAIT, then you wait for the right time.

That’s what believing is.

For this time of LENT, would you join me defining the Good News of God for each of us?

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say

Prayer for the people:

It’s your blood that cleanses me. It’s your blood that gives me life. It’s your blood that took my place in redeeming sacrifice. Washes me whiter than the snow, than the snow. My Jesus, God’s precious sacrifice.

God of love and grace, thank you for your presence among us. Thank you for calling us to worship you and stand before your truth. We are sinful. We are far away from you. But, you never have given up. You are always watching us and you stay around us all the time. You always listen to our prayers and you always speak to us, even when we are not ready to listen to your wisdom. Merciful God, as we continuously worship you, open our ears, so we can listen to you. Open our eyes, so we can see how you are working in our daily lives.

Help us turn back to you and truly have the good news in the centre of our hearts.

We pray for our church. There is an emergent prayer need. We pray for Adele's father, Harvey, who is in hospital right now. Powerful God, would you place your hands upon him and release your healing power? We ask you to help him. Heal him inside and out. Have mercy upon him. Also, God, encourage the whole family. Give them the knowledge that you are with them and you are holding their hands faithfully.

We also pray for the process of healing of our people. Leukemia, broken ankle, lung disease, and other sicknesses. Would you place your hands upon them as well and heal them? Loving God, with your love, be with them in their healing process and all the medical treatments. Also, be upon all the medical doctors, nurses, all the medicines they take, and the treatments they get. Use every possibility for them. Help them be healed.

And there are people who are going through relational struggles. There are some tensions, stress, disagreements, and anger, emotional ups and downs. Take the throne of their hearts and fill their hearts with your love and grace. There are more complicated problems, but still, let your love and grace and mercy cover all their problems. Let them forgive like you forgive us, continuously and repeatedly.

We pray for this time of LENT. As we spend this special time of the year, help us remember you and help us place you in the centre of our lives. God, highlight the precious memories with you in the history of our own lives. Let us glorify you as we repent and believe in the good news.

We want to love you and worship you with all our hearts and through our everything. Hold our hands and walk with us. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

Worshipping God means that we admit the worth of God. What is our true worth? Let us acknowledge God's worth by our offering of our time, attention, passion, love, along with our money. Let us praise and glorify God with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

God of love and grace, we worship you with our offerings. We lift up our time, focus, love, bodies, and money. God, accept our offering and use us to display your awesomeness. Build us true intimacy. We want to enjoy you and we want to glorify you. Thank you for being with us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 634 Will you come and follow me

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. In the season of LENT, some people tend to give up something for God, as they participate in the suffering of Jesus Christ. It might be how they turn back to God again. Is there anything hindering you to turn back to God? Is there anything appearing better than the love of God? As we remember the life-giving love of Jesus Christ, let us pour out our hearts for him.

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.