

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Hope in Christ  
Luke 21: 25-36  
Nov 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship (Responsive)**

*Advent is a time for waiting.*

**We wait for God, who appears like a tender branch growing from a stump.**

*Advent is a time for hoping.*

**We wait for God, who comes with justice and righteousness.**

*Advent is a time to worship.*

**We wait for God, praising the One who comes to fulfil promises.**

**Prayer of Invocation**

*Covenant God,  
you heard your people yearning for a Savior.  
Thank you for sending your Son so long ago.  
We now rehearse your promise  
that Christ will come again,  
that death and suffering will end  
and every tear will be wiped away.  
Come, Lord Jesus, come.  
As you fulfilled Israel's hopes long ago,  
so we long for all these promises to be fulfilled. Amen.*

**Lighting of the Advent Candle**

[First Sunday of Advent, after lighting the first Advent candle]

Prepare the way of the Lord.  
 We light this candle in hope,  
 the hope of our coming Savior, Jesus.  
**Prepare, then, the way of the Lord.**

### **Opening Hymn# 407: "Praise My Soul the King of Heaven"**

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
 to his feet thy tribute bring;  
 ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
 who like me his praise should sing?  
 Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him,  
 praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favour  
 to our fathers in distress;  
 praise him, still the same forever,  
 slow to chide and swift to bless;  
 Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him,  
 glorious in his faithfulness.

### **Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
 Let us make our confession to God.

### **Prayer of Confession**

*Arise, shine: for your light has come.*  
**O God, we live as if the light  
 had never defeated the darkness in the world or in us.**

*And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*  
**We confess that we ignore the Christ  
 you sent to be among us, to be in us.**

*For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,  
 and thick darkness the peoples;  
 but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.*  
**We've kept the birth of your Son confined to the Christmas season  
 and do not yearn for his birth each moment in our waiting hearts.**

*And nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your rising.*  
**Lord, you came to us in the fullness of time.**  
**Forgive us for not opening our eyes to your coming.**  
**It's time that we prepare for your coming.**  
**Let the earth ring with song. Let the light break forth.**  
**Let us all rejoice in the miracle of love.**

*Let Christ come into the fullness of our time. Amen.*

### **Assurance of Pardon**

*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.  
Your sins are pardoned.  
The penalty is paid.*  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **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**

#### **1 Thessalonians 3:9-13**

<sup>9</sup> *For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,*

<sup>10</sup> **as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?**

<sup>11</sup> *Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, <sup>12</sup> and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,*

<sup>13</sup> **so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.**

## Music Ministry

### Prayer for illumination

*God of love and power,  
you are revealed to us in your Word,  
in accounts of prophecy and fulfillment  
that direct our attention to Jesus Christ.  
Illumine us now as we hear your Word proclaimed,  
that we may open our hearts to him,  
yearn for his coming in glory,  
and serve him with joy. Amen.*

## Scripture

### Luke 21:25-36

#### The Coming of the Son of Man

<sup>25</sup> “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, <sup>26</sup> people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

#### The Lesson of the Fig Tree

<sup>29</sup> And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. <sup>31</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

#### Watch Yourself

<sup>34</sup> “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. <sup>35</sup> For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

**Children's Hymn# 357: "Jesus Loves Even Me"**

I am so glad that our Father in heaven  
Tells of His love in the Book He has given;  
Wonderful things in the Bible I see,  
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Refrain:

I am so glad that Jesus loves me,  
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me;  
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,  
Jesus loves even me.

O, if there's only one song I can sing,  
When in His beauty I see the great King,  
This shall my song in eternity be:  
O, what a wonder that Jesus loves me! [Refrain]

**Children's Lesson**

Take a moment and look around the sanctuary. Make note of all the things you see. We see all sorts of things here in the sanctuary. Some will notice the pews, others the people. Many will see the stained-glass story of Jesus's life, and a few might notice the old hymn board. Still others will see the people, adults, or children, and some may see the organ.

St. Andrew's is an old church, and everything you see here is part of a story. Everything here is part of the History of this church, but it is also part of a much larger and bigger story, the story of God's love for his people.

The scripture today again talked about some things which might seem scary. Yet here we are today in a place that reminds us of all the love that God has for us. That is what Jesus was teaching the disciples today when he spoke to them. He was telling them when you feel scared, to look to God and find hope in His love.

There is nothing that can take God's love away from us. God's love is always there for His people, and we should look for it in the world around us. Jesus also tells the

disciples that when they are having trouble seeing God's love that they should spend some time praying.

Prayer is a time when we should not just be asking for things, it should be a time when we are just talking to and listening for God, so we can learn more about his love. It does not matter how we pray, whether we pray out loud, or silently, whether we pray in a group or alone, standing, sitting, or kneeling, with hands clasped in front of us or in our laps. Our prayers can be long or short, fancy or simple, with lots of thought and words, or just a single word and a long time of listening.

What matter is that we spend time in prayer with God so that he can show us His love and fill our lives with the Hope.

Let spend a moment in Prayer before we go spend time with our teachers today, I will start with Dear God, then all of you take a moment and pray to God in your own way.

*We sometimes see things that we are troubled by or make us scared or confused. Open our eyes to see signs of your love and hope in the world around us. Show us your grace and mercy in our lives and the lives of the people around us every day. And let us be signs of your love as e live our lives in the world you created. Amen*

## Sermon

The season of Advent and the beginning of the new liturgical year is upon us. The word advent is rooted in the church's Latin heritage. It comes from the Latin verb 'venio' which means come, 'advenio' means to come towards. In the season of Advent, we are coming towards something.

The question is what is coming? I can already here the young boys and probably a few older ones as well singing 'Santa Claus is coming to town....'. This is the season of Santa, a season of merriment and of elves and of gifts and of food, great food if you have a sweet tooth. It is a time where families come together, and old friends might meet up a Christmas for their one time a year meeting. These are all wonderful things, but the season of advent is not a season of celebrating the coming of Christmas in that sense, instead it is meant to be a celebration of the coming of Jesus.

Advent is the spiritual beginning of the Christian year and the season of expectant waiting and preparation for the coming of Christ. It is a time of celebration and of reflection on the first coming and the expectant second coming of Christ. This is why the colors of advent are purple, a sombre color of reflection and meditation rather than the festive reds and greens that we see elsewhere. Starting today and continuing through to Christmas we will celebrate the day in which our lord entered into this world in human form as a helpless child. A child through whom all of our sins are forgiven, A

child through whom we received life – both the life we have here on the earth and the eternal life we will have in heaven.

I am hoping you recognize the scripture that was read today. A few weeks ago, I spoke about Mark's version of the second coming and mentioned that it was repeated in the books of Luke and of Matthew. The celebration of the first coming of our Lord and the second coming of Christ are connected. Both events are meant to remind us of the same basic principle; God is in control. All of creation is following His plan.

It is easy for us to believe that the world is filled with randomness, or as some would say with luck, or even karma. People believe that things happen for no reason at all. There are many in the world today who do not believe in a meaning, a purpose or direction in their lives, they see their life as just a bunch of random meaningless events, one where they just try to amass as much power, status, and wealth as possible to make the randomness bearable.

Christmas teaches us all something very different. When we are willing, we can see the truth that God is always with us. His plan and his purpose are always taking place and we are invited to become part of His kingdom and be involved in His plan.

It is easy for us to believe that the world is spinning out of control. When we turn on the news, we are often overwhelmed with the chaos that is occurring round the world. We see news of famines, floods, wars, and crime taking place abroad and in our own backyard. There are opinion pieces and editorials that explain just how bad things are and how we can only expect them to get worse.

On top of that we are also experiencing our own hardships in life. There are many who are struggling because of the pandemic with loneliness, grief, and lack of spiritual care. There are many who are strained financially because of the loss of work. There are many who are worried about what the future holds for them or their families because of the chaos they see in the world around them.

Advent is the reminder; it calls for us to remember the promise that God has not abandoned his children. God is always in control, and he will never be separated from the ones he loves.

### **Romans 8:38-39**

**<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

God will never leave us; he will never forsake us and in a world that is filled with things which we cannot understand this is the one truth we can always turn to in our lives.

Christmas is a time of celebration and happiness for many, especially on the surface. Yet for others, and often below the surface, it can be a very difficult time of year. This year there will be people who are alone at Christmas, because of the costs of travel and the limitations set by the pandemic. There will be people who are stressed throughout this season because of the costs of gifts for their loved ones, or even just the cost of paying their bills. There will be people who are overwhelmed with the time commitments of the holiday season, the expectations of visits, of parties, of meetings and the need to always seem to be in good spirits. There will also be those who are saddened because they are not with their loved ones through this blessed season.

There are many things about this season which make it a difficult and stressful time of year. However, there is a way to change it from being a cause of stress in our lives into a cause for joy, even with all of the struggles and stress it may bring.

Christmas is a season where we can see a way that leads to victory and joy. When we learn to see things through a slightly different lens, we can have the hope and expectation that is meant to be stirred up in the season of Advent and experience the grace, mercy, power, and love of God.

### **Luke 21:25-28**

#### **The Coming of the Son of Man**

**<sup>25</sup> “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, <sup>26</sup> people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”**

As we learned in Mark, the world is going to go into chaos. People will be panicked by what is to come. The events leading up to the second coming of the Son of Man will be filled with wars, revolutions, earthquakes, and famines. People will live in fear and distress. These are the birth pangs of His coming, they will lead up to the return of Christ, the day He will literally come and save all of His people.

The lesson for us lies in verse 28. All of us in our lives will experience fear, anxiety, panic, discomfort, and uncertainty. These are all truths of human life, these are all emotions we experience at some time, even though we may use different words to describe them. Hopefully we never go through something that makes us experience



them all at once, but we will have days where more than one of these may be present in our lives and hinder us.

Yet, even when we are overwhelmed by all of these powerful emotions, we need to remember that they are not permanent. They cannot last forever, even if it feels like we will never get away from them. Jesus tells us that the day of redemption will come the day of his joyous return.

This is glorious news for anyone who is suffering. We need to trust in the scripture, in God's word that Jesus is coming and our redemption with Him. That means that even though we suffer now we should be looking forward to the day we will no longer suffer. The promise of future redemption should bring us comfort in our current trials.

We need to learn to look up to Jesus in all things. Throughout the scripture people are told to look up and set their eyes upon the Lord. When Joseph was imprisoned, he kept looking up to God until God delivered him from his situation. When Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, he focused on God to save him. When David stood opposite a giant, he trusted in the Lord to deliver him. Even Jonah, a man who rebelled against God, turned to God, and found his salvation. When Paul and Silas were in shackles, imprisoned by the authorities, they sang out songs to God and God delivered them.

Jesus is trying to teach us that even when the whole world may seem to be against us, to be crumbling out from underneath us, that we should not be focused on the trials and tribulations we find ourselves in, that we shouldn't get caught up in the circumstances. Instead, when we are in these times, we should lift our heads and look to Jesus. Look to Jesus and see that even as things are in chaos around us, even though our emotions are in turmoil, that redemption is coming in Him.

Just like when Jesus came to earth on Christmas day so long ago. He came to save his people who were living in times of turmoil, people who were suffering, emotionally, financially, and spiritually under the rulership of the Roman empire. People who were condemned because of their sinful ways, and Jesus came to redeem them of their sins. He entered into this world and their lives to deliver them from the life they were living, and he will do the same for everyone of us when he comes again.

Just like the Jews of two thousand years ago, we need to acknowledge that God works on his timetable. They thought that the Messiah would appear and give them instantaneous gratification, that he would be the King that rose up against those who suppressed them. However, we need to know that God does things on His timeline not ours. He is not a genie in a bottle that grants wishes, instead he is concerned about our salvation more than gratification.

This is why here at the beginning of the Christmas season we are called to find hope in Christ as we look to God each day. Regardless of the things happening in our life,

whether they are good or bad, we are called to keep facing God, keep calling out to him and live with the recognition that he is coming to bring our eternal salvation.

### **Luke 21:34-35**

**<sup>34</sup> “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. <sup>35</sup> For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.**

To keep our eyes looking up to God we need to learn to take control of our hearts. We are warned to not let our hearts be weighed down by dissipation and drunkenness. Dissipation is not a word we see used commonly anymore. It can be summed up as an indulgence in sensual pleasures, amusements, and diversions. So, we are being warned to not be caught up in things of the flesh, like drunkenness, anxiety and worries or any form of escape that we might seek to get away from the trials and tribulations we face in this world.

How many times do we find ourselves struggling with something in life and we look for a way to escape, to make ourselves feel better? For some people this might be something like shopping, for others it might be food, or alcohol or gambling or some other form of sensory pleasure. Something that we use to distract ourselves from the realities we are facing. The truth is that the thing we use to find relief is not always the issue. The truth is that the issue is that we let these behaviours pull us away from God. Instead of trusting Him in our life, we give in to the thoughts of the chaos of the world and believe that we can find solutions or at least escapes ourselves.

There are also many people that the season around Christmas becomes a season of excess. All of the desires we have can be fulfilled; eat what you want, drink what you want, do what you want, after all it is the holidays. They indulge to excess; they do whatever their heart desires and they become weighed down by the indulgences.

Jesus is telling us that we should be cautious that this does not happen to us. It is taught in the book of Proverbs.

### **Proverbs 4:23**

**Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.**

Everything we are flows from our hearts our desires. Think about the decisions you make. There is a reason that the expression ‘follow your heart’ exists. Whether a person is Christian or not we must acknowledge that the heart is what most people follow. So, Solomon warns us that we need to protect our hearts from those things which are evil and may influence our hearts, causing us to make bad decisions.

We are called to set our eyes on Jesus and guard our hearts from those things which would draw us away from him. Throughout this season when indulgences are all around us, we need to remember to keep Christ at the center. Spending time with Him each day looking to the things above and guarding our hearts. In whatever way you can turn to God each day whether its through worship, song, bible study or just removing those things which draw you away from him.

Luke 21:36

<sup>36</sup> But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Jesus also reminds us that we need to spend time in prayer, in prayer praying for strength. We live in troubled times, in a world that is rapidly falling away from everything that a Christian believes. We no longer know who we can trust, the media has become political. False teachers and false prophets are becoming more and more bold in the proclamations and drawing many to them. The ways of the world are seeping their ways into Christian faith.

For many this causes a sense of anxiety, a sense of loss of direction. This exists because we have placed our faith and hope in those things. This is the problem; we should not be placing hope and faith in anything on this planet. Instead, we should be placing our hope and faith in God.

When we turn to God in prayer, we are shown His blessings in our life. He gives us hope and comfort. Even when life is filled with struggles, and we feel overwhelmed, God will bless us. He may bless us by bringing us to a new place, introducing us to new people or even exposing us to a new church. He blesses us with the people He brings into our lives who share our faith and help carry us through troubled times, sharing our burden and comforting our sorrows. He blesses us because of his grace, freely given, onto those who love and faithfully follow him. What an incredible gift it is that we receive from our Lord.

He has also given us God’s church, that is what this is, this is not a man-made church, this is God’s church which is filled with God’s people. God has blessed everyone here today, everyone who has been here in the past and all who will come in the future. The church is a place where God’s people can find strength and comfort to face everything in life. All believers are part of God’s church, regardless of denominations. Romans tells us what we can expect from God’s church.

**Romans 12:15-18**

**<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your**

**own sight. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.**

God's people are called to share when they rejoice! Share when they weep! To live in harmony with one another. To live in fellowship and in the community. This is what the church is called to be.

God has given us through his church a place where we can seek help without judgement. A place where we can turn to a fellow believer and ask for their ear. A place where we can join together in prayer. God blesses those who believe in him, even if they only have a little spark of belief, by inviting them into his home and making them part of the family. What an incredible gift he has given us. Regardless of how we may feel our lives have spun out of control he has given any who believe in him hope and comfort in his church.

Even though Jesus was speaking about the Second coming, the end of days, his lesson is applicable to us everyday.

- Whatever is going on in our lives, we need to not be drawn away by the things of this world. We should be looking to Jesus, keeping our eyes on Jesus, because redemption is coming for all.
- Whatever is going on in our lives, we need to guard our hearts and not let anything come between us and Jesus. We need to not give into the indulgences of the flesh and instead turn to God for the strength we need to overcome those things which draw us away.
- Whatever is going on in our lives, we need to pray for strength. God will provide a way through whatever comes into our lives. He gave us the church to support one another, and we need to be part of it, in fellowship with other believers and bringing the Glory of God's name to those who are still seeking.

Keep looking up. Keep your heart guarded. Keep praying. Seems simple enough. Know that we walk together in faith, we will support one another as we are tested, we will comfort one another through loss, and we will rejoice with one another in victory.

God has given us Hope. In every situation we have Hope because he is always with us.

O merciful God,  
 you sent your eternal Word  
 to take on human nature  
 in the womb of the virgin Mary.  
 Grant that your chosen people  
 may put off fleshly desires,  
 to prepare their hearts  
 for the visitation of your dear Son,

Jesus Christ our Lord,  
 who lives and reigns with you  
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
 forever and ever.  
**Amen.**

### **Invitation to Offering**

We make our offering today with hopeful hearts,  
 trusting that the Holy One  
 who comes to us will bless our gifts  
 and our lives,  
 to make us signs of hope  
 in the world God loves.

### **Offering Hymn# 309: "Pass It On"**

It only takes a spark to get a fire going,

And soon all those around can warm up to its glowing;  
 That's how it is with God's love, Once you've experienced it:  
 You spread His love to ev'ryone You want to pass it on.

What a wondrous time is spring-- When all the trees are budding,  
 The birds begin to sing, The flowers start their blooming;  
 That's how it is with God's love, Once you've experienced it:  
 You want to sing, It's fresh like spring, You want to pass it on.

### **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](mailto: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

*Holy and Righteous God,  
we offer our gifts with humble hearts,  
knowing the need in your world is great  
and our gifts alone will never fill that need.  
We offer our gifts in hope that you will bless them  
and use them to help fulfil your purpose revealed in Jesus Christ,  
Saviour of us all. Amen.*

### Closing Hymn# 4: "How Great Thou Art"

Oh Lord, my God  
When I, in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart  
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration  
And then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art

### Pastoral Prayer

O Spirit of Hope,  
When the world is confusing and bleak,  
you pierce the despair with your Word,  
and renew our vision of God's possibilities for our lives.  
Thank you for lessons learned,  
for changes of heart,  
for new discoveries made and hope restored,  
even as the pandemic stretches on.  
As the world around us prepares for the long, cold sleep of winter,  
we pray for those who feel the burden of loneliness and isolation.  
We remember those without homes to shelter in,

and those forced to leave their homes  
through conflict, natural disaster, or political upheaval.

O God of Peace,  
There is strife and disagreement all around us these days,  
sometimes in our own lives and relationships,  
and in many nations and neighbourhoods in the news.  
We pray for places where violence and cruelty appear to win the day,  
thinking especially of Afghanistan and Haiti,  
and situations closer to home that we carry on our hearts.

O Creator of Joy,  
We give you thanks for moments of joy and celebration in our lives,  
for pleasure given and received,  
for quiet times of reflection and conversation,  
and for the many ways that allow us to keep in contact with those we love.  
As the days grow colder,  
we remember those who feel bitter while others rejoice,  
those who grieve the loss of loved ones,  
and those who face a bleak winter for any reason.

O Love divine made flesh in Christ,  
You call us into communion with you and community with one another.  
We pray for your church and our congregation,  
that love will guide all your people as we plan for our life and mission.  
We remember before you our families, whether we are close or estranged;  
for our friends, whether nearby or far away.

## **Benediction**

Isaiah says,  
“The root of Jesse shall come,  
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”  
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.