

Sunday Worship on October 13, 2024 (Thanksgiving Sunday)

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Edwin Webster)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song BOP 78 This is the day
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 441 Can a little child like me
- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Joel 2:21-27
- Second reading: Psalm 126 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 6:25-33
- Sermon: Count your blessings
- Hymn Count your blessings
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 376 Lord the light of your love is shining

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Welcome and Announcement:

Responsive Call to Worship

God blesses us with gifts of love, **In relationships that bring joy and gratitude.**

God blesses us with talents and opportunities to serve, **All we need for faithful living.**

God protects us in times of danger, **And guards us from the time of trial.**

So we gather to offer thanksgiving to the Lord our God.

Praise be to God for all good things, now and always!

Praise song – BOP 78 This is the day

Prayer of Adoration

God of all creation, in this season of thanksgiving, we are struck by the beauties of autumn, leaves in bright colours, birds flying south in formation, fields ripe with produce. Such beauty speaks of your goodness that provides what each beloved creature needs. On this Thanksgiving weekend, renew our gratitude for what you give to us in the fruitfulness of creation, and in Christ Jesus who teaches us how to walk wisely on the earth you made. For all your good gifts we honour you with thanks and praise, now and always.

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

God of our lives, even in these challenging times, we know we enjoy an abundance many cannot imagine. Yet we confess we do not always recognize these blessings. We worry about the future, and whether our families can flourish. Forgive our fears of going without, and show us how to share the goodness that is already ours.

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

Be at peace this day. Jesus, our High Priest, knows the temptations of the human heart. From the throne of grace, he offers us mercy in our weakness, to renew us in faithfulness. Thanks be to God for his abundant blessings.

May the Peace of the Lord be with you. *(Let us bless each other with the peace of the Lord.)*

Praise song – BOP 441 Can a little child like me

Prayer for children

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

- First reading: Joel 2:21-27
- Second reading: Psalm 126 (refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 6:25-33

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

SERMON: Count your blessings

Happy Thanksgiving everyone! Thank you for being here and thank you for your faithfulness and thank you for your passion and love and diligence for our God and for our church. On Thanksgiving Sunday, let us come to God with thanksgiving for all he has done for us.

In the book of Esther, one random night, the **King Ahasuerus** was not able to sleep. So, he gave an order to bring the book of records. Sleepless night, as he read through the records for his leisure or sleeping remedy, he became aware of the assassination plot against himself that had been prevented by a man named **Mordecai**. “Wow, I haven’t thanked him yet.” The king made a plan to honour him. But, what the king didn’t know was his royal advisor **Haman** had targeted Mordecai, the king’s life-saviour. Not only had Haman plotted to kill Mordecai, but he also planned to kill all the Jews. Long story short, the queen Esther learned Haman’s evil plan. Therefore, the **queen Esther requested the king** to save not just Mordecai but the entire Jewish population.

Saving the entire population of Jewish is an important event in the book of Esther. **What started the process?** What was the first step? It was the restless and **sleepless night of the king**. Of course, the king did not have any idea why he couldn’t sleep. But, we know that he had insomnia because God was trying to get his attention. God had something important to say to the king. The

way of God getting the attention of the king was an unpleasant night of sleeplessness. This unpleasant night became the starting point of saving the entire nation.

For example, you went to your favourite restaurant with your favourite friend. But, the restaurant was in renovation. So, you had to try a new restaurant with some degree of disappointment. However, it tasted even greater than you planned to go. **Problem became opportunity**. Or, you missed the bus by few seconds, but later you heard that the bus got into a car accident. Also, among 9/11 survivors' stories, one man usually picks up his coffee at his usual time, but the coffee was brewing in that morning, so he had to wait for 5 minutes. Because of the 5 minutes, he saved his life. It first seemed misfortune, uncomfortable, unpleasant, but it **turned out to be a blessing. (PIC)**

Have you had any experiences like this? Sometime I walk slowly to get in the line. At that time, someone ran and took my spot. Not a very pleasant experience. That person took the last fries at MacDonald's, but you get to have newly fried fresh and hot fries. In rush hour, somebody ran to the last seat in packed subway, but the seat had a gum. There are many stories of disguised blessings.

What do we experience in our daily lives? How do we perceive when our plan doesn't go as we planned? Of course, we don't like it. But, like few examples we heard today, God might be calling you for your attention.

Many things are happening in our lives. **On Friday evening**, on her way back home, my wife call me and said, *"I got into a car accident. I don't know what happened, but the airbag deployed, car damaged a lot."* Immediately, I went to the accident site. What happened is this. She was waiting for the green light. She was the first one. When the light changed, she proceeded, but all of the sudden she got hit. She didn't even know what and why was happening. The other driver went through the red light. My wife was waiting for me in an ambulance, she was in a shock. **When I arrived, I sent her off to hospital**. After taking care of all the arrangements and police report, I went home and explained what happened to my children and my mom who lives with us, so she could take care of children. Then, I went to the hospital to pick up my wife. She has a stiff neck causing pains, but other than that, she was ok. Thankfully, my mom was able to take care of my children while my wife and I took care of this mess. Thankfully, my wife was not injured severely. Thankfully, she was alone, children were not involved in the accident.

Through daily events, big and small, what is God saying to us? It could be the moment that God is calling us when things are not going smoothly. On the way back home from hospital, we asked ourselves, **"What is God saying through this?"** At that time, ask the Lord, **"What is that you want to tell me?"** **"What is that you want to teach me?"** In this way, we are able to learn how to walk with God in day to day basis going through all the events.

In 17th century, in Paris, France, there was a lay brother in a monastery serving others as a cook. **Brother Lawrence** was not like a respected chief. He had to work all day long to prepare meals. In spite of his hard work in a lower position, he was always thankful and always content and joyful. He was able to do so because **he developed a simple way of praying from his heart which called "practicing the presence of God."** It reminds me Paul. **Philippians 4:11b-13,** **"For I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, or having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."**

Brother Lawrence *developed* his way of prayer. Apostle Paul *learned* the secret of being content in all circumstances.

Our natural tendency is not satisfying. We want more. That's our innate nature. Maintaining thankful attitude is not natural for us. Today, I would like to suggest to change or highlight the culture of our church. Let us make thanksgiving overflow from our church. In our worship, in our fellowship, in our conversations, in greetings, in all things we do in our lives.

There is a book, **Atomic habits**. There was a person who always forgets to take protein powder. So, he asked, "Do you drink coffee daily?" "Yes." The person answered. So, one more question, "Do you forget to drink coffee?" "No" was the answer. So the author said, put your protein powder beside the coffee machine, then you won't forget to take it. Through this very small change, the person will be able to keep up with the protein powder. Through very small change, we can make our life better.

As a small change, I suggest that all of us get a notebook to write **gratitude diary or gratitude journal**. It is to write something we are grateful for daily.

For example, **Today I am grateful for...**

A delicious coffee.

A meaningful conversation with my friend.

Someone who held the door for me.

A beautiful sky – like Northern light.

The car accident which my wife didn't get hurt much.

The effort of trying to be thankful casts out complains and negative emotions. In bitterness, in distress, in challenging situations, we try to find something to be thankful. In the sleepless night of the king Ahasuerus, he never imagined that he would find the record about Mordecai's prevention of the assassination plan for the king. It was not pleasant to suffer from sleepless night, but it ended up saving the entire population of Jewish. God works in every situation.

What small changes are you ready to make to walk with God?

Let us train ourselves with the daily gratitude diary.

Once we build a good habit, the habit will sustain us. Let us build a habit of being thankful and let us record it. Through this, we will be able to see how God richly blesses us daily. Let us count the blessings of God for us.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – Count your blessings

Prayer for the people

Thank you Lord for your love. Thank you God for your grace. Thank you Holy Spirit for your guidance. Thank you for the wisdom. Thank you for your power. Thank you for inviting us to worship. Thank you for your lesson. Thank you for your glory.

Lord Jesus, we humble ourselves before you. Give us wisdom to count your blessings in our daily lives. We believe that you are working in our life and you are with us every

moment. Through all the things happening in our lives, we want to experience you. Help us be connected with you through our gratitude. Stir our life and rearrange our habits and attitudes. Restore your image in us. Fill our hearts with thanksgiving.

As we lift up our prayers to you, merciful God, grant us our prayers. There are people suffering from physical illness from our church. Help them. Heal them. Comfort their hearts. There are people with broken relationships. Pour out your grace upon them. Let them bring everything to you. Jesus, you are the Prince of peace. Reconcile the brokenness and let your light shine through the difficulties and brokenness. There are other challenges and difficulties. God of love, embrace everyone when they come to you. Assure us that even though we cannot come to you, you still love us and care for us.

On this Thanksgiving, we want to make up our minds to be thankful. Help us build a habit of counting your blessings in our daily lives, so we experience your love, grace, and guidance more closely. We want to put you in the centre of our lives. Be with us always. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

At Thanksgiving, we celebrate the gifts of God's good earth which provide our needs. However, this year we know in some places, harvests will not be plentiful. In every community, neighbours struggle to make ends meet. Today we offer what we have to share in gratitude, praying our gifts will make a difference in challenging times, trusting that God goes with us, whatever we face. As we praise and worship God with our gifts, let us glorify him with all our hearts. BOP #830, Doxology.

Offering prayer:

Generous God, we offer you our thanks for all the goodness we enjoy in Christ and in creation. Bless the gifts we bring, and use them to relieve the need and anxiety many feel these days. May anxious lives see signs of your love and become joyful with your blessings. Use our gifts and use us to share your blessings and shine your lights poured upon us. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and friend. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 376 Lord the light of your love is shining

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. Why does God bless us? Why is God walking with us? When we hold our children's hand, or when we hold the hand of our heavenly Father, we feel the love in the relationship. In this togetherness, let us be thankful remembering how God changed us and what is God doing for us in our daily lives. Remember him and count his blessings in your life.

Commission and Benediction

Cherish each day as God's gift / So that you may gain a wise heart, / And live with gratitude for all God's goodness. // So may the God who made you, / The Christ who mends you, / And the Spirit who brings you life / Bless and keep you now and always. Amen