

Worship on April 28, 2024 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)
(Welcoming Elder: Kevin Johnston)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 376 Lord, the light of your love is shining
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 291 Thou whose almighty word
- Time for our children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: John 15:1-8
- Second reading: Psalm 22:25-31 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: 1 John 4:7-21
- Sermon: Those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also
- Hymn BOP 704 Teach me, God, to wonder
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 420 Praise, I will praise

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

Like spring breaking through winter's power,

God's resurrecting power breaks into our lives in surprising ways.

Like the vine that supports blossoms and fruit,

God's Word upholds the church in strength.

Let us worship God who makes all things new.

We will praise God who brings growth and renewal to all life.

Praise song – BOP 376 Lord, the light of your love is shining

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Holy God, Creator of all things; you are our hope and the source of all wisdom. Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, you are the vine and we are the branches. Your love is our strength. Your energy is our joy. Holy Spirit, you nourish our faith so that we can bear fruit in many different ways. We gather to offer our worship and praise you as Holy God, Loving Son, and Holy Spirit, ever Three and ever One.

Prayer of confession (Unison)

God of Love, we fail to love one another fully. Forgive us for ignoring to love and worship you, for ignoring the needs of others, and not following your ways. Forgive us for seeking praise from others, yet failing to encourage them in their endeavours. Forgive who we have been, O God, and root our lives more deeply in your love.

Hear us, O God, as we offer the Prayer that Jesus taught us: (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 writer of the Gospel of John records that God is love, and that God's perfect love casts out fear. Those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. Claim your hope in this Good News: God's perfect love abides in you through Jesus Christ our Lord. May the love of the Lord be with you. And **May the Peace of the Lord be with you.**

Praise song – BOP 291 Thou whose almighty word

Prayer for children

Prayer for Illumination:

Holy Spirit, move in us and among us, as we listen to the Scriptures read and interpreted. Open our minds and hearts to receive the Living Word, so that we may be transformed to live in your love casting out fear. Be with us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

- First reading: John 15:1-8
- Second reading: Psalm 22:25-31 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: 1 John 4:7-21

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

SERMON: Those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also

First of all, I was told that our elders did great job leading worship on last Sunday. Thank you all those who helped for worship. Last week, I went to the conference called **The Art of Transitional Leadership Conference**. It was held by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, so all the ministers gathered understood and shared the challenges and blessings in each other's ministries. In that sharing, we were able to connect and encourage each other. On that common ground, the love of God was experienced amongst us.

Transitional ministry was specifically for Interim moderators, but as we discuss our ministry deeper, we were able to admit that all ministries are transitional because the world is changing rapidly. We talked a lot about hope and future steps. Rev. Paul Kang was one of the coaches and he recommended a good training program for me as well. For this great opportunity, I like to thank you all for supporting my education opportunity. Thank you. My homework now is how to unfold this learning with you.

Also, yesterday, there was **a small church membership workshop**. Three elders and I attended in the workshop. Thank you those who took time and came out. It was really good to see you. Also, thank you those who remembered and prayed for it. We talked about how to become vital and viable church again. Through our learnings, I hope and pray that we could come up with some strategies for the revival of our church.

Today's sermon title is **“Those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also”**

Love. Who doesn't like love? We want to love and we want to be loved. “Love is universal hunger in the human heart.”¹ There are **4 different types of love**. Storge, family love; Philia, friendly love; Eros, romantic love; and Agape, unconditional love or God's love.

In good relationships, we can develop different kinds of love. I love my children, but it's never eros love. I love my friends, it's Philia love. However, as we long for love so much, we are confused because we don't have the experience of Agape love. When John writes that **God is love, he means Agape love**. This Agape love gives without expecting a return. It's a sacrificial love. God is love. Agape. Jesus died on the cross for us as an act of Agape love. When John says that we ought to love one another, that is Agape. We should love one another sacrificially, without limit. We've heard about this for our entire church life. But, my question is, are we loving one another with Agape love? If so, that's awesome. But, if not, WHY NOT? WHY CAN'T WE?

The Bible says, the way of loving God is to love others. Even though we sometime have the powerful feeling of love toward God, the completion of love is in loving others. Theologian Claudia Highbaugh said, “This is much harder to do than to love God, who is far away, mysterious, and unseen.”² We should remember that the love of God is given to humans in human form, in the person of Jesus [Christ], the Son of God.³

John 15:5 says that “I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”

This tells us that we are to bear the fruit of Jesus. In other words, we are to copy Jesus. We are to love others in the same way Jesus loves us. Therefore, we can safely say that “it makes no sense whatsoever that a person could love God, who is unseen, when we have each other, whom we can see every day. If God's love is perfect love, then that love is perfected in our love for one another.”⁴

When we want to define our identity, how do we do it? Are we what we do? Or are we what we are? If you teach, you are a teacher. If you are running a business, you are a business man. If you heal, you are a doctor. But, does this tell who you are, is this your identity? That could be one of your identities, but that does not define you.

We can be defined by what we are, not by what we do. We are who we are because of what kinds of values we are holding and how we love others with what kinds of love.

¹ William L. Self, Feasting on the Word (1 John 4:7-21.)

² Claudia Highbaugh, Feasting on the Word (1 John 4:7-21.)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Here is a **flashlight**. This light is our true identity. God created us with his perfect image and we have his love and his Holy Spirit. We are to shine brightly like this flashlight. We are to love one another and shine our lights to others without any darkness or dimness.

But, when we experience fear, this light is covered (with this tissue). It decreases the light. Another fearful experience makes it dimmer. Hurt. Failure. Rejection. Like these tissues cover the flashlight, negative experiences in the past come to us as fear; and we lose our true and genuine light.

Anyone had experienced fear and hurt? Anyone had experienced these kinds of tissues get in our ways? We become vulnerable and we are not able to love others with the love from God. Sometimes, when our lights are covered, we remain in darkness. We can't even make eye-contact with others. And that becomes our comfort zone and we don't even recognize it at the end of the day.

Many times, we cannot love because we have too much grimes on us. Too many coverings on our light. Too many hindrances against shining our light.

My wife and I registered one of our children to some program. He went to the first class. A week later, just before going to the second class, he said, he didn't want to go. Uh-oh.. what? Why? He said something, but I couldn't agree with his reason not wanting to go. I said to him, "We paid for the course. I am not too sure about the refund policy. Maybe you cannot drop it." So, I insisted him to go. But, still, he didn't want to go. So, I didn't force him. But, I told him that we were gonna waste a lot of money. My approach was fear-based, guilty based. It created him guilty feeling. As I prepare today's sermon, I was reminded that "Fear cannot generate love, sympathy, tenderness, or compassion. The fruit of fear ends up being distrust, suspicion, and resentment."⁵

In the similar ways, aren't we judging each other with our own experiences and with our own standards? Aren't we thinking of our own lives and others' lives with fear and judgment? Aren't we trying to love others with our grimed and dimmed flashlight?

V18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love."

John is teaching us that our love is not based on fear. The love we have from God casts out fear. The love we have is not generated from our inside, but from upward, from God.

"V19, We love because he first loved us."

Please remember this flashlight. **Matthew 5:14, Jesus says, "you are the light of the world."** Jesus did not say that we have to shine our light to the world. He did not tell us what to do. He did not explain our function, but he defined us what we are. **We are the light.** Although our lights are covered with our past experiences, the fact that we are the light does not change. As we come and meet others, remember that we are covered with some past grimes. Our lights could be dimmed because of many different reasons. So, let us be patient for each other and let us help one another that we can remove the coverings one by one. Let us exercise the love of God, which comes from above, so that our light can be brighter and brighter every day. So that we can love not with our own love, but with the love from above.

⁵ William L. Self, Feasting on the Word (1 John 4:7-21.)

God is love. God shines his light upon us. God made us light. We are the light. We are the reflection of God's light and God's love.

So, because God first loved us, let us accept his love. Remember his love is perfect and his love removes all our fears, all the coverings of our lights. Be in the presence of God and experience his love and see that our coverings are being removed gradually, one by one, so our light becomes shining more brightly day by day.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Hymn BOP 704 Teach me, God, to wonder

Prayer for the people

Heavenly Father, thank you for your love. You called us here in your presence. You gathered us together, so we can love each other. Help us accept each other and help each other because you first loved us. And you poured your love in our hearts. We don't love with our own love, but we love with your love. Help us remember that you are the tree and we are the branches. We cannot do anything apart from you. Help us stay with you and restore our true light, our true identity.

We pray for Hayashi family. Rev. Robert Hayashi's dad, Edward died last week. Please be with the family with your encouragement and peace. Please fill their hearts with hope for the joyous reunion in your presence. Walk with them as they grieve and help them have healthy closure.

We pray for Jim. He has a head cold, so he couldn't come. Be with him as he recovers.

We pray for our session members. Bless them as they commit their time and energy for our church. As they serve you and your church faithfully and with passion and love, watch over their lives and bless their family. Through their lives, may many lives be drawn to your love.

The prayer chain is active now again. As the members pray, listen to the prayer and grant their prayers.

Some elders and I had great opportunities for learning through workshop and conference. Thank you for the opportunities. We learned, so God, help us unfold our learnings. Help us bless our church with new learnings.

Protect each person of our church, watch over our needs. Show your mercy and love and power in our daily lives. We want to live out your faith in our daily lives. Be the centre of our lives. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: While the season of Easter is unfolding, the gifts of spring emerge around us to remind us of God's generosity in Christ and in creation. As we present our gifts to God, may our generosity reflect God's goodness to us and our hope for abundant life in Christ Jesus. Let us praise God and glorify him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

Generous God, we bless you for your gift of life renewed through Christ's love. Bless the gifts we offer so they renew hope in the world you love, in the name of your greatest gift, Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen

Song for the Journey – BOP 420 Praise, I will praise

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Remember who you truly are and live as who you really are. Shine your light and love one another without fear.

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.