

## **Sunday Worship on March 23, 2024**

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Gord Osborne)

### **Sunday Order of Worship**

#### **We Gather**

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to Worship
- Praise song BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say
- Prayer for Worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 412 Come, let us sing to the Lord our song

#### **We listen**

- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Isaiah 55:1-9
- Second reading: Psalm 63:1-8 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Luke 13:1-9
- Sermon: **Repentance as the foundation of true freedom**
- Hymn BOP 662 Those who wait upon the Lord
- Prayer for the people

#### **We Respond**

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 675 Precious Lord, take my hand

#### **We Serve**

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

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### **Responsive Call to Worship**

Seek the Lord while God may be found. Call upon God who is near.

#### **We will return to the Lord our God.**

God's thoughts are not our thoughts. God's ways are not our ways.

#### **We come, seeking new paths to follow.**

As the heavens are higher than the earth so are God's ways higher than ours.

#### **We come as pilgrims on the journey, praising God along the way.**

#### **Let us worship God with thankful hearts!**

### **Praise song – BOP 671 I heard the voice of Jesus say**

#### **Prayer of Adoration**

God, our Creator and Sustainer, in you we live and move and have our being.

In your depths we find meaning; in your heights, we find light and joy.

You are the source of peace and hope for all who turn to you. You alone have been our help and our guide; you give us strength and courage when we face challenges. In you we find rest and welcome along the way. We praise you, O God, for your steadfast love. Draw near to us once more in this time of worship. Reveal your purposes for us and prepare us for the days ahead so that our lives may witness to your mercy and grace as we follow Jesus.

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

**God of grace and mercy, we confess that our thoughts are so often not your thoughts; our ways are rarely your ways. Our tempers are short and we fail to act with kindness. Our confidence is weak and we treat others without respect. Our faith falters and we lose track of you. Forgive the many ways we fail you, and inspire us to follow you more faithfully.**

**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**

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ – And Christ died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. By Christ's mercy, we can make a fresh start following him.

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

**Praise song – BOP 412 Come, let us sing to the Lord our song**

### **Prayer for Children**

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

- First reading: Isaiah 55:1-9
- Second reading: Psalm 63:1-8 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Luke 13:1-9

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

### **SERMON: Repentance as the foundation of true freedom**

FREE sign. In our day to day life, we see this kind of FREE sign.

On the streets, we find old couches, tables, mattresses with this sign. Free to take.

At my university, I lived with friends. We were so rich because so many people threw out their old furniture. My friends and I were strong enough to carry old furniture for over 20 minutes. We picked up a lot of furniture such as light stands, tables, chairs, mattresses, and pretty much everything...

When we talk about free, what does this FREE mean?

For the old furniture I picked up and used, they were not valuable any longer for the original owners, but for me, I could find the value. They were free for me, but they were so precious and useful to me.

We can find many things free around us other than old furniture or materialistic items. They are free not because they don't have any worth, but because of the different value systems of individuals. Some are given for free but are priceless.

How much is a mother's love? / How much is the right to vote? / How much is being healthy? / How much is being able to be confident? // How much is your time? // How much is a childhood memory?

How much is your one hour? If you work for minimum wage, your one hour is around \$17, BUT is this the true worth of your one hour??

How much is the freedom of religion? Freedom of the press, Freedom of speech ??

Free doesn't mean no value. Many times, they cannot be purchased with money. Many times, they cannot be measured by measurable values. That's why some are priceless.

When Isaiah says come to the waters with no money when he says come, buy and eat for free, is it because it's leftover? Are they expired, so there is no value on the products??

God is not offering garbage, but good stuff.

WHY? **Isaiah 55:5, "Now you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you."**

Whether the people around you know God or not, they will come to you because God has glorified you. God will show his glory through you. God displays his glory on your face, on your words, and on your deeds.

**V6, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their way and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."**

God's forgiveness, God's love, God's grace cannot be purchased. We cannot earn by doing some work. How can we receive God's goodness?

We just take them because we are invited.

But, there is a condition. **While he may be found.** When we are blinded by our thoughts, or by our own ways, we don't seek God.

Joshua, the leader of Israel, led the whole people to walk around Jericho for 6 days in silence. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, they walked 7 rounds and shouted. The city was broken down, and Israel took over one of the strongest cities, Jericho. They listened to the Lord and obeyed.

After the great victory, when Joshua tried to conquer a small city Ai, he did not ask God. He overlooked Ai because of its small size.

The great and strong city of Jericho was conquered with the power of God alone. All they did was to obey God. Soon, they forgot how they received the great victory, but only remember the victory they experienced. They considered themselves someone who have power and worth. This is why they did not rely upon the Lord when they attacked the small city of Ai.

In Luke 13, there is a barren fig tree. The owner of the tree waited for 3 years to get some figs from that tree, but the tree didn't produce anything. He became angry and re-evaluated the value of the tree. It is not worth keeping it.

**"See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?"**

Does anybody resonate with this statement? Have you given a chance to someone and waited? Or were you given the chance? How was your experience of waiting or making someone wait? If God sees you, what would he say to you?

**Are we making any fruit? Or are you barren like this fig tree?**

**Luke 6:43-44, “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not gather figs from thorns nor do they pick grapes from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil, for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.”**

We know what this means. We see people around. Who has good hearts and who has not so great hearts.

Remember the servant who’s taking care of the tree. **V8, “He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’”**

Let’s give the tree one more chance.

It is not exactly the same, but in my imagination, God’s different characters are fighting against each other around this tree. If you can imagine the movie called **Inside Out**, a movie showing different emotions in characters within a person, like Joy, Sadness, Fear, Disgust, and Anger.

Character Justice wants justice to be done. No fruit, no worth. Cut it down! It’s like the justice of God.

But, Character Love doesn’t want the tree to be cut down. So, Love pleads to Justice. Let’s give it one more chance. This is like the love of Christ.

The tending person will nurture the tree for one year. It’s like the Holy Spirit walking with us.

Even though it’s not exactly the same as how Triune God works, we can get the image of different characters and how they work differently in this story.

God is loving. God is patient. God is kind. God is inviting us to turn to him. But at the same time, God is just. God is righteous. God is the judge.

God does not wait for us forever. In Isaiah’s passage, it says, **“Seek the Lord while he may be found.”** In Luke’s passage, one more year. What do these tell us?

Before we are overtaken by our own ways and thoughts, we need to turn to God.

### **What is repentance?**

In Greek word, **sin is hamartia**. This means missing the target.

If anything does not hit the bull’s eye, that’s a sin. If we say that the bull’s eye is God’s law, God’s holiness, God’s righteousness, we are missing the target.

**Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Repentance is turning back to God. In other words, to hit the target, you need to change your form. When you play some sports, once you change your form, then there is a high chance that your performance will improve. But, think about changing the form. Repentance is much like an athlete trying to change their form after years of training a certain way. It feels unnatural, difficult, and even frustrating at times. However, if one can change the form, the athlete will find

greater strength and efficiency. True repentance leads to a renewed heart and a deeper walk with God.

Therefore, we have to watch out for becoming stuck in certain ways.

**Hebrews 3:13, “Exhort one another every day ... so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”**

Don't run the risk of developing a hardened heart. Renew your heart before God.

God's invitation is free of charge. We don't pay any money or effort. It is free because of its unmeasurable worth. In this season of Lent, let us reflect on how we are walking with God. If we are not bearing fruit, let us come to God and ask him what to do. God is generous and compassionate, he will guide us.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

**Praise song – BOP 662 Those who wait upon the Lord (Vs. 1, 2, 3, & 5)**

**Prayer for the people:**

Loving God, we humble ourselves before you. We admit that we fall short of your glory. We have sinful desires, we are weak, and we have sinned. We turn from sin and we want to turn back to you. Renew our hearts. Make our old self pass away and let newness come to us. For an experienced athlete, changing the form will be like re-born, impossible. As one starts from scratch again, give us a new beginning. Give us a new life. We rely upon your love and grace. Hold us. Carry us in your arms.

There are people who need our prayers. At this time, let us remember them with love and our friendship. We pray for the families who don't have faith in God. Holy Spirit, please go into their hearts and open their hearts. Give them light, trigger their hearts, so they may come to your truth, so they may have true life. Show your love and greatness as we pray for them. You are a life giving God. Also, there are people who are suffering with their diseases. Embrace their bodies and hearts. With your power, heal them. Help them. There are people who are lonely, who are frustrated, who have unspeakable hardships. Merciful Father, comfort them with your presence, cover them with your love, encourage them, so they are able to stand again. Hold their hands and help them stand strong.

Fill your hope in our community and let your life be here in us.

As we continue to worship you, guide us with your Holy Spirit. Renew us through repentance.

We are yours. Be glorified. Be praised and worshipped. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering:**

God has given us life and breath and created a world of beauty and order. In Christ, we know God's generous mercy. Our gifts are tokens of gratitude for all that we have received in Christ and in creation. May our gifts speak for our thankful hearts on this day. As we give our offerings, let us glorify him. (*BOP #830, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*)

**Offering prayer:**

Loving God, accept these, our gifts, we pray. Bless them and use them to inspire peace in places of unrest, love in places of resentment, joy in places of fear, and hope in places of loss, all for the sake of Jesus Christ, our friend and Saviour. Amen

**Song for the Journey – BOP 675 Precious Lord, take my hand**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. What is the most important thing in your life? Since you are sitting here on Sunday morning, isn't it God? Isn't it being with God in heaven? We are sinful. We have sinned. We cannot come to God in our own power. We need a Rescuer. Jesus Christ saved us. All we need is to accept him. Receive Jesus Christ in your life. Repent and turn to God, he will take care of us with his strong and almighty arms.

**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.