

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, February 13th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Blessings and Woes
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
Luke 6:17-26

Welcome

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Announcements

Church Communication

If you are not on the churches email list or following on Facebook, please join up on **Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/pg/St-Andrews-Presbyterian-Church-in-Perth-101446979060932/posts/> and/or send us an **email** standrewsperth@gmail.com and get added to the email list. I will be communicating out things regularly on both platforms.

Confirmation Class.

Confirmation Class will start Monday Feb 21st at 7pm

Membership Class.

Will start the third week of Feb. on Saturday 19th at 9:30 am

Youth Group

Starts Friday Feb 18th at 4 pm

Bible Studies!

Esther on Mondays Contact Walter if interested.

James on Wednesdays here at the church 8 am, 12 pm, & 7pm and Thursdays by Zoom at 7 pm

Prayers for the people

We need someone to take charge of prayers for the people. Reaching out and updating the prayer list, as well as finding someone to share the prayers during our service
If you are interested, please let Fabiola or me know.

Serve the Church

If you are looking to volunteer in any other way:

Outreach and evangelism talk to Edgar DePaz

Education talk to Tressa Oliver

Worship talk to Melissa Valiquette

Call to Worship

Sing to the Lord a new song!

Let us make melody before our God!

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

Let us praise God's holy name together.

How good it is to sing praises to our God;

For God is gracious and steadfast in mercy.

A song of praise is always fitting,

For God heals the broken hearted and binds up our wounds.

Prayer of Adoration

God of majesty and mystery,
we come before you in wonder and humility.
Source of all that is, you are beyond our imagining,
astonishing us with the detail and designs within your creation.
Word of hope and healing,
you touch our lives with truth and tenderness,
revealing our need and our gift.
Spirit of purpose and possibility,
you move within us when we least expect it,
awakening our gifts, urging us to respond.
Receive our praise and prayer this day,
and prepare us to receive your Word in its wisdom and warning,
for we come to you through Christ our Lord,
trusting in his grace and truth.

Opening Hymn # 66: “To God Be the Glory” (V 1,3)

To God be the glory - great things He hath done!
 So loved He the world that he gave us His Son,
 Who yielded His life an atonement for sin
 And opened the Life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord,
 Let the earth hear His voice!
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
 Let the people rejoice!
 O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
 And give Him the glory - great things He hath done!

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
 And great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son;
 But purer and higher and greater will be
 Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. [Refrain]

Call to Confession

When we gather to praise God,
 we remember that we are people
 who have preferred our wills to his.
 Accepting his power to become new persons in Christ,
 let us confess our sin before God and one another.

Prayer of Confession

**God of life and love,
 at this season of the year our hearts are grateful
 for all the love which touches our lives.
 Still we confess that we are not always shining examples of the love we long for.
 Forgive us those times when we failed to keep our word
 and disappointed those who love us.
 Forgive us when we gave into our tempers and temptations
 and disappointed your hopes for us.
 Renew and remake us through the grace of your Son, Jesus,
 your love made flesh.**

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

Jeremiah 17:5-10

⁵ Thus says the LORD:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man
and makes flesh his strength,
whose heart turns away from the LORD.

**⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see any good come.
He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.**

⁷ “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.

**⁸ He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.”**

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;

who can understand it?

**¹⁰ "I the LORD search the heart
and test the mind,
to give every man according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his deeds."**

Music Ministry: "On Eagle's Wings" by Senior Choir

Prayer for illumination

God, you are the source of wisdom and understanding for us.
In the midst of all that distracts us, help us listen in stillness.
In the midst of competing voices, may we hear your Word for our lives and our times.
By your Spirit, help us discern Jesus' call to follow him. Amen.

Scripture

Luke 6:17-26

Jesus Ministers to a Great Multitude

¹⁷ And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

The Beatitudes

²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

²² "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

Jesus Pronounces Woes

²⁴ "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

²⁶ **“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.**

Children’s Hymn # 357: “Jesus Loves Even Me” (V 1,3)

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

In the scripture today Jesus uses the word ‘woe’. What does this mean? What is a ‘Woe’. Well, it is a warning against something that can cause us harm, or trouble. It is a warning against something that might trap us if we become too focused on it.

Jesus starts by warning people that if they focus too much on money that they can become trapped by their desire for more and more money. Instead of using their money for things that will help others and help God’s kingdom, they will use their money to buy themselves things they want, they desire, like fancy bags, or clothes, or computers or cars.

They will become so focused on these things that they will start giving less and less and become trapped in their own greed. They will only be focused on getting the things they want without thinking about how that desire might impact the people around them. They will start becoming so focused on the money that they will start to make the pursuit of wealth their only focus in life and start to give up God.

Jesus is warning us of all the traps this world has for us, we can get trapped in all kinds of false idols. Money, food, entertainment, fame, and popularity. These are all things which some people make their whole life about. People can get so focused on a show they can lose track of the world around them; they will seek to own things related to the show, seek to live like the people in the show and lose track of the important things in life like family, helping others and God. The same thing can happen with hobbies. Hobbies can become such a focus we lose track of ourselves and start to dedicate all of our time and energy to our hobbies instead of to other things which are important in our lives. People can focus too much on brand clothes, electronics, cars, houses all things which are nice, but can cause us to lose focus on the importance of God in our lives.

People can easily be trapped by social media, placing way too much value on likes and comments and views. Dedicating too much time and energy to the pursuit of popularity and giving up God, family, and friends. People can become so focused on being popular that they give up the ways of God, that they ignore the scripture because they want to be liked by the world.

These are the dangers, the 'woes' that Jesus is warning all of us about today. The things which can trap us, the things which we can want more than anything else in this life. He warns us that when we care too much about the world, we live in we begin to lose focus on the importance of God's word and our relationship with Him in our lives.

Let us pray that we will not fall into these traps in our lives,

Wonderful Father,

We pray that you would send your Holy Spirit to be with us each day of our lives, opening our eyes to the things in our life which might trap us, which might draw us away from you. We pray that you would strengthen us in our faith and our desire to study and learn about you Lord. Continue to be at work in each of us and guide us to spend time in prayer and praise every day. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Sermon

How do we define ourselves? What defines who we are? Some people define themselves by the way they look or the color of their hair. Some people define themselves by the career they have chosen. Some people might define themselves by their social status, or social media presence. Some might define themselves by the car they drive, the clothes they wear or the house they live in! But what defines you? Which one would you choose if you had to pick one way of defining to the world who you are, the all-encompassing answer?

Jesus when he entered into the land of Tyre and Sydon changed the way people were defined. People from all over the region came to find him, sought him out because of his teaching and his ability to heal. People who were defined by their diseases like lepers and blindmen were healed and had their way of life changed, they were able to redefine themselves because of Jesus Christ and his work in their lives. People who were afflicted by illness and demons had their lives radically altered by the power of Christ and were able to redefine themselves in a society that had cast them out. Those who had lived a life of corruptness and sin, like the tax collectors and prostitutes were able to change the way they lived after accepting the words of Christ into their lives and seeking out forgiveness and repenting and turning away from their life of sin, into a new redefined life in Christ. Jesus was moving through the land helping people redefine who they were through the powers of his healing and his word.

So how would you define yourself? Jesus changed the way every one of these people defined themselves. Has he changed the way you define yourself? I have met addicts that he definitely has changed the way they define themselves, or adulterers, or thieves or murderers. We have all been fortunate enough in this world to hear those amazing testimonial stories of change and redefinition in Christ that are shared among the faithful as testimony. Many would say they have been blessed.

What is a blessing? When you pray for God's blessing in your life, what is it you pray for? What do you picture in your life, how does it change when you consider yourself or someone else blessed by God? How does the definition of who someone is change when they are blessed?

Bless is an interesting word. I am sure that even here in this congregation we have multiple ideas of what it means to be blessed by God. We always pray for blessings, for ourselves, for others we know and even for those we do not know. Yet the meaning of what it means to be blessed is often based on the worldly understanding of what it means to be fortunate in this world and not defined by the true blessings of God and His kingdom.

That is what Christ is talking about in the beatitudes, he is talking about what it means to be blessed by God. In Luke we get the blessing and the woes. A look at what is considered blessed in the kingdom of Heaven and a warning against what can lead us away from eternal glory.

There are two ways for us to measure the blessings and woes in our lives. We can either use the worldly measures or the Godly measures. The scripture today is meant to make us look at how we define ourselves, look at which measurement of blessing and woe we adopt when we look at our own lives and the lives of those around us. It makes us ask, 'Are we of the world or of God when we consider the blessings and woes in our lives?'

Jesus has only one measure, but the world has many ways to measure blessings and woes. Many of the Jews of Jesus's time believed that blessings were wealth, health, and power. I believe that many Christians in the modern world believe the same, this is the reason that the prosperity Gospel is so popular.

By the world's measurements, if you are rich, successful in your career, happy in your life, popular, beautiful, healthy that means you are blessed by God. On the other hand, if you are one of the poor, miserable, ugly, rejected, sick or diseased that means you or perhaps someone in your family has displeased God. By the world's understanding, blessings are all things which we can tangibly see and comprehend as beneficial. Blessings are things like possessions, independence, fame and power, all things that are defined by the world we live in as things to pursue, things to desire and things to sacrifice to obtain.

When Jesus defines blessings though he does so very differently from the world. In fact, he does show by referring to the blessing almost in opposite of what the world considers being blessed. Jesus refers to being blessed with a focus on the Kingdom of God. Blessed to Jesus are the ones who have submitted themselves to living their lives under God's rule, submitting themselves to his word. Blessings are not about the conditions in which they are currently living their lives, being blessed is knowing that regardless of the life you are currently living that God's rules all and that they are his child. If you trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, you are blessed. If all you know and understand are the ways of the world, then that is all you have, fleeting happiness that is all in vain. Moreover, no matter how successful you are in this world, no matter how much wealth, power, and fame you acquire, if you do not trust in Christ, you are not blessed.

We are inundated by the worldly understanding of what it means to be blessed and at times we are also led astray into believing that to have any of the things of this world that we are not blessed. Jesus does not say this! Jesus never says that you need to be poor or persecuted or hated in this world to be blessed. Being lesser in this world is not the single prerequisite to being more in the kingdom of God, even though some like to simplify it that way. Jesus came to all, without any regard for our standing in this world. You are not blessed just because of your poorness, your hunger, your crying or because people hate you. The world is filled with poor, hungry, crying and hated that are not blessed, people who do not and at no point in their life will ever come to Jesus, who will never submit themselves to the reign of God in all aspects of their lives. There are many people in this world who are simply angry and frustrated because by worldly standards they are falling short and they feel anger and despair, and they are responding to their worldly desires not the blessings of God.

Jesus is telling those who hear his word that if by the worldly definition of blessings, you are poor, you are hungry, you are crying or hated, it does not mean that you are not blessed in the Kingdom of Heaven. The judgement of the world is not how we are meant to determine who is or is not blessed. Jesus is telling all that just because you have

things now does not mean they are yours for all of eternity. If you define yourself by the things of this world, if the things which you consider blessing are all worldly in nature, then that is all you will ever have. Woe to those people, woe to them, because all of those things; the richness, the foods the laughter and the popularity, those things which people loves to define themselves by, those things which the world considers blessings, those things which the worldly focus on and idolize, they all do not last. Richness does not last forever, poverty will come. Fullness fades back into hunger. Laughter often is used to cover up crying and popularity will turn into hatred. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us all of the things of this world are in vain, they have no deeper meaning, they serve no greater purpose, they may give us momentary pleasure, but it will never last. They are woes to those who chase them.

If you let the world define who we are, if the world's standards become the cornerstone that we build our life upon it is destined to crumble. This is the trouble with sin in our lives. We are bent to seek out the worldly. We seek out power and fame and beauty and we idolize these things. Why is it that an actor can get paid a million dollars or more a year, yet a schoolteacher makes fifty thousand, or an athlete can make a hundred thousand dollars a year and a nurse has to struggle to pay back loans and their mortgage. We have placed our idols, they are the actors and athletes, they are the ones we consider blessed. The ones who have it all, not the ones who serve the greater good of mankind.

When we idolize these things the wealth, the power, the fame, we define ourselves by those things and we never measure up to them. We are constantly striving for them and sacrificing in the wrongs places in an attempt to gain the things of this world. When we let our lack of fame, money, power, looks become they way we define ourselves we fall into despair and hopelessness. Jesus is telling us that if we do that, we have it wrong, if we are following Christ, if we trust in him as our Lord and Savior the things of this world are fleeting and have no greater purpose.

Luke 6:22 & 26

²² "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!"

²⁶ "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."

This is the pairing that impacts all Christians today, the blessing and the woe which are the most difficult for many of us to wrestle with in our lives. People adjust to their level of wealth, people adjust to their conditions of life and learn to make do with what they have. However, the worldly judgement of mankind has a strong influence on who we are and how we behave.

We all want to be liked, we want to be popular, or at least not unpopular. Being the outcast, the person on the fringe is difficult. Even more so now that we live in a world where social media is so prevalent. We want people to speak well of us, we want to have a good reputation and to have our name respected. Yes, in part because it is related to all those other worldly things that are considered blessings, when our reputation is good it is easier to obtain wealth and power and happiness, but also because it hurts more when we are unliked, it is often easier to be hungry than to have people say bad things about us in our presence.

So, we look for ways to ensure people speak well of us in the world. This means we often live different lives depending on where we are at the time. At work we have our work persona, at home we have our family persona, with our friends we have a friend's persona, online our online persona. We try to be the person that we think the world will like. Just like a first date, we want to be desired, even if it means covering up who we are.

When we do this, we are idolizing the world's opinion of us, we are placing what the world thinks of us over the truth of Christ in us. We are defining who we are by the way other people think about us!

Jesus tells us here and in many other places in scripture that the world's values and the values of heaven do not align. He warns that to be his follower is not an easy path, the path is narrow, the gate hard to find and even that many who claim to follow him will be unknown to him when they stand in front of the White Throne on judgement day.

This is the woe he gives to all Christians. When the world speaks well of you be cautious. When the world speaks well of you is it because you have fallen to an understanding of faith like that of the false prophets. When the world speaks well of you have you sacrificed a vital part of your faith just to ensure that they world does not cast you out?

Does the world speak well about you because they do not know of your faith? Maybe you hide your faith because you do not want to be judged! We are called to be Christians in all we do, all we say and everywhere we go, when we hide our faith are we identifying ourselves with the world or with Christ. How can we be fishers of men, casting out the gospel when no one knows we are Christian?

Does the world speak well of you because you go along with its ways? When we fail to live up to the scripture, when we seek to find ways to argue that the world is right, and the Bible needs to change are we identifying ourselves with the world or with God? Woe to the ones who place worldly acceptance over biblical truths.

Instead, Jesus tells us we are blessed when because of the Son of Man, because of our faith in Christ as our Lord and our Saviour, because of our faith following of his biblical teachings we are hated, reviled, spurned.

When we place adherence to God's truths ahead of worldly law, we can expect to be unpopular. The world sets its standard by its sin, by the desires of the flesh. We are called to live our lives in obedience to God's word, repenting and turning away from the sins of the flesh. When you tell someone that something they find pleasure in, something they define themselves by is a sin, they will lash out against you. They will seek to cast you out, push you away and make you stop. They will hate you, revile you can scorn your name.

Yet this is a blessing! Their anger at you, their speaking out against you, their trying to force you into insignificance is a blessing, not in this lifetime, but in the eternal that will follow. When the world seeks to humiliate you publicly, to shame you, to cancel you because of your faith, because of your trust in God and your obedience to his word you are not cursed, you are blessed for all of eternity and in that you should find great joy.

Blessings and woes. We have it all wrong when we look at our lives from a worldly perspective. We find ourselves lacking in so many ways when we compare ourselves to the people that the world places on pedestals, the people the world idolizes. We will never have vast wealth like Bill Gates or Elon Musk, nor the fame of a Hollywood actor or actress. We will not possess the beauty of a supermodel or pageant winner, or the power of a President or King.

By the worlds standards we will never be enough. You will never have enough wealth, or power, or beauty, or influence. Everyone who seeks out these things will never be satisfied with what they have, they will always be looking at the person who had more and wanting that. They will be constantly idolizing people and pushing God to the side in their pursuit of acceptance and worldly values. Woe is to them.

For those who have found Christ it is different.

They will always have enough. While the rich man of the world will always be looking at those who are richer than him and desiring their wealth, they will hoard their wealth and seek to protect it from others. The poor in Christ will look at what little they have and be thankful and share it with other who are in needs, bring the peace and hope of Christ to others in their words and their actions.

Those who are full of the pleasures of this world will constantly be craving more, seeking out more extravagant pleasures. Whether it is food, drink or lust these things all become idols of the worldly. Look at how much perversion there is in the world now, we live in a time of absurdity where those who are attracted to children are seeking acceptance and recognition as normal beings by society. Society, the whole world has become enamored with the pleasures of the flesh and seeks to make them legal in the laws of man, so that they can justify their current idols and seek out the next. Yet for

those who find their pleasure in God's word there is more than enough. They find happiness in the simple joys of praise, worship, and fellowship.

For those who have the power, the wealth, and the influence in this world it is a time of great pleasure. They laugh at those under them, the lord over them and mock them, flaunting the laws of society and doing as they will. They are living their life to the fullest here on Earth. Yet when judgement comes, they will be the ones weeping and gnashing their teeth as they are cast into the lake of fire while those who they persecuted, ridiculed, scorned, and mocked for their faith will be joyfully taken into eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven

Woe to those who seek the acceptance of the world over the obedience of God's word.

So how do you define yourself? How are you blessed? It is easy to get caught up in the ways of the world, in the desires of the flesh. It is easy to get our feelings involved. We get so overwhelmed by the ways of the world, so inundated by the world viewpoint that we look at our life circumstances and everything is skewed. Our feelings, our false sensitivities, or misperceptions of what should be valued can be devastating. Our circumstances in life might be difficult, they might be easy; we might be poor or rich or somewhere in between; we could be living a life of luxury, or the life of a beggar and it does not matter. We need to set aside the circumstances of this life, set aside the world's opinion of us, set aside our own opinion of ourselves, and look at how God sees us. We need to be faithful to Christ, obedient to his teachings and know that our blessings lie in him and not in the vanity of this life.

If we look upon how the world views us to guide our lives it might seem good for a while, it might seem like all you dreamed of, but it is fleeting. Instead, we need to turn our eyes to Jesus, look full into his face and know the love of Christ for God's Children, and that the eternal blessings and joy we will have in His Kingdom far outweigh the pains and pleasures of this life.

Let us Pray,

Give Us Faith to Overcome Our Weakness

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 in your special love and mercy
 you gave us your Son
 who became truly human
 and died on the cross for us.
 Pour your Holy Spirit into our hearts
 that we may put all our trust in him,
 just as the Centurion believed
 that Christ would help his sick servant,

may we be assured
of the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life.
We have your Word:
“Whoever believes in me will never see death.”
Dear Father in heaven,
grant that we may believe with no doubts in our hearts,
and remain in the faith until our last hour.

Almighty and eternal God,
mercifully look on our weaknesses,
and in all dangers and needs
defend us with your power against our enemies;
through Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Epiphany 3.

Music Ministry: “He Giveth More Grace” by Glenda Gould

Invitation to Offering

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 If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it 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

God, you are the Source of our lives. From you, all loving kindness, justice, and mercy flow.

Bless these gifts so that acts of kindness, justice and mercy may flow through them, too.
 And bless our lives so our words and actions show your Spirit at work in us and through us,
 in the name of Jesus Christ, our friend and Saviour. Amen.

Closing Hymn # 493: “It Is Well With My Soul” (V 1,3)

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say,
 “It is well, it is well with my soul!”

It is well with my soul!
 It is well, it is well with my soul!

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious
 thought—
 My sin, not in part, but the whole,
 Is nailed to His Cross, and I bear it no more;
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

Pastoral Prayer

God of mystery and mercy,
 We come before you today carrying hopes and dreams,
 the burdens and blessings of our lives.
 We bring all that is on our hearts and minds to you,
 seeking your comfort and strength,
 listening for your guidance,
 grateful that you hear us when we pray.

God of life and love,
 We give you thanks that you engage us whenever we need you,
 in the midst of challenge and uncertainty.
 We pray today for all those who are fearful about their future,
 and for all who wrestle with challenges at work or at home.
 Help us face our fears and our challenges, sure of your steadfast love:

God of hope and healing,
 In Jesus Christ you confronted demons that trouble our minds
 and the pain and illness which can weigh us down.

We pray today for all those who are facing health concerns,
and for all who care for the suffering and those in need support.
Surround each one with your steadfast love.

God of peace and promise,
when we wrestle with any burden,
your Spirit prays within us with sighs too deep for words.
Today we pray for all those whose burdens seem too heavy to bear:
for the victims of violence or disaster, for their friends and families...
For those caught in despair and poverty in our own neighborhoods
and in the forgotten corners of your world.
Renew the strength of all facing realities beyond their control with your steadfast love.

Almighty Father, receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and equip us to do your
will in this world.
We pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen

Benediction

The grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,
the Holy Spirit keep you
now and forevermore.