

Worship on December 29, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Anne Neuman)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship
- Praise song BOP 177 Christ, whose glory fills the skies
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 141 Good Christians, all rejoice
- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: 1 Samuel 2:18-26
- Second reading: Psalm 148 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Colossians 3:12-17
- Sermon: **Clothe yourselves with love**
- Hymn BOP 650 He leadeth me
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 79) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 811 Standing at the portal

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Responsive call to worship:

One Praise the Lord from the heavens and in the heights;

All: Praise God, sun and moon!

One God's name alone is exalted;

All: God is above the earth and heaven.

One Young and old together, all creatures great and small,

All: Let us praise God's holy name, now and evermore!

Praise song – BOP 177 Christ, whose glory fills the skies

Prayer of Adoration

Loving and everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being:
great are you; great is your power, greater is your love, and of your wisdom and of your grace
there is no end.

By your word that created all things and the love that moves the sun and moon and stars, you
created us; you have made us for yourself, and we are yours, and our hearts are restless until they
come to rest in you. In this time of worship, receive our prayers and our praises as we honour
your gifts of Light and Love which shine upon us through Jesus Christ this day and every day by
your grace.

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

God of our lives and the time in which we live, we confess that we prefer our fantasy to your truth, and our plans to your purposes for us and the world. We shrink from costly discipleship and we seek cheap grace. Forgive our fleeting enthusiasms and our shallow commitments, and guide us always so that we might walk in your way and follow the way of your son now and always; through the steadfast grace of Christ, Amen

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 mercy of our God is from everlasting to everlasting. Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel. In Jesus Christ, God's generous love reaches out to embrace us. We are forgiven and set free to begin again. Let us forgive one another just as God has forgiven us. May the peace of Christ be with us all.

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

Praise song – BOP 141 Good Christians, all rejoice

Prayer for children

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

- First reading: 1 Samuel 2:18-26
- Second reading: Psalm 148 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Colossians 3:12-17

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

SERMON: Clothe yourselves with love

Today's Colossians passage is about Paul's encouragement to the people whom he loved. He starts calling them V12, "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved."

You are the chosen people of God. God called you and God created you and God loves you and God is watching over you all the time.

You are holy already. You are different from this world. You are making differences. You are making good influences around your life. And, you are loved already. You know the love of Christ and you already know why Jesus came to you and what Jesus had done for you. You know that love.

By calling them, God's chosen ones, holy and beloved ones, Paul reminds their true identity.

If we are coming to church for so many years, you have experienced these already. We have been holy and we were filled up with the love of Christ. We were there already.

Paul is calling us God's chosen ones! Holy and beloved.

As the year comes to a close, I want to remind ourselves our true identity. Identity is some kinds of characteristics, personalities, or beliefs that one person recognizes about self. Identity is one's own self-realization. However, the identity we are talking is not about us. Our identity is from God. It is how God sees us.

For example, as a parent, we make mistakes to our beloved children. From time to time, we think and feel that we are a bad parent. We feel like we are a failure in many areas of our lives. We identify ourselves that way. But, is this really true? God still sees us as God's precious children. When someone struggles with addiction, they might be overwhelmed by hopelessness. But, is this really true? Is it really hopeless? While it's difficult, God looks at them with love with aching heart. Isn't it the same that when our children struggle with their problems, we try to help them and we try to love them more dearly. We don't identify their failures. We don't frame them with hopelessness. There's always hope. There's always possibility for change. We care for them more ever before and we support them in every possible way.

Even though we ourselves give up on our own selves and sometimes we identify ourselves failure, God does not give up. By the way how Paul referred them, it is a powerful reminder of God's unwavering love and faithfulness. We all experience ups and downs. Even when we feel lost or unworthy, God's love is always there. God always offers us new opportunities and hope. God's love does not depend on what we do or who we are. God's love and our identity is depend on God's endless love and mercy. No matter what we do or have done, we are never beyond God's reach.

The identity of the beloved people as the background, Paul gives the instructions how to live as God's chosen people.

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Paul talks about forgiveness. This is not an easy topic. We all know that we should forgive each other. But, many times, for our convenience, we just neglect this part. In the first church where Paul ministered, there were struggles among their communities. I always think our influence becomes bigger and bigger from one person, family, church, and other communities. In family relationships, in church, where people gather and share hearts and emotions and thoughts, there are many events. There are a lot of unresolved mistakes and unhealed emotions. To the people with scars and hurts, Paul is saying that **clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.** Paul also talks about the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Jesus showed all these characteristics in his life. Jesus forgave all people when we call upon his name. As we think about the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, let this words of Paul sink in your hearts. **Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.**

Paul continues, **V14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**

In other words, all people are different and sometimes make complains, so in order to keep them one, we have to love. Because Jesus Christ made us new creation, we do not live in our old ways, but new ways of Jesus Christ. After working out, we are soaked in sweat. After taking a

refreshing shower, do we put on sweat soaked clothes again? Of course not. Because we have become new self with new identity, do we want to go back to our old self? The answer is no, we don't want our old ways. However, our lifestyle, our habit is drawn to our old ways. Romans **7:19-20, "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me."** Because we are made new with new identity, now we realize that the evil desires we have is not us, but sin within us. Therefore, we need God more and more. We need his power, grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Staying close to God means growth and renewal. Are we becoming new every day? Or are we staying in our old ways?

If you remain the same, it is like putting on the sweat soaked clothes after working out. We are coming closer to God daily, so we are becoming new every day.

In my short ministry here at St. Andrew's, I had to face my limitation few times. I felt like my sermons are not improving. The scripture readings are different, but the core message seemed to be the same from time to time. Whenever I felt this stagnant time, I tried to overcome this challenging times by going back to God. Why are there challenges? Because growth is going against staying still. If you have experience of having braces on your teeth, how painful it is for your teeth readjust their positions. Moreover, some shellfish such as crabs and lobsters. For example, lobsters grow by molting, shedding their old shell and forming a new, larger one. That is growth. Growth doesn't happen easily.

How easy is to love one another? How easy to forgive? How easy to follow the ways of Jesus? Not so much. Very difficult. Why is that?

Because of our sinful nature. Clothing with love is against our instinct. But, do we really want to live by our instinct alone?

God wants us to know the true value of the truth of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, the truth will set you free. With painful process of growth, we truly experience aliveness. We can finally have hope. In addition, by the power of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we realize our resilience and ability to endure. Clothing with love does not happen one night. It is a long and tedious process. The process of growth takes time and requires patience.

So, Paul's commandment, Clothe yourselves with love, is not a short term project or piece of cake kind of mission. It is a life long journey. Although it is not an easy or comfortable walk, this is the way of Jesus Christ and this is the only way not to leave regret.

As we come close to the year end, as we look back our year, let us keep in mind Paul's teaching to clothe ourselves with love. Let us discipline ourselves in order to live the best life possible. Clothe yourself in love and follow the path of Jesus Christ.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 650 He leadeth me

Prayer for the people:

God of love and grace, thank you for watching over us through the year 2024. In joyous times and challenging times, you were with us with your faithfulness and love. Thank you for your presence in our lives. We pray that you lead us all through our lives in the next year.

Especially, there are people who lost their loved ones this year. Put your hope in their hearts. There will be reunion in your presence. There will be warm greetings and smiles. Glorious God, fill us with hope and the day of joyous reunion. There are people with physical pains. Merciful God, help them be healed. There are difficulties in relationships. Fill them with your love. Let us learn from your forgiveness and help us clothe ourselves with love.

We pray for next year, show your love and glory in our daily lives. We ask for your wisdom, strength, and peace as we face the days ahead. Help us grow in faith, love, and humility, seeking your will in all that we do. May this coming year be filled with opportunities to love and serve and grow closer to you. Thank you for the gift of new beginnings. We entrust this new year to your hands. We rely upon your love. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

The letter to the Colossians reminds us the importance of love in whatever we do, in word or deed. As we give our offerings to God, may our offering be our expression of love for God and for God's people. As we praise God and worship him with our gifts, let us glorify him with all our hearts. May the offering be received. (*BOP #79, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*)

Offering prayer:

God of love, we give thanks for the many blessings you have given us throughout our lives this year. We are grateful to celebrate the birth of your greatest gift, our Saviour Jesus Christ, once again. Bless the offerings we are bringing for you today, and use them and us to serve you well in the coming year. Help us love you and your people. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 811 Standing at the portal

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. God showed his love through his greatest gift Jesus Christ. He did not spare his most precious. He forgave us by sacrificing his one and only Son Jesus Christ in order to show his love. We are forgiven and we are loved. Let our hearts be filled with thanksgiving and may it overflow from our lives and be expressed in love.

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.