

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, October 17th, 2021
Rev. Gerry Gallant

What Will Your Contribution Be?
Mark 10:35-45

Welcome

Announcements

- Sheet at the back where you can write down your favorite hymn — Choir practice every Thursday at 7:00 p.m., everyone is welcome regardless of ability, so please come out and join the choir.
- Community Bible Study starting on Wednesday Nov. 3rd from 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. We will be studying the Book of James. Everyone is welcome. Please sign up by email gteacher@gmail.com or standrewspert@bellnet.ca or giving the church a call **613-267-2481**. Also, over the next couple of weeks invite at least two non- St. Andrews members to join us in this Study
- If you have any ideas, suggestions, or things you would like to see happening at the Church, please let me know by email gteacher@gmail.com , telephone **519-851-3274**, text or in-person.

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Our hearts are ready, O Lord,

our hearts are ready!

We will sing and make melody!

We will awaken the dawn!

We will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples,

we will sing praises to you among the nations.

For your steadfast love is great above the heavens,

and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Prayer of Invocation

O God, our Father,

you seek men and women, boys and girls,

who will worship you in spirit and in truth;

*and so we ask you to inspire
and bless the worship week by week in this church,
in words and music,
prayers and hymns,
psalms and lessons.*

*Open the hearts and lips of those
who worship you today all over the world,
that all of us may listen with an alert conscience
to the preaching of your Word
and come to receive the bread and cup with true repentance and faith.*

*We ask this in the name of him
through whom alone our worship is acceptable to you:
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.***

Opening Hymn:

Call to Confession

*In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength,
but you would have none of it.*

*Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.*

For the LORD is a God of justice.

Blessed are all who wait for him!

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you**

in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

*Through Jesus Christ forgiveness of sins
is proclaimed to you.
In Christ we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of his grace.*

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 104:1–9 ESV

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty,

2 covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent.

3 He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind;

4 he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.

5 He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.

6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

7 At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.

8 The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them.

9 You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.

Music Ministry

Scripture

Mark 10:35–45 ESV

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” **36** And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” **37** And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” **38** Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” **39** And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, **40** but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” **41** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. **42** And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Children's Lesson

Does anyone know what this is? This is the baptismal font. We use it when we baptise people here at the church.



Who here remembers their baptism? What about the last time someone was baptised here at the church? Baptism is a pretty special celebration in many churches and families because it symbolises a special connection with Jesus.

Jesus talks about baptism a lot in the bible. In fact, in today's gospel message we heard Jesus talking to James and John about baptism. However, this time he is speaking about it a little differently than when he has talked about it before.

I think you heard that James and John want to be the ones who get to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus when he is on his throne in His Kingdom. This is a pretty big deal, because those seats are usually saved for people really close to the king, kind of like how people always try to save a seat beside themselves for their best friend.

Jesus knows that the brothers both want to be in those seats, so he tells them that to sit in those seats they need to be baptised in the same way that Jesus is going to be baptised.

Now if you think back to the last baptism, you saw it was probably a happy event, everyone smiling and being in a good mood. Baptisms are one of the most beautiful events anyone can be invited to, because they are so special. So why is Jesus telling his two disciples that they would have to undergo the same baptism that he has to if they are so nice?

Well, the truth is that in this scripture Jesus is speaking of another kind of baptism. Jesus has been teaching the disciples that he is going to be hurt and die for the sins of the world and then he will be raised from the dead after three days. It is this that Jesus is trying to make the disciples understand, that he is going to die for their sins and if they want to be at his right and left hand, they are going to do the same.

Now we know that Jesus has paid the debt for our sins, so what did he mean for us to learn from this scripture. Well, when we are baptised, we actually say we are dying to our old self and being born anew in Christ. Baptism is a new life, so what Jesus is trying to teach us is to live our new life in him, one where we are raised up out of the waters with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is a life where we try to give up our sins and temptations and live like Jesus did when he was in the world. When we are baptised, we all became part of one big family, God's family and what Jesus is teaching his disciples is that we should live our new lives in Christ giving up the sinful ways of our old lives.

Loving and Living God, we come to you seeking love and understanding. We come to you to live out our baptismal promises. We come to you with joy in our hearts at the new life you give us in the cleansing water of Baptism. Amen

Hymn Before Sermon

Prayer for illumination

*Lord, our God,
in the reading and proclamation of your Word,
we pray you will illumine our minds and hearts
so that we may hear and understand your Word,
know and live according to your Word,
and become living letters of your Word,
equipped to follow Jesus
in every part of our lives,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
through Christ, our Lord, the living Word. Amen.*

Sermon



In 2002, Kevin Kline portrayed a teacher of Western civilization at a prestigious private school in t

he movie Emperor's club which is based upon a short story by Neil Tolkin. On the first day of classes, we are presented the image of roughly 30 High School boys, all dressed in striking red jackets, as they settle down into the classroom. The room itself is decorated with a variety of maps, as well as the busts of many great leaders throughout western civilization such as Caesar, Plato, and Socrates.

As the boys look around Cline asks a student to stand up and read the plaque that is installed above the door. The student approaches the door and looks upon a plaque that seems to be an ancient artifact.

The student then begins to read what is written upon the plaque in an uncertain voice, 'I am Shutruk Nahunte, King of Ashand and Susa, Sovereign of the Land of Elam. By the Command of Inshushinak, I destroyed Sippar, took the Stele of Nirah-Sin, and brought it back to Elam, where I erected it as an offering to my God, Inshushinak. Shutruk Nahunte, 1158 B.C.'

As the student finishes his reading, Kline looks out over the class and asks, 'Is anyone familiar with this fellow? Texts are permissible, but you will not find him there. Shutruk Nahunte. King. Sovereign of Elam. The Destroyer of Sippar. But behold his accomplishments cannot be found in any history book. Why? Because great ambition and conquest without contribution are without significance.'

Kline then ends with a question we all need to hear: 'What will your contribution be?'

As we look at the Scripture today, I want us to remember what we have covered over the last few weeks about not seeking the worldly and instead focusing on the spiritual. If you were presented with this same question in front of God today, how would you explain your contribution to his kingdom?

In the few verses we are not looking at between last weeks scripture and this week's scripture, Jesus explains to the disciples for the third time about his coming death, which is actually becoming very close.

And like before the disciples seem to be oblivious to the reality of this and instead become caught up in the things of this world. In fact, if you think about this the book of mark is probably an excellent proof of the truth of the gospel, what group of people would write a book about themselves where they are such fools. The truth of the fact that they got it wrong so often and wrote about it proves the divine narrative of God's Gospel.

Mark 10:35 ESV

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."

It starts of simple enough, James and John approach Jesus and ask him to grant them their desire. Notice however, that they do not ask for what they desire right away, instead they try to get a yes from Jesus before they say what it is that they are asking for.

Kids do this, when they want something while out shopping, they often ask, 'Can I get something?' They ask it this way because they know once they have the yes, they can go wild with their requests, and before you know what has happened, they follow up with, 'Can I have a pony?'

They are seeking the 'yes' so that they can persuade us to get them their desires. Parents we all need to learn something from Jesus here and respond to their question with a question.

Mark 10:36 ESV

36 And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Jesus knows what it is that they are going to ask for, but he wants to have them ask. Their request is going to present yet another opportunity for Jesus to tell us the costs of being a follower of His.

Mark 10:37 ESV

37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."

They do not hesitate to ask for the seats at the right and left hand of God. The top two positions in a worldly kingdom because they were given to the ones whom the King trusted as his closest advisors.

They wanted these positions of power because they wanted their lives to matter. They wanted to know, and for everyone else to know, they were the ones who were closest to Jesus, the ones he brought everywhere with him and the ones he trusted most in his inner circle of disciples.

Jesus does not reprimand his disciples this time. Even though he has explained to them many times that the path of greatness was service, self-sacrifice, he does not get angry with them, instead he chooses this time to ask them if they understand the costs that are associated with these positions.

Mark 10:38–39 ESV

38 Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” 39 And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,

In his response he is asking them if they understand the suffering that Jesus must go through before his death. They still have their ideal of what the Messiah will be and how His Kingdom will operate. They believe it work just like the kingdoms they are familiar with on Earth, like the kingdoms of the Israelites that existed in Judea and Israel in the past.

Yet, this is not how the Kingdom of God works. Those who sit at the right and left of Jesus will be chosen very differently than how those in the kingdoms of man are chosen.

We need to remember when we are looking at the symbolism and metaphors that Jesus uses that they are in reference to the Old Testament. So, this is not the ‘cup’ as we know it in communion, but instead the ‘cup’ which was a symbol of blessings at times in the Book of Psalms, but which was more commonly know to refer to divine judgement and suffering in the books of the prophets and in the majority of the psalms.

Psalms 75:7–8 ESV

7 but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. 8 For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.

It is this ‘cup’ that which Jesus refers to in His Words, the symbol of God’s wrath and judgement. We know this because he speaks of this immediately after speaking of his death upon the cross for the third time, he is trying to drive home the message of the cross into the minds of His disciples.

We see this echoed in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, and Zechariah. All of the Old Testament prophets knew that the cup was not something which you wanted.

This is the cup from which Jesus will drink from as he is upon the cross. The cup which is filled to the brim with the wrath of God’s judgement against the sins of man. Jesus wants to know if they are willing to drink from this cup alongside Him. Plainly put Jesus is telling both James and John, ‘I am about to go through a time of extreme pain and suffering, one where God’s wrath is poured out upon me. Are you willing to go through this with me?’

The baptism is a little more complex. In the Old Testament we do not see clear examples of baptism. However, this is a place where the knowledge of Greek helps to clarify the meaning of Jesus's Words. The word used for baptism means to be submerged, this is the argument that the Baptists use to say baptisms require full submersion. However, it is not even quit that simple, as the word does not simply mean being submerged in a liquid. It can also mean being submerged in an experience.

In Greek, a man who was not careful with his money and accrued a significant debt would be submerged in debt. A drunk, submerged in drink. Someone who is grief stricken, submerged in grief. A student who is driving their teacher crazy with inquired, submerged in questions. So, if we look at submergence in the Old Testament it can give us a clearer understanding of why Jesus asks these disciples about Baptism. Submergence in the Old Testament was submergence under the water, like a boat that has been sunk, or a submarine diving into the depths with the waves and water passing over it.

Psalm 124:4 ESV

4 then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us;

Jesus is asking James and John, 'are you willing to be submerged in suffering?' The truth is that Jesus will undergo great suffering. More than any man should have to undergo. It is going to begin with the ridicule and hate filled words that are flung at him. Then it will become more intense as he is flogged and tortured, spilling his blood upon the ground to the cheers of his tormentors. Then it will escalate yet again on the cross, a death that is still considered one of the worst possible forms of torture and death that any human could endure.

This is what Jesus is speaking of; His suffering and death upon the cross is necessary and if they want to be a follower and obtain their perceived positions of glory, they are going to have to be willing to go through everything that Jesus is going to go through. The truth is that while they did not go through this with Christ, they did go through it as his followers. James is beheaded by Herod Antipas in the Book of Acts and John suffered as he preached the Gospel to all who would hear even being exiled at one point of his life to the island of Patmos. Every one of the Disciples shared in the suffering of Christ as they spread His word throughout the world.

Mark 10:40ESV

40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

Jesus tells the brothers, that even though they are willing to endure the suffering that Jesus will endure, the truth is that the positions which they desire is not His to grant. The reality of being a follower of Jesus is recognizing that the things which we desire and the plan that God has for us may not align with one another.

These brothers wanted to be in positions of power and sought to secure them ahead of the other disciples. The truth is that God has already determined their positions and will enact His plan, regardless of what the brothers do and desire.

God has prepared a place for every one of His faithful believers. Regardless of our positions on Earth, He has a plan for each of us where we will serve His Kingdom, some of us may have a grand role and others may have a minor role. It is not up to us the position which we serve, instead it is our duty to do our best in whatever position God has called us to serve.

This is perhaps one of the hardest things for us to understand as humans. We all know that we seek glory and recognition. Everyone knows people who are famous, even in the realm of pastors there are pastors who are famous and renowned.

Many young pastors dream of mega-churches and huge congregations of followers. They look at pastors like Billy Graham, R.C. Sproul, or Charles Spurgeon. They look up to these great men and think of the impact and influence they could have on the Kingdom of God if they were like these men.

However, what about the people who influenced these Pastors. No one knows Charles Spurgeon's dad who was also a pastor, who served a small church faithfully his whole life. How many here know the story of how Billy Graham came to love Jesus?

Let us start with Edward Kimball. I am guessing many of you have never heard of this man. In fact, I am guessing many Christians have no knowledge of Edward Kimball.

He was a Sunday school teacher who sought to bring every student in his care to an understanding of the Lord he tried to instill in each of them a desire to seek a personal relationship with God. He made a choice early in his teaching to put an intentional effort with every boy he taught, praying for them, and seeking ways to connect them to God. I am sure many times he faced challenges and wanted to quit. I know that any person who has tried to teach scripture to young boys faces challenges like none other, herding a field full of cats would be easier than keeping them focus of the scripture.

One year Mr. Kimball had a student who seemed to be struggling to understand the Gospel and what it meant in his life, so he decided to go to the shoe store that the man worked at stocking shelves. He went into the stock room and took the time to explain the importance of entering into a personal relationship with Jesus to the young man. It was in the small stockroom on a Saturday that a young man who had not known Christ was moved to believe in the Gospel and accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. That young man was Dwight L. Moody, whom I am sure some of you know as one of the most influential Pastors of the 1800's and even into today.

What is amazing is that the story does not end there, under the tutelage of Rev. Moody another young man came to God named Wilbur Chapman. Rev. Chapman was an evangelist who converted thousands to Christianity and one day he had a professional baseball player by the name of Billy Sunday attend his meeting. That was the day that Billy Sunday became a believer in Jesus Christ.

Billy Sunday quit playing baseball and joined Chapman working as an evangelist. When Rev. Chapman decided to accept the pastorate of a church Billy Sunday carried on the Evangelical mission.

Then another man gave his life to God. Mordecai Ham, a man known as a dignified gentleman. Rev. Ham had a flair for showmanship and was known to rent a hearse and drive it through towns to call people to his meetings.

When Rev. Ham entered the town of Charlotte, North Carolina, there was a local High School boy, Billy Frank, who vowed to all of his friends that he would never go hear Rev. Ham speak. Rev. Ham had learned that many of the High School Boys would skip school and visit a house of ill repute that was located across the street from the High School. Rev. Ham decided to speak out against this, and this upset many of the High School boys who decided that they would go interrupt the meetings of Mordecai Ham. The day the boy decided to go, Billy Frank tagged along curious to see the mayhem that they thought was going to ensue.

However, instead of being amused Billy Frank was intrigued by the message of Rev. Ham. He came back another night and when they had an alter call, he stood up and received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. Billy Frank eventually changed his name to Billy Graham and became one of the greatest evangelists of our time. And it all started with a Sunday school teacher who loved his students enough to ensure they were learning the importance of the Gospel.

So, whether we are called by God to do remarkable things or insignificant things we should always be doing them to the best of our ability. We should live our lives not striving to be rich, or famous or powerful, but instead we should strive to be a faithful servant of God as a father, as a husband, as a wife, as a mother, as a grandparent or as a child, as a student or as a teacher, as a businessman or as a tradesman and as a preacher.

What ever role God has determined for us, it is in His strength that we are called to carry out that role to the best of our ability. Understanding this is critical to understanding how we can make contributions to the kingdom of Heaven.

Mark 10:41–42 ESV

41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

This is yet another example of how the disciples still do not understand what they have been taught about Jesus’s death. Instead of understanding the lessons about sacrifice and service that have been laid out before them, they are focused on being angry.

Angry because they did not think of asking for the position of sitting at Jesus’s right and left first. Every disciple wanted to be the one that was Jesus’s most loved disciple, his most trusted confidant.

Jesus points out that they are still holding onto this worldly view of greatness. One where leaders are the people who dominate and control. One where those in power demand that their rights and privileges are cared for and often exploit and abuse others to ensure that they are getting what they want out of life.

Mark 10:43–45 ESV

43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

He once again explains to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is different.

Greatness is not measured by worldly standards. Greatness is not measured by the respect, power, or wealth you gain in this world. Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven is measured by your contribution to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus does not crush their desire to be great followers of His. Instead, he explains to them how they can obtain greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven. I am sure that he would tell each and everyone of us the same thing. If we want to live lives that matter, we need to learn how to serve.

This is where the world and Christians collide. The world tells you to watch out for yourself, work hard and get ahead, make money, be successful, get power and be liked by everyone. Jesus tells us loves others and help those in need and proclaim my name to all even if they hate you for it.

To Jesus service is love. We are all called to serve one another. To live a life where we make a contribution by making a positive difference in the lives of others. This is what love is, unconditional acceptance is not love, love is when you are willing to tell someone something that might hurt them, but you are telling it because you are trying to make their lives better.

This was a difficult thing for me to grasp, but luckily, I have a patient wife who kept telling me things even when I would get upset. She did not do it to make me upset, she did not do it to hurt me. She does it because she loves me and wants me to be a better person.

If we want a life that matters, we need be willing to make sacrifices of the things we want, to suffer alongside Christ perhaps in persecution, to be willing to submit ourselves to fully serve God in any position that he calls us to and we need to serve, serve one another with the love that Jesus taught us.

These are all things which are difficult for us to understand. They challenge our teachings in society and go against the popular culture. The call for us to not seek the life of a celebrity but instead live the life of a servant.

Yet, like Edward Kimball, if we give ourselves fully into the service of God, doing what he has called us to do to the absolute best of our ability, with a focus on God’s Kingdom and bringing the Glory of His name to everyone we know, we could be making a much larger contribution to the Kingdom of Heaven than we will ever know.

As we go forth this week, lets take the time to think about how we can serve others in this church, in the community and in the world and make our contribution to the Kingdom of God.

Let us pray,

Hymn:**Invitation to Offering**

*The willingness to give is a sign of life.
 The fruit tree gives of its fruit,
 and we know it is alive.
 When it no longer gives,
 we know real life has gone out of it.
 The heart that hoards the blessings of God
 is no longer alive with spiritual power.
 To give is to live.*

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.

Offertory Prayer

*Praise be to you, LORD,
 the God of our father Israel,
 from everlasting to everlasting.
 Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power
 and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
 for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
 Yours, LORD, is the kingdom;
 you are exalted as head over all.
 Wealth and honor come from you;
 you are the ruler of all things.*

*In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.
Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name. Amen.*

Closing Hymn

Pastoral Prayer

*God of each and every life,
You open our eyes on the world you love
to show us your presence and your purpose in all creation.
We thank you for the wonders of the seasons as they change,
and for gifts of love and compassion you offer us through friend and stranger.
We pray for the earth as it struggles to support your many creatures.
Make us better stewards in creation,
and kinder neighbours to both friend and stranger.
God of justice,
You open our eyes on the world to show us struggle and conflict.
We see the burdens many are carrying,
and the way differences create division.
We pray for all those still struggling with the economic impact of the pandemic
and for those feeling the stress of these days in deeply personal ways.
Show us how to support those in difficulty
and mend relationships in our community.
God of compassion,
You open our eyes on the world to show us suffering and despair.
We see challenges for health care all around us,*

*and know many still face the effects of COVID-19
or other illnesses and complications that make life hard to cope with.
We pray for those who suffer here
and in so many places in the world you love.
God of wisdom,
You open our eyes on the world to show us its complexities.
We see countries locked in old animosities
and communities overwhelmed by fresh upheaval.
We pray for the millions displaced in current conflicts and by natural disasters,
and for leaders here and around the world.
Open their eyes to the suffering of the earth and those in their jurisdictions.
And open all our eyes to ways we can participate in solutions
to situations which break your heart and ours.
We pray all this in the name of your one and only Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen***

Benediction

*May you, people of God, know that
God our Father made you and guides your every step;
Jesus Christ gave his life for you and brings you new life;
the Spirit keeps you in the Lord's presence and empowers you to serve.
May almighty God continue to bless you and move you to give thanks. Amen.*