

Order of worship on March 10, 2024

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

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 27 As the deer
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 373 Jesus loves me, this I know
- Prayer for children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Numbers 21:4-9
- Second reading: Psalm 107 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: John 3:14-21
- Sermon: Look at it and live.
- Praise song – BOP 651 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 290 Immortal, invisible, God only wise

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

One: On this fourth Sunday of Lent, we overhear a nighttime conversation between Jesus and a Pharisee named Nicodemus.

All: Jesus says we must be born anew and born of the Spirit. With Nicodemus we ask, "How can these things be?"

One: But maybe it's not all about understanding these mysteries. Maybe it's about hearing, believing and sharing the good news with our words and our actions.

All: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

Praise song – BOP 27 As the deer

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Gracious God, Great and wonderful are your works! Your steadfast love is everlasting.

Where there is darkness, you bring light. Where there is sadness, you speak words of hope.

Where there is despair, you bring new possibilities. You have come among us in Christ Jesus to save us, bringing healing for the sick, and forgiveness for the sinner. In this time of worship, stir us with your Holy Spirit, O God. Awaken our joy and reverence in our songs and in our silence, in our prayers and in our praises, for you are our God, here and everywhere, now and always.

Merciful God, We confess that we often take your acceptance of us for granted. We are careless in our relationships, focused on our own needs and desires. The everyday news distracts us, and we put opinion above your expectations of us. Forgive us. Renew our understanding of your purposes and our place within them, so we may serve you more faithfully, day by day.

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

Friends in Christ, by grace we have been saved through faith. This is not our doing but God's gift to us. Know that God forgives you, and forgive one another. So you may live in the peace of Christ.

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 373 Jesus loves me, this I know

Prayer for children

Prayer for Illumination:

God of light and truth, speak to us through the Scriptures this day. By your Holy Spirit working in us and among us, lead us to encounter your Living Word, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

- First reading: Numbers 21:4-9
- Second reading: Psalm 107 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: John 3:14-21

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

Sermon: Look at it and live.

Today's sermon title came from Numbers 21:8. **Look at it and live.**

God came to Abraham and told him to leave everything behind, just trusting his word. Abraham obeyed God. Joseph was one of the descendants of Abraham. When there was a severe famine, Joseph was able to call all of his family members to the land of Egypt. 70 Israelites came to the new home, Egypt, and adjusted themselves under the care of Joseph and they prospered. They had numerous sons and daughters. Time passed and there was a king who never heard of Joseph. At that time, there were great number of Israelites. Egyptians were fearful or they were concerned of them because they worried that Israelites might betray them. Therefore, they treated them harshly. Israelites became the slaves of Egyptians. Many many years passed and God came to Moses. With many events, God brought out the entire Israelites from the land of Egypt through Moses. They were in the wilderness.

What was wilderness like? There was nothing. No meat, no vegetable, no wine... They complained. **Numbers 21:5, "The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have**

you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.”

For generations, they were slaves. Being slave was too natural for them. They had slave-mentality that they could not take the lead of their own lives. They were used to listen to what was commanded to them and just doing it.

Genesis 15:13-14, “Then the Lord said to Abram, ‘Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions.’”

This is the promise for God’s own people, Israel. After 400 years of slavery, they were given freedom, but they didn’t know what to do with it. All they could see was difference, inconvenience, lack of what they had.

To their complaint, this is the answer of the Lord. **Number 21:6, “Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died.”**

People were scared and asked Moses to pray to God. The Lord answered, **“Make a poisonous serpent [with bronze], and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.”**

Whoever looked at the bronze serpent was healed. But, on the other hand, whoever did not look at it was not healed.

There was a problem they could not handle. So, God gave the solution. The answer was available. However, some listened and obeyed. They were able to enjoy. However, there were people who did not take the answer which was given and they were overtaken by the problem.

In John chapter 3, a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus and asked how to gain life. Jesus answered that **he had to born from above.**

Nicodemus faced the problem of death and life. Jesus answered him to believe in him taking the bronze serpent as an example.

John 3:14-15, “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

Yes, there is a problem of life and death in front of us, all the time. With our own power, we cannot overcome this death problem. How do we born again? How do we born from above? What does this mean? We do not know how and why.

The people of Israel did not understand how God healed the people when they simply looked at the bronze serpent. It does not make any sense. But, they believed the instruction and obeyed it and they were saved.

In the same way, Jesus is telling us now to believe himself. We will have the Holy Spirit and we will experience the new birth from above when we accept Jesus Christ.

God does not try to make us understand or persuade. He just said it. This is what you are to do. This is the answer how you gain life.

Like Nicodemus, we asked questions. What is this? How does this work? What does this mean? Why is it in this way? Etc.

Through John 3:16, God encompasses all the questions and embraces all the people.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

The keyword of this verse is love. This is the answer for all the questions.

God was angry when people became impatient on the way. But, because of his love, he gave the solution of the bronze serpent to live. They were given the opportunity to have life.

Likewise, in John 3:16, we are standing before the **destiny of perishing or eternal life**. What makes the change? Believing in Jesus. Why God gave Jesus as the bronze serpent to heal the world?

Because of love.

Because of the love of God for us, our destiny was changed.

How would you live that love we have received from God?

As we remember Jesus who was crucified and died for us, let us have his love in the centre of our hearts and think about how we can exercise his love in our daily lives.

The foundation of the gospel is love.

The foundation of our life is love.

Joshua took the leadership from Moses. They needed to cross the river to go to the promised land. When they saw the river, it didn't seem easy. The water overflowed to the riverbank.

But the Lord, still, wanted them to cross the river by walking. The Lord commanded to step into the overflowing river. The priests holding the ark of the covenant took their steps. When they were in the river, the water started to stop. **Joshua 3:15-16, “the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the edge of the water, the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap. ... then the people crossed over.”**

Taking one step seems not easy, but when you take the first step, the Lord works.

Love. Can you think of anyone whom you love?

How would you love? Warm smile? Friendly handshake? Comforting word? A cup of a coffee?

If we can walk the path of the love of God, God shows that he is with us. When we have the fellowship time at the Guild Hall, it is the time to exercise love of God within our hearts.

For this week, as we look at the cross and live, let us respond to the love of God we have received with our thoughts, words, and actions. Those little things count.

Let us lift our eyes and look at the cross and live in the love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 651 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

Prayer for the people:

Bread of heaven, strong Deliverer. Feed us till we want no more. Feed us now and evermore. Be our strength and shield. We are weak, but you are mighty. Gracious and Merciful God, hold our hand and guide us.

O God, our great Redeemer, we stand humble before you. We just come before you with our honest selves. We stand before you with vulnerability. We bring all our burdens before your feet.

Like the people who were bitten by poisonous serpents looked the bronze serpent and were healed, we want to look at Jesus Christ. We want to rely upon your love.

With your love, embrace our church. We are tired. We have desires. We have needs. Like Israelites, we complain too. God, that's who we are. We believe that on the cross, you gave us new life. You filled us with your love. You gave us your light. We are yours. We are able to stand strong because of you. Beyond all our emotions, problems, brokenness, weakness, and sickness, let us look at you. You are the only answer. Be with each member with our own prayer needs. Listen to our prayers and answer us.

Help us come to you daily with our sincere hearts and seek your presence.
Be with us and let us live like we should. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

The season of Lent leads us closer and closer to the Cross. As we contemplate Jesus lifted up for our sakes, consider what the gift of his mercy and grace means for you. Let our offering express our thanksgiving for such an amazing gift from God. Let us praise God and glorify him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

Lord Jesus, you gave so much without counting the cost. Bless these gifts with your generous love. Use them to bless the world with the same hope and healing we have found in you. And let us not count the cost until we too have given all we can for your sake. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 290 Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. We need God. We need his help. We have his love. Let us come to God with humble and honest hearts and remain in him, in his love.

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.