

Sunday Worship on July 21, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Kevin Johnston)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 651 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 519 Jesus, friend so kind and gentle

We Listen

- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6
- Second reading: Psalm 89:20-37 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Ephesians 2:11-22
- Sermon: Jesus as our cornerstone
- Hymn – BOP 349 My hope is built on nothing less
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 650 He leadeth me

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Responsive Call to Worship

In moments of anxiety, God leads us to still waters.

O God, we come to you.

In moments of confusion, God leads us in right paths.

O God, we come to hear your voice.

In moments of loneliness, God is with us.

O God, we come, seeking your love.

In all our moments, God is with us.

So we come to praise the One who restores our lives.

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

Prayer of Adoration

God our Maker, in summer we marvel at the world you have made, the colours of sunrise and sunset filling the horizon, the intricate beauty of flower gardens and natural parks, the quiet dignity of a river in its course, and the steadfast presence of a rock face carved over time.

You show us how each small piece of your creation depends in many ways on all the others; the quality of life on the respect we offer each another. God our Maker, we join all creation to bring

you praise, honouring you and the relationships you have set between us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and our Refuge and shield, our foundation and our cornerstone.

Prayer of confession (Unison) (Let us come to God with the Prayer of confession in Unison)
God our Maker, though we marvel at your creation, we confess we often take it for granted. We prefer to live as if our lifestyles make no impact on the earth. We resist reports that tell us otherwise. We confess we don't really want to change. Yet we wonder if the way we live pleases you. Forgive us for any harm we cause the earth. Teach us how to live with love and respect for you and your whole creation.

Heavenly Father, hear us, 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 Bible proclaims that in Christ, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. God has made peace with us through the Cross of Jesus Christ. So in Jesus Christ, all things hold together. Accept the peace of Christ, and make peace with your own self, and make peace with one another in his name. **May the Peace of the Lord be with you.**

Praise song – BOP 519 Jesus, friend so kind and gentle

Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)

- First reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6
- Second reading: Psalm 89:20-37 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

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

SERMON: Jesus as our cornerstone

Cornerstone. It is a word used in construction. Cornerstone is a stone connects and unites two of the walls. This is the first stone set in the construction. So, it can be seen as the foundation of the building. All other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure. Therefore, this one stone becomes the most important one.

We are church. Each person is church and we, as a group are church too. Also, we call the building we gather church too. Church in Greek is **Ecclesia**, meaning **the people who are called by God**. These are God's chosen people. That is who we are. And we are being built together according to today's Ephesians passage. **V21-22, “In [Jesus] the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.”**

These two verses are the conclusion of today's message. Jesus as our cornerstone, we are built together to be a dwelling-place for God. That is church.

Ephesians is a letter from Paul to the believers in the church in Ephesus. In Ephesus, they were experiencing a big change. There used to be a clear wall between Jewish and non-Jewish. Jewish were the chosen people by God, and non-Jewish were not chosen. There was a clear distinction between God's people and not God's people. But, after the death of Jesus Christ, the door for God was wide open to everyone. Everyone was invited by God and the Good News of the Gospel was available for all people. **V15-16, "15 [Jesus] has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, 16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it."**

The two people did not get along. Jewish people overlooked non-Jewish people because they were not chosen. The Gentiles knew how they thought of themselves. There was hostility between them. Paul, knowing both their unfriendly relationships and how Christ removed all the barriers between all people, proclaimed the peace in the Lord. **V17, "So [Jesus] came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near."** Who were far off from Christ? They are the gentiles. And who were near? They were the Jews. Therefore, Paul spoke to them both at the same time. Paul continues in v19, **"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone."**

Embrace each other because NOW you are the same citizens in the Christ, now you belong to the same household of God.

Here, we can see that Christ connects the **apostles and prophets**. Apostles are the ones who laid the foundation of church. They are the ones who proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ the Saviour. They have established the church.

The prophets are the ones who preached truth received direct revelation from God before the completion of the New Testament. It is generally accepted that prophets are both who received the revelation from God in the New Testament and the Old Testament.

Therefore, the foundation of the apostles and prophets can be understood as the gospel they preached.

Therefore, TOGETHER, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

MSG paraphrased Bible, God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together.

Jesus as our cornerstone, there are the prophets and apostles and all the other bricks are us, the members of God's household. This is the picture of the dwelling place of God which we are being built.

In Toronto, some say that there are only two seasons. You know what they are? Winter and Construction. We can see so many construction sites these days. We are construction sites too. We are the dwelling place of God and we are being built together to the holy temple of God.

Do you remember the children song, little by little?

My youngest son Benjamin wants to outgrow his brothers. So, I explained to him. We are growing little by little every day. One day, you will become big. And I sang this song for him.

“Little by little every day. Little by little in every way My Jesus is changing me” – Little by little every day, we are being built into the holy temple of God. Anyone here, accomplished every single purpose of God for your life already? I guess not. We are all growing daily. We are becoming holier daily. We are little by little coming closer to God every day.

Have anyone played in a sport team? OR some project requiring teamwork OR a music band or a choir? When you first join a team, it might not be as smooth as you expected. There is no relationship between teammates. No one seems to care for you. When they play, they seem all selfish. They don't want to pass me the ball. Some are good players, but some are pretty bad. They don't want to play together even though they are playing at the same time on the same side as the same team. How miserable is this? Anyone can relate to this experience? What about music band? I have played in a band all my 20's. I played bass guitar. When drummer cannot keep the beat consistently, the whole band increase the speed or become slower. If I played a wrong note, the whole music sounds mistaken. Sometimes, we do not want to get along with certain members of the same group. Have you experienced this too? As time goes, members understand each other and get used to the style of other players, and learn how to play together, then the sport play becomes more fun. The quality of music increases. And we enjoy more. You know the satisfactory feeling and contentment from the connectedness and togetherness of the team. This could be the emotion we could experience as we are being built together into the holy temple of God. That is what Paul urges to the Jews and Gentiles in the church of Ephesus.

2 Corinthians 4:7, “we now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”

Even though we are heading to become a holy temple of God, it does not mean that we have accomplished holiness. We are church, but we are not holy, not just yet. We are here to become a vessel holding God. We are just fragile clay jars. Like this picture, we are broken jars of clay. Easy to break, sometimes, we might have some cracks too. However, remember the light coming out from the cracks. As church, we are holding the most precious treasure, the true Light, Jesus Christ.

Have Jesus in your hearts. Jesus connects each one of us and puts each of us to the most suitable place to build his holy temple. **As a group, we are his church.** And each one of us is church, God's dwelling place. Remember, God is in you. Have confidence and live like a church.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 349 My hope is built on nothing less

Prayer for the people

Our Foundation, Jesus Christ, thank you for calling us here today to worship you and share our love and care and prayers with other members of your church. We are going to stand on the solid rock alone. We are not going to rely on other ground. When we look around, we see many other temptations. Money seems good. Fame looks great. And we might put our family above you. Help us not to forget that our truth safe haven is you alone. Give us wisdom to balance between our important things and help us put you in the centre of our life, like the cornerstone of a building.

Gracious God, we learn that there are many different difficulties around the world. Wars are not stopping. No one gives up their wants sacrificing many lives and resources. Attempt to assassinate US president candidate, Donald Trump. Fear and violence is everywhere.

We remember the song, He's got the whole world in his hands. And we wonder why you are not dealing with some mess. And we wait on you. And we come to rely on your grace and mercy alone. Have mercy on us, on our selfishness. As each brick or stone in this world, we want to build up this world your temple. You created all people and you love all people. And you want all people to be saved. Help believers, help us bring your light to our surroundings and make changes for you.

We pray for our church. Heal us. Revive us. Help us face our true selves and come before you ceaselessly. We are weak. We need you. In our sickness, be with us with your healing power. In our distortedness, and brokenness, shine your light of peace and encouragement. In our desperateness, cry with us with your mercy. Help us give you time and our attention daily, so that we build up relationship with you, so that we can become your holy temple gradually and surely. Be with everyone who is away. Keep them safe and provide them restful time.

Help us remember that we are all different, but we are making one team. Give us unity because you are holding us together as your dwelling place. We worship you and we love you. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

Our gifts to God can become a brick and a stone building God's temple. Through our gifts, we are helping God's people stand up firmly. We are becoming God's hands and feet raising up God's people. God can use us and our gifts of money, time, prayers, thoughts, gentle smile, and warm welcome. Let us give God what we have. As we praise and worship God with gifts, Let us praise God and glorify him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

God of goodness and growth, receive our gifts and gratitude for all you provide. Bless our gifts so that they may strengthen your people. Build your church. We want to shine your light. Use us and use your gifts. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, we pray. Amen,

Song for the Journey – BOP 650 He leadeth me

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. Look around. Few people. But, are we all same? Same look? Same interests? Same hobby, even? NO... Even in a small group, we are all different. Like the different colours on the screen, with our different gifts, different inputs, different shapes, we are building God's church together. In a music band or orchestra, different instruments make harmony. That is us. Let us build God's church together, because Jesus is holding us all as the cornerstone. Praise the Lord.

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.