

Worship on January 26, 2024

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

Sunday Order of Worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to Worship
- Praise song BOP 497 Word of God, across the ages
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 374 Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing

We listen

- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
- Second reading: Psalm 19 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Luke 4:14-21
- Sermon: **The mission statement of Jesus**
- Hymn BOP 570 I have decided to follow
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 79) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 592 I, the Lord, of sea and sky

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Responsive Call to Worship

One: There is one true God

All: whom to know is life eternal, whom to serve is joy and peace.

One: God creates all that is.

All: The whole universe displays the majesty and power of its Maker.

One: We worship God as the source of all life.

All: With thanks we acknowledge God's wisdom, power, faithfulness, and love.

Praise song – BOP 497 Word of God, across the ages

Prayer of Adoration

Creator God, Christ and Holy Spirit, you are the Maker of a better world. You are the Creator of lasting peace. We worship you for the gifts of peace and healing that you bring into troubled lives. You have shown us the way to work for justice, to love friend and enemy alike, to build a better world. In this time of worship, inspire us to believe our work in your name makes a difference. So may we live to bring glory to you through our commitment to you and the fellowship we share with so many around the world as your faithful disciples. Knowing your love is everlasting, we confess to you our sins.

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

God of grace and harmony, we confess that we can be divisive when you call us to unity, quarrelsome when you call us to seek peace, and critical rather than caring. We have grown used to our own ways and cannot imagine you would ask us to change even for the sake of the gospel. Forgive us when we mistake our familiar traditions for your truth. Show us how we can witness to your love through working and worshipping together.

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

God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. It shines into the world and scatters the darkness. Know that you are forgiven. Now, forgive one another.

Be at peace and walk in the newness of life, led by God's light.

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

Praise song – BOP 374 Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing

Prayer for children

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

- First reading: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
- Second reading: Psalm 19 (Refrain 2)
- Third reading: Luke 4:14-21

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

SERMON: The mission statement of Jesus

The chosen passage is not the end of the story. If you continue reading beyond verse 21, the Bible describes the response of the people who heard Jesus. The people responded with a quick and hostile attitude. However, there is great value in focusing solely on verses 14 to 21 for today's message. These verses highlight the central mission statement of Jesus' ministry, found in verses 18 and 19. After proclaiming this mission statement, Jesus makes a bold declaration that stirs controversy among his listeners.

First, let us examine the mission statement of Jesus. In verse 18, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,"** Jesus clearly identifies the source of his power: the Spirit of the Lord. He is anointed by the Spirit, sent by God, and empowered for his ministry. This highlights that Jesus did not act in isolation or self-sufficiency but lived in a deep relationship within the Triune God.

Now, let us focus on the action verbs in this passage. Jesus says he has been sent to **bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, restore sight to the blind, and free the oppressed.** Verse 19 states the ultimate purpose of these actions: **“to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”** In other words, Jesus’ mission was to reveal and embody God’s grace and love.

This is why I chose to end today’s reading with verse 21, where Jesus declares, **“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”** Regardless of the people’s reactions, Jesus’ mission remains unchanged. This serves as a powerful reminder for us. When we carry out the mission of Jesus, our focus should not be on others’ opinions or responses. We live in a world where standing out can provoke hostility. People often expect conformity—when they sin, they want you to sin as well. So, who will you please: the crowd or the One who gives you your mission? By stopping at verse 21, we are reminded that fulfilling God’s mission does not depend on human approval. It depends solely on our obedience to God.

It is my prayer that we learn to focus on the heart of God rather than being overly concerned with the opinions of others. Our lives are meant to showcase God’s goodness, not be dictated by human reactions. We are not made to please others but to please God alone.

The story takes place in Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth. The people listening to him knew him well. They had watched him grow up. They knew his father, his family, and his childhood. They probably had seen Jesus working as a carpenter alongside Joseph, his father. Familiarity, as we know, often makes people doubtful about our credibility or authority. It’s similar to how our family members or close friends might react if we suddenly began sharing profound spiritual truths. They might listen, but a part of them might think, “Why don’t you first live out what you’re trying to teach?”

We also know our own weaknesses and sinful desires. Sometimes, we feel unqualified or incapable of fulfilling God’s mission. But this is where the mission statement of Jesus becomes deeply personal. **He came to set us free.** If you feel poor in spirit, hear the good news and rise up boldly. If you feel trapped, Jesus proclaims your release. If you are blinded by sin or despair, he calls you to open your eyes. If you are oppressed by burdens, he sets you free. This is the mission of Jesus, and it is for each and every one of us.

We are not meant to live restricted lives, bound by sin or fear. Jesus’ mission is to free us so that we can live boldly and demonstrate his goodness. Are you in a broken relationship? Jesus says, “Be released.” Are you struggling with a recurring sin? Jesus calls you to rise up and be free. The purpose of his mission is not only to liberate us but also to empower us to proclaim God’s grace and love and goodness we experience. Our weaknesses and sins may try to hinder us, but they cannot diminish the power of Jesus’ mission. Just as the negative reactions of the people in Nazareth could not stop him, our limitations cannot stop God’s work in us.

How did Jesus carry out his mission? This is crucial for us to understand as we seek to live according to God’s will. Each of us has a God-given purpose. Some of you might have given up some important things for you to follow Jesus. You might think you have given up so much. At times, you might miss what you left behind. Trusting God and following Jesus can be challenging, but remember this: the mission of Jesus will be fulfilled in your life, too. And imagine what kind of life you will be able to live before the presence of our God.

Despite the negative feedback he received, Jesus remained steadfast. How? He relied on the Spirit of the Lord and the presence of the Triune God.

The same Spirit that empowered Jesus is promised to us as well. There will be moments when life feels overwhelming when we struggle to find meaning or direction. In those times, let us return to the mission statement of Jesus. He had a clear purpose and was guided by the Triune God. We can follow his example and live lives aligned with God's calling.

The good news is that Jesus' mission was not accomplished by human strength or power. It was completed through the help of the Triune God. God the Father gave Jesus his mission, and because it came from God, it was meaningful and purposeful. The same God who created the universe knows each and every one of us by name and has plans for our lives. He desires for us to live meaningful and fulfilled lives. So let us not hesitate because of our weaknesses or the opinions of other people. While it is important to maintain healthy relationships with others, our relationship with God must come first. Let us live in a way that prioritizes God above all else.

The Holy Spirit, who empowered Jesus, is with us today. When the resurrected Jesus ascended to heaven, he promised the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in our daily lives, offering guidance and encouragement. Let us become sensitive to his voice by remaining open to his guidance. In addition, Jesus serves as our ultimate example. He endured hardships and rejection but never gave up. His perseverance teaches us the most important values in life and assures us that he understands our struggles. Jesus experienced pain and hardship, and because of this, he can empathize with us in our struggles and weaknesses.

The mission of Jesus was to set us free so that we could proclaim God's goodness. As freed people, we are now called to be God's witnesses in the world. Let us embrace this calling and live lives that reflect God's grace and love. My question to you as I close today's message is this: **What is your mission statement? What purpose has God placed in your life?** What is the passion God placed in your heart?

As we conclude, I invite you to reflect on this question during our responsive hymn and during the week. Let us pray together for God's guidance and strength as we seek to live out the mission he has entrusted to us.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 570 I have decided to follow

Prayer for the people:

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the mission of Jesus, which brought light to darkness, freedom to the captives, and hope to the brokenhearted. As we have heard your Word today, remind us that this mission is also for us. Empower us, through your Holy Spirit, to proclaim your goodness, and to live out your love in our daily lives. Give us the courage to rise above our fears, doubts, and weaknesses so that we can walk boldly in obedience to your calling. May our lives embody your grace, and may we never forget that you are with us, guiding us and strengthening us.

Merciful Father, we remember shut-ins and the elderly in our community. In cold weather like these days, keep them safe and warm. Give them good health and fill their hearts with your peace.

We pray for our members and adherents. As we worship you together, unite our hearts in your love. Help us acknowledge our weaknesses and rely upon your power and wisdom,

not on our own. Holy Spirit, stir our hearts and help us come before your feet. Let us bring our burdens to you and make us free. Heal the sick. Embrace their hearts and bodies and emotions. Give us peace, reconcile our broken relationships. Give us hope and faith.

You are worthy of our worship and you are our only King and Lord. Help us follow your steps with our whole hearts. Help us glorify you through our lives. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

God loves you and God provides you with your needs. Our gift to God is the expression of our gratitude. God freed us. As free people of God, let us participate in the works of Jesus Christ with thanksgiving and love. As we give our offerings, let us glorify him. (*BOP #79, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*)

Offering prayer:

Creator God, you made each of us in our uniqueness, and together, you made all of us to bear your image in the world. Accept our gifts, unique as they are, and bless them for the sake of your Son, Jesus. Use us and our gifts to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, restore sight to the blind, and free the oppressed. Help us walk and follow the steps of Jesus. Be with us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 592 I, the Lord, of sea and sky

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. God sends us out with purpose. In his love, God gives us unique purposes. What is your mission statement? What purpose has God placed in your life? What passion God has placed in your heart? I hope and pray that you spend time with God and may God shine his light in his wisdom.

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.