

## **Order of worship on February 25, 2024**

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

### **We Gather**

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 384 O breath of life, come sweeping through us
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 675 Precious Lord take my hand
- Prayer for children

### **We Listen**

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Genesis 17:1-8
- Second reading: Psalm 22:22-26 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Mark 8:31-38
- Sermon: For the sake of the gospel
- Praise song – BOP 211 Take up your cross
- Prayer for the people

### **We Respond**

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 570 I have decided to follow Jesus

### **We Serve**

- Benediction

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### **Responsive Call to Worship**

One: On this second Sunday of Lent, we hear Jesus teaching about the suffering and rejection that he would endure on his way to the cross.

**All: Like Peter, we resist this teaching. We prefer an easier way without struggle and suffering.**

One: But Jesus does not hold back. He tells us that to become his followers we need to deny ourselves and take up our cross.

**All: May God help us as we learn more of what it means to be friends and followers of Jesus.**

### **Praise song – BOP 384 O breath of life come sweeping through us**

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

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises made to the generations before us, Thank you for your grace, May everyone tell of your goodness and your grace. Generous God, we praise you for gracious presence with us throughout the years and for sending Jesus Christ to deliver us from all manner of injustices and inequalities. Your glorious Spirit fills this world and renews our hearts and visions so that we can see your image in every person irrespective of background, race, and ethnicity. Your love moves beyond all the divisions and works in us to end misunderstanding,

racism, and injustice; creating communities of care and love and hope. We praise you for reconciling your world and making us one in Christ.

Forgiving God, we do not readily open our hearts to others who are different from us. We want to follow the example set by Jesus to love everyone, but we are scared of the unknown and scared that we might lose ourselves. We fail so often to share your unconditional love with others. Forgive us, Lord, and remind us of Jesus' sacrificial love for us and all humanity. Strengthen us where we are weak, that we may faithfully respond to your call to love one another as you have loved us. Make us channels of your peace and people, who will build your kingdom of love and justice. Amen.

**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**

As descendants of Abraham we are covered by God's grace that has set us free. Let us give God thanks that we have received salvation through the resurrection of Jesus. Go, live in peace, love the Lord, and love others.

**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 675 Precious Lord take my hand**

### **Prayer for children**

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

Gracious God, your Word instructs us how we live and how we should grow in relationship with all you have created. Open our hearts to receive your Word of truth and may your truth lead to our liberation. May your Word help us to strive for justice, peace and equality for all people and set us on fire with love for you. Amen.

- First reading: Genesis 17:1-8
- Second reading: Psalm 22:22-26 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Mark 8:31-38

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

### **Sermon: For the sake of the gospel**

When we are in love, we voluntarily give up what we like. When I was younger, I only ate clean and pretty fruit. When I found an apple with a little bruise, I threw it out. Of course, at that time, the price was much cheaper too. But, I did not want to eat something with defect. But, now, when I have my three children waiting, and I cut apples or some fruit for them, I give them good

parts and I eat bad parts. I eat the bad parts of fruit where I would have never ever even touched before having my children. Did they ask me to eat bad parts? No. They are not even aware of that I am eating. They are busy eating their portions Because I love them, I gladly give up the good parts.

When we are in love, we want to give something good to our loved ones.

Jesus was talking with his disciples. “Who do people say that I am?” Jesus was considered to be John the Baptist, Elijah, or some prophets. These are the understanding of the people at that time. So, Jesus asked them, “Then, who do you say that I am?”

The Bible is funny because we don’t know how much time gap between these lines.

**V29, ‘But who do you say that I am?’**

**Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”**

Was there a pause? Or Did Peter answer instantly? We cannot know for sure.

But, we know that Peter is the only one who answered to Jesus with confidence.

**“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16:16**

Jesus was very pleased with Peter’s answer. Wow! Yes! **“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.”**

**Matthew 16:17.**

And then, Jesus changed the topic. Jesus began to tell his disciples that he had to go through suffering. Not only suffering, he would be betrayed, and he would be killed. And Jesus included that he would be raised on the third day.

Jesus just told them that he is the Son of the Living God. He is the Messiah. He is the Saviour. He is the Rescuer. But, now, he will die? He will be betrayed?

Peter was not able to take that. So, he stood up and talked to Jesus.

“Come here and listen to me. We need to talk.” **Peter rebuked Jesus. “God forbid it! What are you talking about? This must never happen to you.”**

To rebuke is to express sharp and stern disapproval or to criticize someone.

So, this means, Peter disapprove the teachings of Jesus in front of the disciples and the crowd.

**What is in his heart?** The love for Jesus. He did this to love Jesus. Peter loved Jesus, his works, his teachings, his wisdom, his miracles, his power, his fame, and his confidence. Because Peter was faithful to Jesus and because he was passionate for Jesus, he stood up and disagreed with Jesus.

We understand Peter’s feeling. Peter’s disappointment with Jesus. And the helpless feeling with his teaching.

Sometimes, we have disagreements when we serve the church together. Different people have different ideas and sometimes they collide. This is caused because of each other’s different ways to love Jesus. But, Jesus’ way is beyond our understanding.

**Matthew 16:23, “But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”**

Shocking. Peter rebuked Jesus for the sake of the gospel, but he was called Satan by Jesus.

These two stories are not separated. Sometimes, I help others when preaching the gospel. But, I always try to be careful that, unknowingly, I might preach something Jesus would call me Satan. As I prepare worship and as I minister God’s church, my prayer is not to go beyond Jesus, but to follow him faithfully and obediently.

Just like Peter was praised by Jesus and Peter was rebuked by Jesus. Peter was doing well, Peter was making mistakes. Peter was on the right track, and Peter was not, sometimes. Peter was a good role model, but Peter was a stumbling-block.

Then, how can we avoid becoming stumbling-blocks for others.

This leads to the third part of today’s story.

**Mark 8:34, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”**

What is the keyword of this verse? It could be different by different people, or different times and situations. To some, denying themselves would be highlighted. Or, taking up their cross could stand out. Or following Jesus could be the main lesson for some.

There are three parts in today’s message.

1 Peter’s great faith confession – that Jesus is the Messiah

2 Peter’s misunderstanding of the plan of Jesus out of passion and love for Jesus. His idea and his understanding became a stumbling block.

3 Instruction of Jesus how to follow him.

Each of us could be Peter in any situations. Sometimes we please God with our love and faith. And other times, we fall. We fail. We misunderstand and try to walk ahead of Jesus out of our love and passion and faithfulness and diligence for our Jesus and for his church.

To all of us who sometimes make mistakes, Jesus teaches us v34.

**Mark 8:34, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”**

Sometimes, contrasting helps us understand easier. Today’s Mark passage reveals us what Satan wants.

**v33, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”**

When Peter was going ahead of Jesus, he put his mind on his own understanding, his own way to love Jesus.

**And v35-36, “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?”**

The goal and direction Jesus is teaching us is to seek Jesus. It is to hold on to the gospel.

In our daily lives, what would be the way for us to take up our cross for Jesus and for the gospel? To display God's love, what can we do?

There are times we are doing great. For example, we share urgent prayer needs within our people. We care for each other and we share our love. This is priceless experience. In our togetherness, God's love and presence and power are experienced. It is lighting up the whole community.

We gladly give up our time to care for them. We make phone calls, we take time to pray for them. Or sometimes, we actually provide them practical helps.

And, many are involved with the Martha's Table sharing your time and energy, your life. This is how you take up your own cross and follow Jesus.

We love Jesus. We love our church, as Peter loved Jesus.

Take Peter as a good example. Sometimes, we are doing well, but other times, we are not. We overdo and we try to step ahead of Jesus with our own ideas and passions.

Evaluate your heart frequently. If you are taking up your cross and following the steps of Jesus, then tap on your shoulder and give a huge encouragement. And if you are trying to love and serve Jesus in your own ways with your overwhelming passion and energy, slow down and adjust your focus. God knows you that you love Jesus.

Remember, Peter was not that different from us. Like Peter, sometimes we are doing great, and sometimes we fall too. There are ups and downs. Let us take Jesus as our unwavering anchor. Even though there are ups and downs, we are holding onto Jesus, so we don't lose the right track.

For the gospel, for the love, for the truth, for the life, for the sake of Jesus Christ, let us take our own cross and let us focus on Jesus alone and let us follow him.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

### **Praise song – BOP 211 Take up your cross**

#### **Prayer for the people:**

Loving God, we humble ourselves before you. We praise your holy name and we lift up your glorious name. At the cross, you accepted who we are and took our sin to make us holy and sacred, to restore our broken relationship with God. Thank you for becoming the bridge. Thank you for your sacrifice and love. As you taught today, we will take up our own cross and follow you. Strengthen us and hold our hands and guide us.

We give thanks and praise you for a new birth in our congregation. Helen and Dariush had a new baby boy last month. First of all, be with Helen as she recovers and as she takes care of the newborn baby. Help the baby and bless the baby. As the baby boy and Kiasha grow up, give them wisdom and good health. Provide them good teachers and friends. Put your love and truth in the centre of their hearts, so they may stand strong for their generation. Also be Dariush as well.

We pray for the Rev. Jim and the Rev. Robert. We had few meetings to discern the next steps of our church. Give them wisdom and insight, so they may see the things we really need. So, with hopeful hearts, with encouragement with each other, we may shine our light to this community.

Importantly, we know some prayer needs of our people. Listen to their prayers. Stay close to them and embrace them and encourage them. Heal their physical bodies and heal their wounds in hearts. Cover them with your hands and pour out your love.

For the sake of the gospel, we are here. Fill us and strengthen us. Help us live a life that pleases you alone. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering:**

God has blessed us in so many ways and everything our world needs come from the Lord. We have been made to thrive and live in abundance. We have the power to make a difference by giving to the life changing work of sharing the gospel of grace. Come now, let us offer our gifts, our love; our everything on the altar as the Lord will bless us, keep us, and shape us. Let us praise and glorify God with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

**Offering prayer:**

Generous God, you have blessed our lives with various gifts and peoples. We pause with grateful hearts to offer you gifts of money that you have provided for us. We also give to you our hands, our feet, our voices, our time, and our abilities. Use all that we are along with these gifts to spread your love throughout the world. We dedicate ourselves and all that we are to your work. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Song for the Journey BOP 570 I have decided to follow Jesus**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. The world behind me, the cross before me. No turning back, no turning back. This is our faith confession. Take up your own cross and follow Jesus. It may not be easy, but God will be with you. God will help you.

**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.