

Order of worship on March 17, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Dr. Robert Revington)

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 398 When the spirit of the Lord moves in my soul
- Prayer for children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Hebrews 5:5-10
- Second reading: Psalm 51:1-12 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 26:36-46
- Sermon: vulnerability of Jesus
- Praise song – BOP 496 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 685 How firm a foundation

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

One: On this fifth Sunday of Lent, we discover a troubled Jesus in prayer as he contemplates his death on the cross

All: We are grateful for the prayers of Jesus and for the times in the gospels when Jesus prayed.

One: In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus threw himself on the ground and prayed, "Remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."

All: And so we pray, as Jesus taught us, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Praise song – BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Creating God, Loving Christ, Guiding Holy Spirit, With the promise of spring and new life awakening, you wake us from our slumbers. You are faithful to us through every season of the year and every season of life whether we go through our downs or ups. The hope you offer in Jesus Christ draws us together, as your Holy Spirit rises within our hearts.

Even as the cross looms on the horizon, we praise you for Jesus' courage and compassion, which bring renewal to us in the midst of all our challenges. We praise you, O God, for such love that will never let us go.

Gracious and Loving God, as we draw closer to the Cross, we recognize ways we fall short of your hope for us. We get lost in our own concerns and neglect to show love, even to those right beside us. We find some people too difficult to care for. We think others unworthy of your love and ours. Forgive us and renew a right spirit within us, so that we find the courage to go on and the compassion to reach out in your name.

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

Jesus said, Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Friends in Christ, trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gifts to you this day.

Be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit that moves with you into each new day.

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 398 When the spirit of the Lord moves in my soul

Prayer for children

Prayer for Illumination:

Loving God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, open our hearts to receive your Word, speaking through the Scriptures. Reveal your truth for our lives and our times, through Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Amen.

- First reading: Hebrews 5:5-10
- Second reading: Psalm 51:1-12 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 26:36-46

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

Sermon: Vulnerability of Jesus

When we go to a counselor, we need to be as honest as possible. Counselors or consultants or even physiotherapists need to know all the facts about you, so that they can come up with the best solutions or advices.

Being honest in front of someone is not an easy thing to do. Sometimes, we feel shame about our emotions or behaviours or our bodies. So, we choose what to reveal and what to hide. If we do that, counselors or physiotherapists cannot get the right picture, so they might be misled and we won't be able to get the right solutions we need.

We are able to imagine how difficult to be honest even in front of counselors or therapists.

In today's Matthew scripture, Jesus went to Gethsemane. It is a garden between Jerusalem and mount Olives. After the last supper with three of his disciples, Jesus went there to pray.

Pray. Here, Jesus shows the right attitude when we pray to God.

Matthew 26:39a, “[Jesus] threw himself on the ground and prayed.”

He fell his face to the ground and prayed. He bowed with his face to the ground and prayed.

He knelt with his face to the ground and prayed.

Threw himself down. Fell his face down. Bowed his face down. Knelt down.

What was his physical position and what does this mean?

Traditionally, and throughout the Bible, this kneeling down position indicates the most humble and submissive position possible. In prayer, before God, this reflects a person making a request of great urgency. This shows the desperateness of Jesus when he prayed.

With great urgency and desperateness, what did Jesus pray for?

V39b, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Once again, his second prayer, **v42, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”**

Jesus is asking God with his humble and honest heart. He is vulnerable at this moment of prayer. He does not want something to happen to him. What is it and what’s the emotion of Jesus toward it?

As Jesus came to Gethsemane, **V37, “He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated.”**

Christian Standard Bible writes, “He began to be sorrowful and troubled.”

J. D. Greear focuses on word “began”

“Began” means that he saw something while he was praying, something that he hadn’t experienced until that point. And it astonished him. The word translated “sorrowful” is a very strong Greek word that can mean “horrified,” especially when you couple it with “troubled.” One scholar says it indicates the kind of feeling you’d have, for example, if you came home one evening and found your family murdered.¹

Very agitated image and emotion. **What is it then Jesus wanted to avoid that much?**

What is the one thing he never experienced until that point?

Even though Jesus’ repeated prayers, for the first time in all of eternity, the Father was silent. We cannot find any evidence that Jesus’ prayer was answered by the Father. Jesus prayed the second time, but all he got was the silence of God.

[A New Testament scholar, William Lane,] says that here, in Gethsemane, God had already begun to turn his face away. The judgment of our sin had already begun. Before the first nail was driven into his body, Jesus’ soul was being abandoned by God.²

The one thing Jesus wanted to avoid was the disconnectedness from God.

So, what’s important for us is why we are talking about this today.

¹ <https://jdgreear.com/what-really-happened-in-that-garden/>

² <https://jdgreear.com/what-really-happened-in-that-garden/>

This is what Jesus prayed. **V39b, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”**

Jesus called this suffering from the disconnectedness from God a cup, not a river, ocean, but a cup. This means there will be end soon.

Do you remember the water flowing from the temple in Ezekiel?

Ezekiel 47:3-6a, **“Going on eastwards with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. He said to me, “Mortal, have you seen this?”**

Many interpret this passage that, as we experience the love of God, the influence of God’s grace increases. I am not saying that Jesus’ suffering is so tiny that it was nothing. But, I am saying that, in order to get there, get to the river, something had to be done first. It’s like the door to be opened for the grace of God to be overflowing. It’s like door to the next world.

In order to experience the love of God, the problem of our sin should be cleared off. Jesus had to experience the dreadful fear of disconnection from God.

Not to decrease the meaning of the cross of Jesus, I am shifting the focus from this suffering to the unfathomable grace of God for us.

Last week, we talked about Jesus Christ being lifted up like the bronze serpent.

John 3:16, “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.”

For God SO loved the world.

This **SO** contains the meaning of Jesus passing through the dreadful suffering AND the immeasurable grace of God shown in Ezekiel and many other places in the Bible.

The gospel is love. The good news is love. What love? How was it possible?

By Jesus’ being vulnerable. Jesus went through all the sufferings, even to death, which means the disconnectedness from God. The unity of the Trinity was broken for the first time in eternity.

Matthew Henry said that when Jesus said, “It is finished,” it was that grief that was now finished. Even though it was just a cup, a foreseeable moment, but it had a striking impact on the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

That disconnectedness Jesus experienced was not because of him, but that was the consequence of our sin. This horrific and dreadful disconnection from God was for us, not for Jesus himself.

The Creator of the whole universe stands against us in wrath of judgment. His anger was pointing at us. But, Jesus stood between us and God, taking all the wrath of God himself, experiencing separation from God, and although being Life itself, facing death, experiencing death. This is what God SO loved the world. God SO loved each and every one of us.

God loves us even to sending his own Son to us.

Jesus loves us even to the point of separation from God and even to the point of death.

Lent is the season of remembering the love of Christ and the sacrifice for us.
God LOVES you. This LOVE cannot be understood with our concept or any of our knowledge.

Remember that Jesus became vulnerable in order to love us.
This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 496 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet

Prayer for 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.

Loving God the Father, thank you for your love giving up your own life, but giving us your life. You love us even to the point of death. Because of us, the eternal unity of the Triune God had to be broken. What kind of love we have received. How striking love it is. Thank you. We praise you. We worship you. Our mere hearts cannot contain your worth. We just humble ourselves before you in awe.

In this season of Lent, we pray that your love is remembered by all people. May the true meaning of your cross be correctly presented. And the life and love we have received truly be cherished and celebrated in the right way. Glorious God, merciful Father, remember us as we carry out our daily lives. Strengthen us so that we may stand strong as your people. Take care of our daily lives. Give healing to the sick. Recover them. Give peace in struggling relationships. Comfort those who are frustrated. Embrace and hug us, so that we may rest in your arms, under your wings. Help us display the love in our relationships and help us care for each other and pray for each other. And make us shine your light to the world.

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Receive us and use us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

Jesus reminds us that a seed surrenders its life to the ground in order to bear fruit. What we surrender to God in our offering will also bear fruit in the world, for the sake of Christ, our Lord. As springtime begins this week, sow seeds of God's love as you offer your gifts to God. Let us praise God and glorify him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

God of growth and new life, with our gifts we offer you our thanks and praise for the promise of spring and the promise of resurrection in Christ Jesus. With these gifts, accomplish more than we can ask or imagine, as they bear fruit in the world you love, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 685 How firm a foundation

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. God loves you. Jesus loves you. The Holy Spirit loves you. This LOVE we have is so powerful. It broke the unity of the Triune God. This LOVE is so valuable because of this love, God experienced the disconnectedness. This is the love of God for us. Let this love be with 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.