

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
January 3rd, 2021
Worship Leader: Rev. Stephen Dunkin

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship
(Based on Psalm 5)

Listen to my words, O LORD,
consider my lament.

**Hear my cry for help,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.**

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait expectantly.

**By your great love,
I can come into your house;
in reverence I bow down
toward your holy temple.**

Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness

Prayer of Invocation

Lord God, gracious and merciful,
you anointed your beloved Son with the Holy Spirit
at his baptism in the Jordan,
and you consecrated him prophet, priest, and king.
Pour out your Spirit on us again
that we may be faithful to our baptismal calling,
ardently desire the communion of Christ's body and blood,
and serve the poor of your people and all who need your love,
through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**

Hymn #575: "Lead Me Lord" (Samuel Sebastian Wesley)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLtlylXJ3V4>

Lead me Lord, lead me in thy righteousness;
 Make your plain before my face,
 For it is you, and you, God only,
 Who makes me to dwell in safety.

Responsive Call to Confession (1 John 1:5-7)

This is the message we have heard
 from him and declare to you:

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

**If we claim to have fellowship with him
 yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.
 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,
 we have fellowship with one another,
 and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
 in baptism you grafted us into the body of Christ,
 promising us forgiveness of sin and newness of life.
 But we fail to live as forgiven people.
 We keep destructive habits and hold grudges.
 We allow our past to hold us hostage
 and are reluctant to welcome newness.
 In your loving-kindness
 have mercy on us and free us from sin.
 Remind us of the promises you have made to us in baptism
 so that we may live as your people,
 claimed in the waters of promise. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

From the fullness of Christ
 we have received redemption through his blood.
 Our sins are forgiven
 according to the riches of his grace lavished upon us.

Sisters and Brothers, your sins are forgiven; be at peace.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

**Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen**

Responsive Reading

Psalm 147:12-20

Extol the LORD, Jerusalem;
 praise your God, Zion.

**He strengthens the bars of your gates
 and blesses your people within you.**

He grants peace to your borders
 and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

**He sends his command to the earth;
 his word runs swiftly.**

He spreads the snow like wool
 and scatters the frost like ashes.

**He hurls down his hail like pebbles.
 Who can withstand his icy blast?**

He sends his word and melts them;
 he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

**He has revealed his word to Jacob,
 his laws and decrees to Israel.**

He has done this for no other nation;
 they do not know his laws.

Praise the LORD.

Ministry of Music: CityAlight – Ancient of Days (Lyric Video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxFMal-Ely0>

1. Though the nations rage
 Kingdoms rise and fall
 There is still one King
 Reigning over all
 So I will not fear
 For this truth remains
 That my God is the Ancient of Days

Chorus

None above Him none before Him
 All of time in His hands
 For His throne it shall remain and ever stand

All the power all the glory
I will trust in His name
For my God is the Ancient of days

2. Though the dread of night
Overwhelms my soul
He is here with me
I am not alone
O His love is sure
And He knows my name
For my God is the Ancient of Days

Chorus

None above Him none before Him
All of time in His hands
For His throne it shall remain and ever stand
All the power all the glory
I will trust in His name
For my God is the Ancient of days

3. Though I may not see
What the future brings
I will watch and wait
For the Saviour king
Then my joy complete
Standing face to face
In the presence of the Ancient of Days

Chorus

None above Him none before Him
All of time in His hands
For His throne it shall remain and ever stand
All the power all the glory
I will trust in His name
For my God is the Ancient of days

Tag

For my God is the Ancient of Days

Scripture Reading:

Philippians 2:1- 4

1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

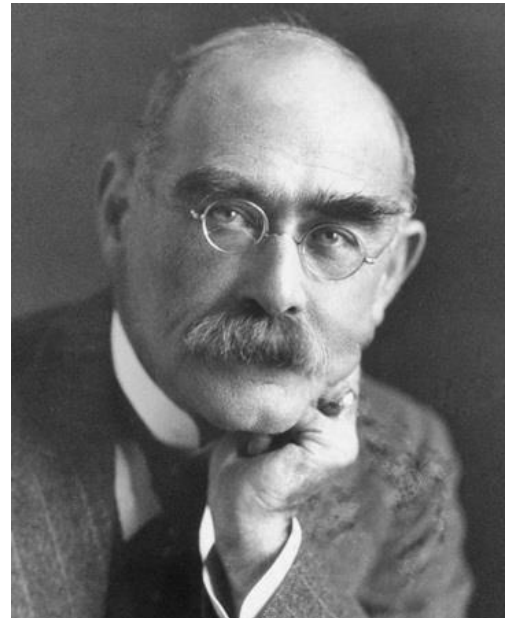
Prayer for Illumination

Lord God,
 let the words of your servant's mouth
 and the meditations of our hearts
 be pleasing in your sight,
 O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer.
 Through Christ. **Amen.**

“Looking Out For the Interests of Others”

Philippians 2: 1-4

I want to begin with a poem that I had to memorize in High School. You may be familiar with it because this poem is very well known. The title is simply “If” and it was written by Rudyard Kipling in 1895 and first published in 1910.



*If you can keep your head when all about you
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too;
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
 Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
 If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
 If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
 And treat those two impostors just the same;
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
 And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,*

*And lose, and start again at your beginnings
 And never breathe a word about your loss;
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
 To serve your turn long after they are gone,
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
 Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
 If all men count with you, but none too much;
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!*

I wonder if Kipling had read Philippians? Certainly a number of the themes he touches on are found in Paul's letters and, had Kipling read chapter 2 verse 1 he would have discovered that Paul liked the "if" as well. In fact, he uses it four times in one verse. "If" is a conjunction. That means it is a joining word, which Paul uses to good advantage as he appeals to his readers. Historically, he was writing to the Philippians but his appeal is aimed at everyone who bears the name of Christian. This is just another way of saying that it applies just as much to us as it did to the Christians in Philippi to whom he wrote almost 2,000 years ago.

1 Therefore,

- **if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,**
- **if any comfort from his love,**
- **if any common sharing in the Spirit,**
- **if any tenderness and compassion,**

Paul is referring here to our experience of the Christian life and in effect he is saying: "Look, is any of this true?"

1. Have you been encouraged in any way from your relationship with Jesus Christ?
2. Have you experienced anything from knowing the love of God?
3. Do you sense that you have anything in common with your brothers and sisters in Christ because the Holy Spirit is at work within you?

Then he asks one final question:

4. Is there any tenderness and compassion in you?



“If any of these things are true, then do something for me. Take my cup of joy and fill it to overflowing. Do you want to know how to do that? Here are three things that you can do:

1. **By being like minded;**
2. **Having the same love; and**
3. **Being one in spirit and purpose.**

Being “like minded” is defined in verse [5](#): **In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.** We will be looking at that more closely in a couple of weeks. Having the “same love” is having the same kind of sacrificial and unconditional love that God showed for us when he permitted his Son to die on the cross for our sins. “Being one in spirit and purpose” is allowing ourselves to be made one in our desires and our wishes by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

Why did Paul write this stuff? Originally it was because there was a problem among the people of this church that was tearing them apart. There was dissension in the church. We don’t know how widespread it was, but at the very least it involved two women who just couldn’t agree. It could just as well have been two men, but in this case, it was two women. Their names were Euodia, whose name means “good way” and Syntyche, whose name means “confidence, success. I can just hear them. One says, “Hey, I’m the good way! Follow me!” The other says, “I am confident that if you do things my way, we will be successful!” You can see how that would split a church. Here is how Paul responds. [2](#) **I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord...** (Philippians 4) He wants them to agree with each other. He loved them both. They had worked side by side with him for the cause of the gospel, but something had happened that caused these two Christians to disagree and it was affecting the whole church. No wonder he says: **be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.**

If you hang around churches for any length of time, then you will know that this is a tragedy that plays itself out all too often. Two people have a difference of opinion. That difference of opinion grows into a disagreement. As they tell their side of the story to others, unhappiness begins to spread and other members of the church begin to pick sides. Rumors, half-truths and downright lies begin to circulate among

the saints. In time, fellow Christians break into two separate camps and neither side will listen to the other. Eventually there is either a split or some people just stop coming to church. Do you recognize this scenario? Does it have about it the ring of truth?

Hey, you recognize this, don't you! Think of the number of things that can cause problems and friction in a congregation. Sometimes it focuses around the minister. Some may be dissatisfied with his preaching. Others may feel he doesn't visit enough. Some find they have a personality conflict with the minister. She simply rubs them the wrong way. Some may not like the direction he is leading the congregation and as a result begin a campaign of opposition. In recent years one of the biggest areas of contention in churches of all denominations is in the area of music and worship. In the last 30 years there have been more fights and splits over this than any other area issue. Some want only traditional hymns. Others are satisfied only if the focus of worship is on

contemporary praise choruses. Some insist that the only legitimate instrument to be played in church is an organ. Others are all for pitching the organ in favour of drums and guitars. These churches wage what have become known as "worship wars". It is my contention that there are excellent and poor traditional hymns. There is good and bad gospel music. There are good, poor and mediocre contemporary worship songs and hymns. At St. Andrew's

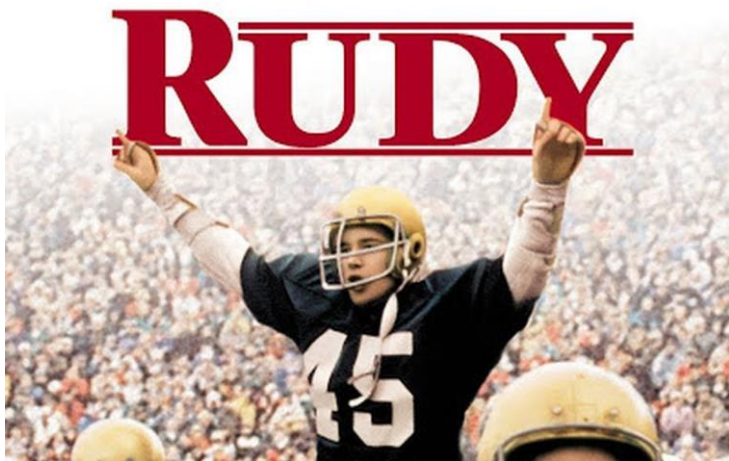
we have tried to steer a middle course and use a blended form of worship. We never want to lose the great traditional hymns of the Christian faith with their solid, theologically sound lyrics that preserve the best of past generations of worshippers. At the same time, we will search far and wide to find the best that is being produced by contemporary hymn writers which have strong, theologically sound lyrics and whose tunes speak to the hearts of a new generation of worshippers of Jesus Christ. For me personally, the organ is my instrument of choice, but I also love a good guitar riff and a strong drum beat.



There are two principal causes of friction or dissension in a group or between individuals. The first is **selfish ambition**. In one sense this hardly needs any definition. We know that a **selfish** person is one who is concerned chiefly with their

own personal profit and pleasure. We also know that a person with **ambition** is a person who has chosen to achieve success in a particular field. Now, we know that “selfish” is a bad word. We would never want anyone to say of us, “Now there is a selfish person if there ever was one!” It is a word that we would never apply to ourselves. Yet, if you and I are completely upfront and honest, we would have to admit that there is selfishness in all of us. We are chiefly concerned with our won profit and pleasure first. We are willing to do things for others, but only if it doesn’t stop us getting what we want.

Ambition is a little different. We could very well ask, “Is there anything wrong with being ambitious?” In one sense, ambition and the determination that go along with it can be good. Years ago, Susan and I along, with Andrew and Emily, watched the



1993 movie *Rudy*. It is a biographical sports film. Daniel “Rudy” Ruettinger was raised in the mill town of Joliet, Illinois. When he finishes high school, he works in the mill like his father and brothers. He may work in a mill, but his dream is to play football for the University of Notre Dame. However, he lacks the grades and the money to attend, and the stature and the talent to play major college football. When his best friend is killed in the mill, Rudy

heads for Notre Dame despite everyone trying to discourage him. It is a great movie and very enjoyable to watch. The thing that keeps Rudy going despite all the setbacks he faces is his ambition – his determination – to achieve his dream.

However, there are times when determination and ambition can be bad. There are times when individuals are so determined and ambitious that they will stop at nothing to get what they want. Chuck Colson, who was Director of the Office of Public Liaison in the Nixon Administration, gives an idea of what naked ambition looks like when he said, “I’d walk over my own grandmother to re-elect Richard Nixon.” He later spent time in the Maxwell Correctional Facility in Alabama for his part in the Watergate scandal. The truly ambitious will step on anyone to get what they want.

The second principal cause of dissension is **vain conceit**. Now the Greek word that is here translated by the two words “vain conceit” means this:

- It is a state of pride that has no proper basis; and
- It is the futile thirst for glory.

I am quite sure that no one reading this has ever suffered from **selfish ambition** or **vain conceit** ... but I have. So, let me share with you a bit about what they are like from firsthand experience. As I already said, selfish ambition is to want something so bad that you will go to any lengths to achieve it. Vain conceit – well, that is thinking that your ideas are better than anyone else's. In 1979 I found myself in a church in Niagara Falls that was going nowhere. Spiritually it was dead. Financially, it couldn't pay its bills. The power and the gas company were threatening to cut us off if we didn't pay up our arrears. After one year, I was close to quitting. Then I read a statement that if a church was willing to spend between 5 and 10% of its budget on advertising, it could grow. With a Bachelor of Commerce degree with a concentration in marketing, that idea excited me. So, I took a proposal to the Annual Meeting that we spend 5% of our budget on advertising. We really couldn't afford it, but it was approved and I was off and running. We became known in Niagara Falls as the church that advertised, and we began to attract new people. That first-year attendance increased by 15%.



However, with growth came conflict. Some of the longer-term members of the congregation disliked the advertising and the changes I made in the worship service in order to attract new people. At first their complaints were quietly voiced. In time



they became more vocal and strident. They pushed for things to go back to the way they used to be. I was unwilling to make any changes or concessions. I liked the popularity bordering on notoriety that I had gained. I wanted to be somebody. I wanted to be part of a growing church where things were happening. I'd had enough of being part of a withering, dying church. I could not back down. I would not

back down or away from the direction I was leading the church in. I was convinced that my ideas were better than those of the naysayers. Session meetings (Board of Elders) broke into fights. Eventually there was a split. One night half of the elders walked out of the Session meeting never to return. We lost 25 people in one week. Others fell away over time. In no time the church lost more than it had gained under my leadership.

Let me read to you again these verses from Philippians 2: **3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.** Who was wrong in this situation? Was it those who opposed growth, outreach and change? I could make a good argument for it being their fault. If I am honest, however, I have to admit that I was the one in the wrong. What I did was in direct contradiction to what the Word of God says here. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.** My ambition was wrong. My unwillingness to listen to others was wrong. Thinking that my ideas were better than the ideas of others was wrong. God calls us to walk before him in humility. In humility we are to consider the needs of others above our own. In humility we are to consider them **better than ourselves.** There is nothing wrong in having our own interests according to these two verses. It is just that we are to look out for the interests of others just as much as we do our own.

If we are going to be followers of Jesus, we must learn to walk the path of humility that he walked. Something that I have learned is that in the end what I want – the things I am determined to achieve – are not really all that important. In God’s eyes, having a growing church is not nearly as important as the love that needs to exist in our midst. Being **like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind** must come first. I will never become **somebody** by trying to push my own agenda. Only God is able to make a person a “**somebody**”. To be a “**somebody**” in the world’s eyes is to be a “**nobody**” in God’s eyes. It is my experience that if we humble ourselves before the Lord then, and only then, will he make us “**somebodies**”. Peter in his first epistle puts it this way: **5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.**

Hymn #635: Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You (Lyrics)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttW9oQ-yiuU>

1. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I might have the grace to
Let you be my servant, too.
2. We are pilgrims on a journey;
We are family on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the miles and bear the load.
3. I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.
4. I will weep when you are weeping;
When you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joys and sorrows
Till we've seen this journey through.
5. When we sing to God in Heaven
We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.
6. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I might have the grace to
Let you be my servant, too.

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) **We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer.** This note from our treasurer.

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Invitation to Offering

So, here's what I want you to do, God helping you:
Take your everyday, ordinary life—

your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—
and place it before God as an offering.

Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

—Romans 12:1, TM

Offertory Prayer

Lord God, heavenly King,
we offer these our gifts
as a sign of love, devotion, and praise.
Through these, as through our praises,
we acknowledge that you are our Lord.
In your name we pray. **Amen.**

Pastoral Prayer (Based on Psalm 121)

Almighty God,
No matter where we are, where we are going, or what we are doing,
we know that we find our help in you, our Lord.
You are the creator and sustainer of all
that has been made and will be made.
And yet, the immensity of creation does not distract you
from caring personally for every person in it.

We know that is true of your care for us too!
You do not daydream or become weary in that care.
We thank you that you not only watch over us with diligence
but that you will guide us so that we will not fall—
so that we won't even stumble.

Whether we are awake or asleep, you are there,
sheltering and protecting us from all that would hurt us.
We know that you watch over all our living—
you have in the past, and we know you are now.
Your promise holds for the future and for eternity,
and we praise and thank you for that. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn #634

“Will You Come and Follow Me” (Lyrics)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiXnbOORTAU>

1. Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?
3. Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?
4. Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?
5. Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Benediction

Go now, and bear witness to the light so others might believe.
Since you are chosen in Christ,
live before him in love, holy and blameless.
Live with hope in Christ, for the praise of his glory.

And may God fill the earth with peace;
May Christ give you grace upon grace from his fullness;
And may the Holy Spirit, the pledge of your inheritance,
lead you on straight paths where you will not stumble.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.