

Sunday Worship on April 6, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

Sunday Order of Worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to Worship
- Praise song BOP 374 Oh for a thousand tongues to sing (Vs. 1, 2, & 5)
- Prayer for Worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 500 Open my eyes, that I may see

We listen

- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Isaiah 43:16-21
- Second reading: Psalm 126 (Refrain 3)
- Third reading: Philippians 3:4b-14
- Sermon: **Press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus**
- Hymn BOP 490 God of grace and God of glory (Vs. 1, 2, & 5)
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 461 Be thou my vision

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Responsive Call to Worship

God says to us: I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers flow in the desert.

The LORD does great things.

God says to us: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.

The LORD does great things.

God says to us: I am about to do a new thing.

The LORD does great things.

So we worship God with songs of joy and prayers of thanksgiving.

Praise song – BOP 374 Oh for a thousand tongues to sing (Vs. 1, 2, & 5)

Prayer of Adoration

Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life, we come with grateful hearts, we praise you for your creation and its reliable rhythms. We praise you, for Christ and his ministry that we seek to participate. By the power of your Holy Spirit, lighten our hearts in this time of worship, and help

us brighten the lives we touch this week in Jesus' name. And so we praise you, O God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life, and offer you all glory and honour, this day and every day, now and evermore.

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

Lord Jesus Christ, we gather in your name today, aware that you keep moving closer and closer to the cross. We confess it is not easy to follow your story. We confess we often struggle to decide what to give and whom to help. We can be critical of those in need and those who help them. Forgive us when we look for reasons not to share, and excuse ourselves from acting generously, as you did. Lead us to learn from and follow the pattern of Jesus Christ the Lord. 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

Hear the good news! Imagine the most loving person you have ever met. Our God is at least 1000 times more loving than the person you imagined. God's abundant love is beyond our imagination. Believe in the forgiving love of God. God proved his love with his death on the cross. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and we are set free.

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

Praise song – BOP 500 Open my eyes, that I may see

Prayer for Children

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

- First reading: Isaiah 43:16-21
- Second reading: Psalm 126 (Refrain 3)
- Third reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

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

SERMON: Press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus

What is the most important thing in your life?

Many would say family.

Recently I heard that our life is like **a business trip**. If you have ever gone on a business trip, how was your experience?

When you were away from home on your business trip, how would you create your environment? In your hotel room, you don't have a kitchen, so would you install a kitchen

because you love to cook? You might not like the mattress from your hotel room, so would you order the perfect mattress for your back and for your sound sleep? You might upgrade your hotel room, but most likely, we don't buy stuff because we know that this life on your business trip is **temporary**. It doesn't last forever, so we just bear some inconvenience. We wait for the last day of our business trip. We long for our home.

My family, my bed, my favourite coffee mug.

During a business trip, we can endure some discomfort because we know that it doesn't last forever. We are hoping for a better place, home.

Apostle Paul was a very successful person. He was a highly educated Pharisee with a strong understanding of Jewish law and culture, and had a natural ability to communicate effectively across different cultures. Some say that he basically had the equivalent of two Ph. D.'s by the age of 21 in his time.

V7, "Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ."

Because of Jesus Christ, he opened his eyes to the kingdom of God, true value, true treasure. His focus was on this earthly life, but his focus shifted toward heaven after his encounter with Jesus Christ.

V8, "More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him."

His goal had been changed. The rubbish he mentioned was his treasures.

In The Lord of the Rings (PIC), Gollum calls the One Ring "my precious." It shows his deep obsession and twisted attachment to the ring. What is your "my precious"?

Paul's precious obsessions were being Pharisee, and protecting Jewish law and culture against Jesus movement. That's why he was so passionate about killing Jesus followers.

After his conversion, **his precious was Jesus alone. (PIC)**

One of the parables of Jesus about the Kingdom of God is finding the finest pearl. **Matthew 13:45&46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."**

Paul found the greatest value and regarded other things he cherished as garbage.

When you are on your business trip, what is the priority?

Let's say that you went to Vancouver to meet your client. You arrived in Vancouver, Beautiful British Columbia, two days before the meeting. There are so many places you want to visit. Stanley Park, UBC, White Rock, Burnaby Mountain, Metro Town, and some restaurants with your old friends. You want to do so many things.

Although you have so many desires, you wouldn't pack your schedule tightly because you have a meeting to prepare for in two days. We need to keep our focus. Our purpose is to have a business meeting. We have a priority.

V13, “Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.”

On your business trip, you need to eat. So, you try some restaurants. If it was so bad, are you going to be sad or depressed about the bad restaurant? Hardly! You move on. You forget about it.

Let's say you had \$1,000,000,000 in your bank account. One day, you had to take a taxi. In your wallet, you only had a \$10 bill. You opened the door and extended one leg to go out, as you opened your wallet to pay. But, somehow, a strong wind came and blew your \$10 bill. So, you had to use your credit card. Not a great experience.

How long are you going to be sad or angry about the loss of your precious \$10 bill? One hour? One day? One week?

Not for a long time because it's a small thing when you have \$1 billion in your account. You move on because you have your true home to return. Our true home, our heavenly reward of knowing God is like \$1 billion in our account and the flying \$10 bill is like this earthly life. This is not our true home. We are on a business trip with a mission from God. However, we frequently chase after worldly acceptance because we forget the treasure of truly knowing the living God, the true and genuine joy of heavenly reward. Many times, we just focus on the flying away \$10 bill.

We fall. We make mistakes. Sometimes we hate. We are disappointed in something. We are angry. Sometimes, we feel like our inner being is rejected, ignored, or crushed.

But, **God loves you. God cares for you. God cherishes you. God encourages you. God supports you. God likes what you are doing. God provides your needs. God fills your cup. God protects you. God walks with you. God holds your hands. God had to give up his own precious Son for you.**

Where are we going to focus on? A missing \$10 bill? Or the love of our Heavenly Father?
“forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.”

This is the attitude we have to have to live our life to the fullest.

The priority of a business trip is to accomplish your mission.

Back to the first question. **What is the most important thing in your life?** Before we finish our business trip and return to our true home in heaven, is there something we must accomplish? Is there something you can die for?

For Paul, it was the heavenly prize – eternal life with Christ. When we return to our true home, what is waiting for us?

I will conclude my message with the last line of The Chronicles of Narnia, “The Last Battle” by C. S. Lewis. He finishes his book like this.

All their life in this world and all their adventures had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Where do you want to spend your eternity? Let us see beyond the earthly treasures we are focusing on, but desire the heavenly reward from God.

Do you really have Jesus Christ in the centre of your heart? Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and King? Submit your heart to him. Give God the control of your life.

Those who want to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, Pray to God. One example of this prayer sounds like this.

“Jesus, you are the Lord, not me. I surrender to you right now. Jesus, I receive you as my Saviour to pay for my sin and take me to heaven.”

If you prayed this prayer for the first time, may the Holy Spirit dwell in you and guide you. If you need any help, please let me know, any time.

May the Holy Spirit stir your heart and re-adjust your focus toward the goal for the prize God has prepared for you.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 490 God of grace and God of glory (Vs. 1, 2, & 5)

Prayer for the people:

All things live in you, O God.

You command us to seek you, and you are always ready to be found. To know you is life. To serve you is freedom. To praise you is joy. We bless and adore you, worship and magnify you. Thank and love you. (Augustine)

Heavenly Father, if we measure your worth with money, you are more than a billion dollars. On our business trip to this earth, we have an important mission to accomplish. It is to know God and to make God known to our surroundings. Loving God, help us focus on the one thing we cannot give up. We cannot miss this. We really need you. Guide us. Hold our hands and walk with us.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of this world. Even though there are disasters, difficulties, and disappointments, you are still on the throne reigning this world. You are controlling this world with your own will and timing. Although it's beyond our understanding, give us faith to believe in you, O God. You are good and you are loving. We praise you and we love you for what you have done for us and for what you are doing for us now. Be with your church, shift our focus from this worldly treasure to your kingdom. May your will be done through our lives. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

According to Paul's teaching, what is treasure and what is rubbish? God gives us wisdom and courage. Let us offer our life to God alone. Let us use our life for God. May our life and the offerings we present today be pleasing aroma to the Lord.

As we give our offerings, let us glorify him. (*BOP #830, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*)

Offering prayer:

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Accept the gifts we bring and anoint them with your Holy Spirit. Through the mission and ministry of your church, may people know you and

love you and worship you. Let his be our desire for our life. In Jesus' precious name, we pray.
Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 461 Be thou my vision

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. What is the one thing you cannot give up? What is the one thing you can die for? Paul accomplished... pretty much everything. But after knowing Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord, he regarded his accomplishment as garbage. Is Jesus your Lord? Is Jesus the most important value for you? Receive Jesus Christ as your Lord. And press on toward the true goal.

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.