

Sunday Worship on September 15, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Stephen Knowles)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 416 Blessed Jesus, at your word
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 704 Teach me, God, to wonder

We Listen

- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a
- Second reading: Psalm 116:1-9 (refrain 3)
- Third reading: Mark 8:27-38
- Sermon: For the sake of the gospel
- Hymn – BOP 358 There is a redeemer
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 350 To God be the glory

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Responsive Call to Worship

Come, people of God, worship the One who listens to our prayers.

We will worship the One who hears us.

Come, people of God, worship the One who watches over us.

We will worship the One who cares deeply for us all.

Come, people of God, worship the One who offered his life for us.

We will offer thanks and praise to the One who gives us life.

Praise song – BOP 416 Blessed Jesus, at your word

Prayer of Adoration

Living God, you are the artist of the changing skies and architect of the steadfast earth, Loving Christ, you were born to walk life's journey with us and show us God's purposes. Spirit of life, you are always moving in us and among us, offering us wisdom for every choice. Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, we honour you in our prayers and our praise. In this time of worship, show us how we can serve you, for we seek your guidance and your grace now and always.

Prayer of confession (Unison) (Let us come to God with the Prayer of confession in Unison)

God of time and eternity, we confess that we have long memories, especially for moments we resent or regret. Each week we seek your forgiveness for our mistakes, but we confess

we do not forgive others so faithfully. Sometimes we seek opportunity to even the score. Confront us with your mercy, O God, and open our hearts to its cleansing power.

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

From now on, the Apostle Paul declared, we regard no one from a human point of view. If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Through Christ God has reconciled us, and given us a ministry of reconciliation. Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start, this day and every day! **May the Peace of the Lord be with you.**

Praise song – BOP 704 Teach me, God to wonder

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

- First reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a
- Second reading: Psalm 116:1-9 (refrain 3)
- Third reading: Mark 8:27-38

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

SERMON: For the sake of the gospel

After a long and tired day's work, when you came back home, you would like to rest on your couch with your favorite TV show. But, in my house, it's not possible. It's because of our young children. They would like to watch what they want.

So, who holds the power of the remote control? Not parents, but kids.

My wife and I do this not because we are too weak, but because of our love for them.

When we love, we want to give up what we want for the people we love.

I think I shared my experience with fruit. I only ate good and pretty fruit, but ever since I have children, I give them good parts and I eat bad parts of fruit. It was something not imaginable, but it's happening under the name of LOVE.

When we are in love, we want to give something good to our loved ones, even if we have to give up something.

In today's Mark scripture, 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, his disciples, “Then, who do YOU say that I am?”

Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”

Among Jesus' 12 disciples, 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 rejected, betrayed, and 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? Glorious King giving up his power? All his rights?

Peter was not able to perceive what was said. So, he stood up and talked to Jesus.
"Come here and listen to me." **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 disapproved the teachings of Jesus.

When Peter rebuked Jesus, **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. Peter was not able to see Jesus losing his power and what he had at that time. It's going great, but why giving up everything? Betrayed? Death? WHY?! We understand Peter's feeling. Peter's disappointment with Jesus. And his disagreement 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. No one is giving up, but stubbornly press on. Although Jesus knew what Peter was thinking, to Peter, this is the answer of Jesus.

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 love for him, but Jesus just called Peter Satan.

When I preach the gospel, I try to help others with the truth. But I always try to be mindful that, unknowingly, I might preach something Jesus wouldn't like. I might use the Bible to support my own ideas. He might call me Satan for something like this. As I prepare worship services and as I minister God's church, my prayer is not to go beyond Jesus, but to follow him faithfully and obediently. Not me, but Jesus.

We all understand the opposite experiences of Peter. 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. Peter was a good role model, but Peter was a stumbling-block.

Then, how can we avoid becoming stumbling-blocks for others. How can we reduce the failures.

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. What stood out for you?

Each of us could be Peter in any situations. Sometimes we please God with our love and faith. Other times, 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. We cannot give up “my love” and say that this is for Jesus.

To all of us who hold our own desires, 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 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.*”**

“Not on divine things” When Peter was going ahead of Jesus, he put his mind on his own understanding, his own way to love Jesus.

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? What is something that we have to give up for Jesus?

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

With love, 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. So, ask yourself a question, what is something I should give up now for the sake of Jesus?

Remember, Peter was not that different from us. Like Peter, sometimes we are doing great, while other times we fall. There are ups and downs. Let us take Jesus as our unwavering anchor. Even though there are ups and downs, Jesus is holding us. **Jim Elliot's quote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."**

What is the one thing we cannot lose, then we will be able to figure out what to give up.

For the gospel, for the love, for the truth, for the life, for the sake of Jesus Christ, let us take up 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 358 There is a redeemer

Prayer for the people

Gracious God, with your love for us, you gave up your life. Because you cannot lose us, you lost your life. Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for not giving up us.

Give us wisdom to discern the one thing we can never lose. And give us courage to hold on to the one thing that is absolutely most precious for us.

As we worship weekly, we expect you to reveal your love and your grace to us. We want to make this time of worship a very special time for our life. Help us bring our whole hearts to your presence. We pray for our choir. Thank you for their passion and love for you. Guide them, so they can lead the whole congregation in praise and worship. Fill their hearts with your joy, so that joy overflows from them to the whole church. Help them when they practice and when they lead worship.

We pray for all the church members. Open our hearts. Help us give up something we don't need to worship God. Help us solely focus on the joy you prepare for us as we gather in your presence. Help us focus on you alone.

We pray for your help and guidance in our daily lives. Holy Spirit, remind us your love every morning. Holy Spirit, encourage us and give us peace in every situation we may fall. Father, hold us in your arms with your unfathomable love. Heal those who are suffering with physical pains. Provide them most suitable medical help. Encourage their hearts and guide their emotions. Reconcile those who have difficulties in relationships. You are the Prince of peace and you are with them. So, Jesus, teach them what to do and what to say. Give them peace. There are people who are going through tremendous sadness due to the loss of their loved ones. Hold them. Cry with them. Remind them good memories and precious time shared together. Give them hope for the reunion in your presence. Give them strength to carry on their everyday life.

Precious God, we need you every day. Fill us and guide us. Hold our hands and walk with us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

Jesus challenged his disciples to take up the cross and follow him. Whatever we offer him speaks of how we take up his challenge in our time. So give with grateful, loyal hearts. Through this offering, let us participate taking up our own cross. As we praise and worship God with our gifts, Let us praise God and glorify him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

Generous God, you poured out your love for us through Jesus Christ, who gave up everything on the cross. We bring what we have to offer you in love and loyalty. Receive our gratitude and bless all that our gifts can do to share your love for Christ's sake. We are yours. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 350 To God be the glory

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. What is the one thing you can never lose? What is the most precious thing in your life? Isn't it Jesus? Isn't it our salvation? For the sake of Jesus, for the sake of our truly abundant life, let us give up the things that hinder us to come to Jesus.

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, our Father, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.