

Worship on December 1st, 2024 (First Sunday of Advent)

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

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship (See the insert) (Light the candle of hope)
- Lighting the HOPE candle – BOP 119 Hope of a star (vs. 1)
- Praise song BOP 122 Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel (Vs. 1-4)
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 15 The Lord's my Light
- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16
- Second reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
- Third reading: Psalm 25:1-10 (Refrain 1)
- Sermon: **The foundation of hope: The steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord**
- Hymn BOP 20 The steadfast love of the Lord
- Communion and Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 79) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 110 Come, thou long-expected Jesus

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Welcome and Announcement:

Responsive call to worship: (Please see the insert) (Light the candle of hope)

BOP 119 Hope of a star (vs. 1)

Praise song – BOP 122 Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel (Vs. 1-4)

Prayer of Adoration

God of love, you come to your people to dwell with us. You come with power to transform all things. You come with promises to make all things new. You come with signs of your deep love for the world. You come, and your truth breaks into our lives shattering lies and half-truths, setting your people free. Your coming is our hope, and so, we offer you our praise and prayers in gratitude and anticipation. Come into our lives again, O God, and show us how to hope in the face of all that is discouraging, for we gather in the name of Hope made flesh, Jesus Christ, your promise and our desire. Merciful God, in your gracious presence we confess our sins and the sins of this world.

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

Surprising God, forgive our sleepiness in the presence of your splendour and for when we abandon hope and expect and look for the same old thing in the same old way. Forgive us our silence when we ought to have spoken up and our carelessness with your world and each other. Awaken us to your holy, hopeful presence so we may watch and wait for you, Lord Jesus Christ.

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 One who comes with justice also comes with mercy. The God of Judgment is truly the Christ of compassion. God offers you forgiveness today, in the hope you will receive it gladly. Do not be afraid but rejoice in the God who comes to us.

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

Praise song – BOP 15 The Lord's my light

Prayer for children

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

- First reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16
- Second reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
- Third reading: Psalm 25:1-10 (Refrain 1)

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

SERMON: The Foundation of Hope: The steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord

In the late 1980s, Toyota was preparing to launch Lexus. The company aimed to create a luxury brand that could compete with established rivals like Mercedes-Benz and BMW. To achieve this, Toyota invested a lot of time and resources to understand the luxury market and ensure that Lexus not only offered exceptional vehicles but also a premium customer experience.

One of their efforts is sending core engineers and designers to luxury hotels in the United States and other countries. The purpose was to study how these establishments delivered high-end services. The main purpose was to immerse the team in a world of luxury and understand the expectations of affluent customers. This included observing details such as how staff interacted with guests, how services were personalized, and how the environment was meticulously designed to create an aura of exclusivity and comfort. The insights gained from these experiences influenced not only the design and engineering of Lexus vehicles but also overall brand philosophy. Through this investment, Lexus launched their luxury sedan in 1989. It was very well received by premium customers.

This is how Toyota started their own high-end brand Lexus. When sending core designers and engineers, Toyota hoped that the luxury hotel's atmosphere and everything may be immersed in them and luxury lifestyle becomes natural for them. It was an attempt to transform a middle class individual into a wealthy and successful lifestyle.

Imagine you were one of the engineers or designers. As an individual, your goal is to enjoy the luxurious services as much as you can and observe how they do it. But, we all have our backgrounds. I was not raised in very luxurious environment. If I have to play a very important role to create high end premium cars, I would feel tremendous pressure. Even in the middle of experiencing and enjoying the most fancy services, I would doubt myself.

On the other hand, the company was determined. We don't know for sure how long individuals stayed at hotel. It ranges from few days to two years. If living in a luxurious hotel for two years, even if you were raised in a very poor family, you would understand what a high-end and most luxurious lifestyle. This was not done by one's hard work, but it was given to them. It was provided for them. It was exposed to them. It was immersed in them.

This is the first Sunday of Advent. The theme is HOPE. The company hoped their people to be immersed in a luxurious lifestyle. Individuals, while they enjoy hotel life, may felt pressure and uncertainty. Thus, for them to be fully immersed, the company extended the time of their stay.

There are two kinds of hope. The company's hope and the individual's hope. The company knew that the hope of individuals had certain limit. So, in order for them to fully immersed in the luxurious experience, the company gave them enough time. The company understood the importance of the duration of time to absorb in the experience. The company achieved its hope whether or not individuals work hard to gain the experience. The company's unwavering support enabled to achieve their hope, even though individuals might have suspected their own ability.

The most important theme of the Old Testament is the promise of Jesus' birth. People hoped for Jesus' birth. Individuals hoped for Jesus' birth. They waited for the coming of the Messiah. They hoped. Therefore, Jesus came? What made Jesus come to the earth? It was the hope of the Triune God, not the hope of people. God had bigger plan. Like the Toyota and Lexus story, the company had bigger plan than individuals. Whether individuals achieved their goals, whether they worked hard, the company knew it's not done by their hopes and wants. Transformation of their lifestyle needed time. God had a plan for the perfect timing for Jesus to be born and die on the cross for our salvation. **Isaiah 55:8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."**

We do our best. We work hard. We pour out our whole hearts.
But, we do not put our hope in our own self, in our deeds.

Do you put your hope in the Lord? If yes, is it all the time? Do you always always have hope in the Lord alone? Probably, if you are like me, sometimes, or we try. I try to have my hope in the Lord. However, my hope is not reliable like the engineers who spent time enjoy at luxurious hotel. We don't know whether we are making differences. Are we really growing in faith? Are we coming closer to God daily? I hope so.. But, this hope is not grounded in our feelings or in our doings. How reliable are we? How confident?

Because our hearts experience ups and downs, the foundation of our hope is not in us, but it's in our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, **hope in the Lord** means that entrust the foundation of our life to the Lord, not us.

To have hope, we need faith. We rely on our faith in everything of our life. For example, above the **curb** is the pedestrian pathway, and below the **curb** is the roadway for cars. When we walk, the distance between cars passing by and us could be 1 meter, 2 meters? If driver makes a mistake, danger is not far from us. We have the faith that cars won't come up the curb and hurt pedestrians. If we do not have that faith, there's no peace of mind when walking. And when we make online purchase, from time to time, I still doubt if it's safe. If we found the favorite item online, but if we cannot trust online payment, we cannot have hope to get the favorite item.

Jesus said, **John 14:1, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me."** If we try to find some definite answer for our own self, we can't find one, we will be shaken.

Numbers 23:19, "God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? "

Lamentations 3:22-23, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

There are more and more and more scriptures that support God's faithfulness and steadfast love for us. God waits for us so that we are fully immersed in his faithfulness and his steadfast love. So, let us wait and welcome the coming of Baby Jesus in this Advent season with the hope in him.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 20 The steadfast love of the Lord

Communion At The Lord's Table

On this first Sunday of Advent, we gather in hope, waiting for the coming of Christ. As we await the fulfillment of God's promise, we come to the table of grace where Christ is present with us. this is the Lord's table, and all who trust in him are invited to partake in this sacred meal. As we join the Lord's Table, let us confess our faith with the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles' Creed (BOP 539)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

*(Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:) (Please say **BOLD print** together)*

L: The Lord be with you. **P: And also, with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts. **P: We lift them to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **P: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

L: It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth. In this season of Advent, we wait in hope for the coming of your Son, who brings light into our darkness and peace into our hearts.

As we wait, we join our voices with those from every time and place, to proclaim your glory in the unending hymn. **We lift our hearts in joyful praises.**

(Sanctus) Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of Your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

L: You spoke through the prophets, and in the fullness of time, you sent your Son, Jesus, to dwell among us. He came to us as a child, born in a humble manger, yet he is the hope of the world. As we wait in expectation for his return, we remember with thanksgiving his life, death, and resurrection. **We recall the mystery of our faith:**

P: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

L: Holy Spirit, come upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine. May they be for us the body and blood of Christ. As we partake in this sacrament, may we be strengthened in our faith, united in hope, and empowered to live as the body of Christ in the world. Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

Breaking of the BREAD and Pouring the WINE

(The minister breaks bread in the presence of the people, saying:)

The Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it and said, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

(The minister may pour wine into the cup, lifting it while saying:)

In the same way, he took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do it in remembrance of me."

(Distribution of the elements)

Every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Take some time for personal prayer)

Prayer after Communion:

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have fed us with your grace. As we await the return of your Son, strengthen us with the hope of his coming. Empower us to live lives of love and service, sharing the hope and joy of your steadfast love and faithfulness with the world.

Merciful Father, thank you for the lessons learned. Change our hearts. Renew our faith. Help us place our hope in you alone.

We pray for the people in need of our prayers. Whether there is health issues, relationship issues, hardships, and all kinds of difficulties, help all of us to cast our burdens on the Lord because you care for us. Hold us and walk with us.

In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

We make our offering today with hopeful hearts, trusting that the Holy One who comes to us will bless our gifts and our lives, to make us signs of hope in the world God loves. As we praise and worship God with our gifts, let us glorify him with all our hearts. Let the offering be received.

BOP #79, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Offering prayer:

Holy and Righteous God, we offer our gifts with humble hearts, knowing the needs in your world are great and our gifts alone will never fill that need. We offer our gifts in hope that you will bless them and use them to help fulfill your purpose revealed in Jesus Christ, Saviour of us all. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 110 Come thou long-expected Jesus

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. Hope in the Lord. Rely on the faithfulness and steadfast love of our God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

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.