

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 20th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Lessons in Lent - Time
Third Sunday in Lent
Luke 13:1-9**

Welcome

Announcements

Esther viewing

Sunday March 27th at 3pm in the sanctuary.
Produced by Sight & Sound in Lancaster
Snacks and drinks at the intermission downstairs.

Bible Studies

The next bible study on Mondays will be the book of Hebrews. March 28th – Sign up at the back
James will finish in a few weeks. The next study will be the book Revelation.

Sermons by Phone

A new way to connect with the weekly service.
Due some challenges we had to go with a toll-free number, hopefully that means we can share it even further with friends and family all over.
1-833-270-9944

Bake sale at Perth Maple festival

April 30th is the Perth Maple festival
We will be having a bake sale
Proceeds from the bake sale will go to support the Sermons by phone
If you can help out with sales or sale items let us know

Refreshing of Church Directory

I am still new and in need to an up-to-date Church Directory
We will be having families fill out a new Church Directory information sheet soon.

Snacks for youth group

If you are willing to provide snacks for the 4:00pm youth group meetings on Friday please send us an email and let us know. We are in the process of organizing a list, so people do not feel burdened in doing so.

Call to Worship

Seek the Lord while God may be found. Call upon God who is near.
We will return to the Lord our God.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts. God's ways are not our ways.
We come, seeking new paths to follow.

As the heavens are higher than the earth so are God's ways higher than ours.
We come as pilgrims on the journey, praising God along the way.

Prayer of Adoration

God, our Creator and Sustainer,
 in you we live and move and have our being.
 In your depths we find meaning; in your heights we find light and joy.
 You are the source of peace and hope for all who turn to you.
 You alone have been our help and our guide;
 you give us strength and courage when we face challenges.
 In you we find rest and welcome along the way.
 We praise you, O God, for your steadfast love.
 Draw near to us once more in this time of worship.
 Reveal your purposes for us
 and prepare us for the days ahead
 so that our lives may witness to your mercy and grace
 as we follow Our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

Opening Hymn # 366: "I Surrender All" (V 1, 4)

All to Jesus I surrender
 All to Him I freely give
 I will ever love and trust Him
 In His presence daily live

Refrain:
 I surrender all
 I surrender all
 All to Thee

My blessed Savior
I surrender all

All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me. [Refrain]

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

**God of grace and mercy,
We confess that our thoughts are so often not your thoughts;
our way are rarely your ways.
Our tempers are short and we fail to act with kindness.
Our confidence is weak and we treat others without respect.
Our faith falters and we lose track of you.
Forgive the many ways we fail you,
and inspire us to follow you more faithfully.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ –
And Christ died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us.
In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. By Christ's mercy, we can make a fresh start following him.

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

Question 8. Since there is only one God, why do we speak of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit?

We believe in one, true, eternal God, as witnessed to in scripture and in the earliest Christian confessions. This one God is revealed as eternally Father, Son and Holy Spirit, creating, rescuing and guiding us. God is eternal Trinity, three in one, one in three, equal in power and majesty.

Deut 6:4, Mt 28:19, 2 Cor 13:13

Question 9. Each of the three parts of the creed begins with the words, “I believe.” What does it mean to believe?

Belief or faith is a wholehearted trust in God, created in us by the Holy Spirit through hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. It involves confessing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, repenting of our sin, and resolving by the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. Faith is nurtured and renewed by worship, hearing the proclaimed Word, celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, prayer and the reading of scripture.

Ps 56:4, Isa 26:4, 1 Cor 12:3, Rom 10:17

Question 10. Does faith exclude a I doubt?

Faith is often assailed by doubts and anxieties. Like the man who came to Jesus and sought healing for his son, we also say, “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.” The strength of our faith may vary but we are assured by Jesus that if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will grow and increase through communion with him, on whom faith depends from start to finish.

Mt 28:17, Mk 9:24, Lk 17:5, Heb 12:3

Music Ministry: “Grace Us, O Lord” by Choir

Prayer for illumination (Edgar)

O God, we turn to the Scripture to seek your wisdom and your truth.
Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to receive your Word for our lives and our times. Equip us to follow Jesus Christ, your Living Word.

Scripture

Luke 13:1-9

13 There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered them, “Do

you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

⁶ And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ ⁸ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Children’s Hymn # 88: “Fairest Lord Jesus” (V 1, 4)

Fairest Lord Jesus,
ruler of all nature,
O thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cherish,
Thee will I honor,
thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.

Beautiful Savior!
Lord of all the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor,
praise, adoration,
now and forevermore be thine. Amen.

Children’s Lesson

In the scripture today Jesus speaks about a Fig tree. While many of us might not have every seen a fig tree we are all familiar with the idea of a tree or plant that produces fruit.

I am sure that many people here have gone apple picking or to a strawberry, blueberry or some other type of berry picking place at some point in their life.

This is usually a fun time, you wander around in nature, experiencing all the beauty of this world that God created. You take your time and pick fruit from the tree, bush, or plant that you think looks delicious. I am sure at times sampling it just to make sure that it tastes as sweet as you think it is going to.

Once you have picked all the fruit you desire you get to pay for it and then take it home where it is usually transformed from its state of being fruit into a new state, desert!

What Jesus is talking about today is what would happen if that tree, bush, or plant you went to pick the delicious morsel from never produced any delicious morsels.

Could you imagine going apple picking at an apple farm, and there was not a single apple on the trees? How about strawberry picking and there are no strawberries? I don't think you would every go back to that place, it would be a waste of time.

Imagine how upset you would be after driving out there, thinking about how good that fruit will taste, about the desert you could make when you got home and could share with your loved ones and there was nothing there.

This is how God thinks about our faith. He loves when he sees that we have faith, he loves when we come to him and praise him and worship him. He loves when we pray to him and tell others about him.

God loves to come to us and see all the fruit of the spirit active in our lives.

But what about when we have no fruit of the spirit. Jesus is warning the people listening that God is looking for the fruit of the spirit, he wants to see it, he wants us to share it.

Like the fig tree in the parable, we are only given our time here on earth to do this. So, Jesus is telling us that we should find out about God now, while we can, so that we can produce the fruit of the spirit in our lives.

Let us Pray,

Loving father, we pray that you would be active in us. Helping us to learn more about you from our families, friends and brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray that you would help us learn to be fruitful in our lives, producing the things which are pleasing to you in everything we do. In Jesus's name we pray,
Amen.

Sermon

Over the first two weeks of lent we have reflected on temptation and how we resist its influence in our lives and on where our citizenship lies. Both critical aspects of our faith,

we are constantly being faced with the temptations of the world and every choice we make in life shows others and ourselves whether we are citizens of Heaven or citizens of the world first.

Lent is a season we reflect on these things; we reflect on the position that God has in our lives. Is it God that we turn to first when we face temptation? Is it God's will and Word that we base our decisions off in our daily lives, or are we pursuing our own desires?

These are complex questions, and one of the reasons they are brought up at lent is because every Christian struggles with them! Every Christian has a struggle with some form of temptation, every Christian struggles with placing the things of this world against the kingdom of heaven.

In today's scripture we are told one of the reasons why that struggle we go through is so important. Why this Lenten season is critical in our lives.

Time!

In today's scripture Jesus is teaching about the call to repent and the importance of it in our lives, not just for our salvation, but also because of the realities of the fragility of human life. The reality of the world we live in is that once you are born then only really inevitability is death. You will die, the question is not if you will die it is when you will die.

We need to keep this in our hearts and minds and know that the call to turn to Christ, that call to be a citizen of Heaven is prevalent here and now, not tomorrow, not next week, not next year. Today, at this very moment, because we are not the ones who get to determine our future.

In the world right now there are people, innocent people dying in war, there are people dying of disease and famine, there are those who are victims of senseless crimes and people who will have their lives taken because of addiction, there are also those who will lose their life due to an accident that could not be foreseen or prevented.

The question we all ask is why? Why did they have to die? Why did that take place? What was the cause, who is to blame? The world will do a thorough investigation and come up with a worldly answer to many of these questions, and still sometimes they cannot answer all of them, especially when death is accidental.

My question is how many of them were ready to go to God, to meet the Lord? How many people with die in the world today without knowing eternal salvation? Why did they have to die today? They are people no different than anyone else, so why was today their day to die?

This is what Jesus is teaching today. Our day will come, and we better be ready when it does. Death in the world should serve as a reminder to all of us that we are called to repent, called to live as citizens of heaven every day of our lives.

In both verses 3 and 5 Jesus says, **“No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”** Repent, repent from the ways of this world or perish for all of eternity.

Jesus has been teaching people who come to him about the kingdom of heaven and what it means to be a follower of his throughout chapters 11 and 12. Explaining what it means to be a citizen of heaven here on earth, explaining what it means to love God first and your fellow man second.

Then at the beginning of today’s scripture he is approached by a group of people who share with him the tragedy that took place at the temple. About a group of Galileans, who had been killed at the temple and had their blood shed along with that of the sacrifices for sin they had been making.

For some unknown reason, Pilate had ordered that a group of Galileans, we don’t know how many, had been executed while performing sacrifices. Passover was a time of political unrest in the area, and it was not uncommon for the Romans and Jews to get into conflict with one another during the season. Jewish Patriotism ran high during Passover and rebellious uprising would occur, which were then suppressed by the Roman authorities in whatever manner they thought would be most effective.

These people who brought the news to Jesus were likely trying to get him to rise up against the Roman authorities, to be the Messiah that many of the Jew’s thought would lead them in a rebellion against Rome.

But Jesus takes this opportunity to give those present a different lesson. One that is much more important than who it is that is ruling over them in this world. He doesn’t need his followers focused on religious rights or the limits of political power in the world. He needs them focused on the realities of death and eternity.

For this reason, he questions them, **‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?’**. There was a prevalent Jewish belief at that time that bad people have bad things happen to them and good people have good things happen to them. Perhaps it was a belief that was not just prevalent at Jesus’s time. I am pretty sure it is still a commonly held belief in the world today.

Jesus is taking the focus off the events of their death, the tragedy of what has happened to them and is instead bring the focus on death itself.

Death is inevitable, it can occur for a multitude of reasons, and Jesus wants them to not be focused on the things of this world. He does not want them focused on the perceived political or religious injustice that is occurring, he wants them focused on the reality that life ended for those people, their time on earth is done and their eternal salvation is determined.

This is so much more important than political rights or religious rights, this should be a basic concern of every Christian. When someone dies their eternal fate is set.

Jesus said, **'No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.'** These Galileans died, plain and simple, their time on earth had finished. It was not because of their lives of sin, in fact they were in the process of atonement, they were not bad people being punished.

The fact that they were killed for political or religious reasons did not matter, that is an earthly issue, the more critical issue was did they repent their sinful nature? Had they turned to God as their saviour, because at that moment, their eternity was finalized and there were no more chances to say I will come to Christ fully later when I have already had the things I want from this world.

To drive home his point Jesus speaks of another example of the frailty of human life.

Luke 3:4

⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?

People lose their lives for many reasons. The example of the Galileans covers one of the most common, worldly issue, conflict because of politics and religion. Wars and conflicts around power, wealth, and status. These have claimed the lives of people for all time, and will until the end of time, when war is released upon the world in the book of revelation.

But what about natural disasters. In Siloam, the southeastern corner of the city of Jerusalem a tower had collapsed and claimed the lives of 18 people. Did this occur because of the way that they were living? Once again, he is pushing the question not to get people to consider the way in which death occurred but to focus on death itself. Too often when we read of natural disaster we begin to think, why did that happen to them, what had they done to deserve that. I have heard people comment on natural disasters saying it is God punishing the guilty.

But just like deaths in war zones, we know that when people die in natural disasters there are often innocent people as well, so the theory of God's punishment is pointless.

Think of a car accident, slippery road conditions, vehicular malfunctions, drugs, and alcohol, all of these are reasons for a vehicle to lose control and crash, often ending in serious injury or death. We can do an investigation and find someone to blame, we can blame the roads, the vehicle, the drugs, the other driver. Some will even blame God or the devil.

Does it matter who we blame to the one who is dead? To the one who is dead their eternal fate is sealed, it does not matter if we blame God, the devil, or some man-made idea. It does not change the fact they are dead or that all of eternity is decided for them at that instant.

Jesus is telling those present that when these things occur, when deaths happen for worldly reasons, we should not be seeking to explain the death, to justify it or condemn it in a worldly fashion. Instead, we should be focused on the death itself, as a reminder to ourselves of our own fragile human nature.

Instead of seeking out an answer, seek out repentance. Do not become concerned chasing down the 'why did this happen' we should be focused on God and getting ourselves right with him in this word. Focused on being citizens of heaven and not citizens of the world.

We should be assured of God's love for us and as it says in Romans

Rom 8:38-39

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ 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.

Life's tragedies are calls for us to reflect and repent. They are times for us to sit down and examine our own lives, asking those questions of citizenship, asking ourselves are we acting as a citizen of this world, caught up in the ways of the world, or are we acting as a citizen of heaven focused on the things above?

When a natural disaster occurs, when a man-made disaster occurs, when political or religious conflicts occur, we should not be focused on the worldly aspects, we should be focused on the spiritual.

We can assign worldly blame, worldly responsibility, worldly punishment, or praise to whoever we want, but for those who died their fate is determined. Disaster looms for people who do not see the spiritual price of these events. Life's tragedies are calls for people to repent, to understand their fragility and respond by seeking out Christ. For if

they willfully reject the Messiah and persist in worldly ways of sin, the end that they reach is final and complete.

Instead of seeking an explanation or assuming divine judgement of an event we should be seeing them as a call to personal reflection and repentance.

In a world that is filled with things beyond our control we should be praying for God hand and God's will to be done. We should be praying for everyone caught up in accidents and natural disasters or even pandemics like we have been going through. We should be praying for everyone trapped in a warzone and for everyone whose lives are impacted by the reach of worldly conquest and ideals. We should be praying that these events would serve as a reminder to people around the world of their fragility and the importance of turning to God and seeking repentance. Reminding them that the truth of eternity is determined at God's will and not their own. We should be praying that these events serve as a wake-up call for ourselves and others in the world about the truth of our eternal fates.

Now that Jesus has the crowd focused on the fragility of life and the reality of death, he proceeds to teach them of the importance of repenting without delay.

Luke 13:6-7

⁶ And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?'"

The fig tree was commonly used by teachers of the time to represent the nation of Israel. Jesus is going to teach those present of the importance of spiritual fruit in their lives. While people can have their lives come to a sudden end through political tragedy, natural disaster or accident, the path that their life was on prior to that moment are what is critical.

Throughout the bible we see a constant cycle of the nation of Israel wandering away from God's teachings into doing their own things for their own desires. This continued at the time of Jesus. There were many Jews who were not living their lives according to the teachings of the scriptures. People who had not repented from their sins and instead were just going through the rituals of a religion, rather than living a life of spiritual repentance and producing the fruit of the spirit in their lives.

People who would come to the realization between the difference in True faith and religious behavior when their lives ended and they discovered their fate for eternity.

Jesus wants us all to be on the right side of eternity, he wants all his faithful to be with him and that is why this message is delivered to those who were present that day and why it was recorded for all future followers of His in the scriptures.

Fig trees usually take three years from the time of planting to produce fruit. In this case the plantation owner had discovered that a tree had past the three-year mark and was yet to produce any fruit for harvest. So, looking upon this tree he called for it to be cut down, its life ended. In the eyes of the plantation owner this tree was sucking up the resources, the nutrients in the soil and taking up the place that another tree could use to produce something for harvest. Why should he waste anymore time or resources on this fig tree?

Interestingly, Jesus is also at the three-year point of his ministry when he gives this parable. Three years of public preaching, miracles, and teachings to which many of the Israelites had not responded with any form of spiritual fruit. Should Jesus do the same, stop being the soil and nutrients of the faith and cut down those who are not producing yet?

God is merciful and when the vinedresser intercedes the tree is given one last chance to produce fruit.

Luke13:8-9

⁸ And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'

He pleads to give it one more year, perhaps with some extra care, with some additional fertilizer, a turning of the soil, some extra nutrients, and more water, perhaps with all of these things the fig tree could produce some fruit.

This is God's grace, God's mercy for his people. Jesus knows that we can have our lives ended at any moment in a multitude of ways and he is seeking to give us the chance to come to him, to repent and change our ways while we are still capable of producing fruits of the spirit.

Like the fig tree who has just sat and absorbed for three years, Christians are instead called to be fruitful, we are not meant to just absorb the teachings of Christ. We are not called to just grow big and strong as Christians, we are called to live Christ like lives, bringing others to Christ as we live as an example of him and share our faith with others in words and deeds.

Like the tree, those of you who are members of the church have been given an extension to find ways to come to faith, to bear fruit. Here in God's house, we get the extra nutrients we need in worship, praise, bible studies, we get the extra care we need

through fellowship and other events. We are shown and taught what it means to produce fruit in our faith, and we should be seeking to imitate those people who have a deeper understanding of their Christian citizenship than we do.

We are also reminded in the final verse that we are not given all of eternity to do this. Eventually there will be a time when the tree is cut down, its life ended. So, we need to take advantage of the grace and mercy we have received from God come to repentance.

Judgement is inevitable for everyone. It comes for non-Christians, it comes from practitioners of all the different worldly religions, it comes for people who are Christian in name alone, having no fruit of their faith and it comes for fruit producing Christians.

Jesus is speaking here of the same thing that James talks of in his book, the difference between a living faith and a dead faith. Those who have a dead faith better find living faith and start producing fruit, just being a church member does not guarantee your salvation, there needs to be some evidence of the Holy Spirit being active in you if you are to be saved.

If you have no visible change in who you are, if you have no spiritual fruit then you are like that fruitless fig tree. The plantation owner would be fine having you cut down and tossed into the fire, but Jesus has asked for just one more year to see if he can help you to produce some fruit of the spirit inside you.

This parable should serve as a reminder that we do not have forever to come to Christ. We have today and this very minute to come to him, every minute we have beyond this one is a gift from God that we are given. When we here of people dying in natural and man-made disasters, when we here of people dying in accidents it should serve to remind us that judgement is not put off until we are ready to be judged, it can come at any time.

Jesus is telling everyone that the timeline in the book of Revelation has started. God is watching his vineyard closely. Judgement time will come for everyone. While that judgement may not come for us today it could come tomorrow, or 25 years from now, but it will be coming. It is only his patience, his love and his mercy that grants us the breath that we walk up with each morning.

This is why repentance and turning to God is not a tomorrow thing, it is not something we should be putting off until later in life. It should be a right now, right here thing. It does not go on the to do list, after all of the worldly things we desire. All of eternity is determined by where you are the moment that this life ends.

God is giving all of us a chance to respond to his message. To come to him fully and seek him as Lord and Savior. To turn to him and seek repentance, to see the Holy Spirit to be active in our lives, changing us from who we are into who he is calling us to be.

It is faith in Christ alone that brings us to salvation. It is faith in Christ alone that saves a sinner from an eternity of being locked away from God and opens the door to forgiveness.

It is not just coming to church and going through the motions. Being religious is not enough.

Matthew 7:21-25

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

This the warning given to the tree that is in the vineyard and not producing fruit. When judgement comes, just being a tree is not enough. You need to have done something. Faith in Christ must have some evidence in your life, it needs to be evident in who you are. We need to show a change in our heart and hands from our sinful nature into one of repentance. We need to turn from our sin and turn to Christ.

Jesus began his ministry saying,

Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

It is never too early to place your faith in Christ, to turn to him fully and repent, but soon it may be too late.

Let us pray,

Preserve Us in All Temptations

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 you sent your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
 to take on himself our flesh
 that he might overcome the devil’s tyranny
 and defend us poor sinners.
 We give you thanks for your merciful help.
 Be present with us in your grace in all temptations,
 preserve us from worldly security
 and by your Holy Spirit keep us

in your Word and your fear,
 that we may be delivered from the enemy
 and obtain eternal salvation;
 through your beloved Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Lent 3

Music Ministry: "I Must Tell Jesus" by Rob Noyes

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 (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer (Edgar)

Loving God, accept these our gifts, we pray.
 Bless them and use them to inspire peace in places of unrest,
 love in places of resentment, joy in places of fear, and hope in places of loss,
 all for the sake of Jesus Christ, our friend and Saviour. Amen

Closing Hymn # 347: "Be Still, My Soul" (V 1, 3)

Be still, my soul; the Lord is on your side;
 bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
 leave to your God to order and provide;
 in ev'ry change he faithful will remain.

Be still, my soul; your best, your heav'nly friend
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on
when we shall be forever with the Lord,
when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still my soul; when change and tears are past,
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Prayers for the People & Pastoral Prayer

God of Hope,
When the world is confusing and frustrating,
you bring light and hope.
We give you thanks for lessons learned, for changes of heart,
for fresh discoveries made, and new paths followed,
even during these months of pandemic.
We pray this day for those who are confused or afraid.
for those who feel anger or despair.

God of Peace,
there is so much conflict, hostility, and antagonism
around us and within us.
Personal relationships are often tense; the world community at odds.
We pray for understanding to prevail
in relationships at home and at work,
in our community and our country.
And we pray for diplomacy to end conflict and threat among nations

God of Joy,
we give you thanks for moments of joy and celebration in our lives,
for small pleasures given and received through times of isolation.
We remember those who feel left out or bitter,
those who are anxious or in distress.
We pray for those who face loss and hardship in these uncertain times,
and all who know sorrow and suffering,
naming before you those on our hearts this day.

God of community and compassion,
we thank you for your steadfast presence
in the face of all that brings uncertainty and worry these days.
Bless our congregation and every church that is struggling;
inspire us to consider renewed ministry and mission

after months of restricted gatherings.
Reawaken our love for one another
and our desire to worship and serve together in Jesus' name.
Sustain leaders who feel exhausted by the challenges they've faced
and renew our stewardship with gratitude for your love.

God of grace,
Receive these prayers and the unspoken prayers of our hearts.
Deepen our trust in you for the days ahead,
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction

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