

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 27th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Lessons in Lent – Where is your heart
Fourth Sunday in Lent
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Welcome

Announcements

Esther viewing

Today at 3pm in the sanctuary.
Produced by Sight & Sound in Lancaster
Snacks and drinks at the intermission downstairs.

Bible Studies

Book Hebrews starts tomorrow. March 28th – Sign up at the back.
James will finish in a few weeks. The next study will be the book of 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

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!

Thanks be to God for such great mercy.

Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Thanks be to God for new beginnings!

God has given us the ministry of reconciliation through Christ Jesus.

Together we will make a new beginning in Christ!

Let us worship God with joyful hearts, trusting God to renew us and all things.

We will lift our praises to God with hearts refreshed by grace.

Prayer of Adoration

God of Mystery and Mercy,
 we gather to worship you in humility and hope
 because we believe you have the power to change the world;
 to change the world for the better with your love.
 We gather to worship you
 trusting that no one or situation is beyond your concern,
 or your embrace.
 Such love astonishes us.
 Without your grace we cannot imagine such love.
 Inspire us with a vision of love
 which will change the world and our lives
 through the love and mercy we meet in Jesus Christ,
 your Son and our Saviour.

Opening Hymn #313: "Oh Worship The King" (V 1, 5)

Oh worship the King, all glorious above;
 oh gratefully sing God's power and God's love,
 our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
 pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
 while angels delight to hymn thee above,

thy ransomed creation, in glory ablaze,
in true adoration shall sing to thy praise.

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

**God of love and mercy,
when we pause for a moment in your presence,
the daily details of our lives press in on us.
We recall things left undone; opportunities ignored.
We remember careless words spoken,
disappointments that trouble our souls.
We offer to you now our repentance for our misspent moments and missed
opportunities. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Remember the promise that the apostle Paul declares:
What can separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword?
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loves us.
Neither death nor life, things present nor things to come can separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
Thanks be to God for such a promise!
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

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 11. Are faith and reason contradictory?

No. Faith uses reason and always seeks to understand. Not only are we commanded to love God with all our mind as with all our heart and soul, but we are also counselled to be ready at any time to give an answer to anyone who wants a reason for the hope that we have in us.

Jn10:38, Mt 22:37, 1 Pet 3:15

Question 12. What do we believe when we say, “I believe in God, the Father almighty”?

Believing is more than agreeing that there is a Supreme Being. In believing we trust in and commit ourselves to the God who is declared in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and revealed in Jesus Christ. The creed affirms that God is the Father and that God is almighty.

Jas 2:19, Prov 3:5-6, Heb 1:3

Question 13. Why do we call God “the Father”?

First and foremost, the word “Father” identifies God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In calling God “my Father and your Father”, Jesus invites all humanity to acknowledge and to share with him the privilege of being God’s child.

2 Cor 1:3, Jn 20:17, Gal 4:6

Music Ministry: “Light of the World” by Choir

Prayer for illumination (David)

Almighty, gracious Father,
 the true understanding of your holy Word helps us to grow
 into the fulness of the salvation you so freely offer in Christ.
 Grant to all of us that our hearts, being freed from worldly affairs,
 may hear and grasp your holy Word with all diligence and faith,
 that we may rightly understand your gracious will,
 cherish it, and live by it with all earnestness, to your praise and honor.
 Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Scripture

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

³ So he told them this parable:

“There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had

and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Children's Hymn # 445: "Open Our Eyes Lord" (V 1, 2)

Open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch him,
and say that we love him.

Open our ears, Lord,
and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus.

Children's Lesson

Today's story is a pretty easy one to understand on the surface. It is a story we have probably all heard at least once while we were in church and one that has made its way into the media of the world around us.

Everyone loves this story, because in it we see a boy who is self-centered who gets everything he wants and gets to come home in the end.

The story of the prodigal son is so simple. A young man wants to do what he wants instead of listening to his father. So, he goes to his dad and says give me all the money I would get for my inheritance after you died. Quite a shocking thing to say actually.

Then he sets off into the world and does whatever he wants. I wonder if something we all are not like the prodigal son, how many of us here as children did not want to obey our parents and instead wanted to go off and do the things we wanted to in the world.

How many of the children here would prefer to play video games or watch Netflix than do chores, or go help their parents do something?

So, we relate to this story because in many ways how we behave with our parents is the way the prodigal son behaved with his father. Demanding that he get to do the things he wants, because it's his life after all.

Then the son runs into trouble in life and wants to go home. The runaway that makes it a few blocks away and then realizes they have nowhere to sleep, or no food. This is another truth that the prodigal son never saw, if he leaves his father's house, he is fully responsible for himself, and that is not free.

Life is difficult and when the son leaves, yes he has fun and does what he wants, but he soon begins to realize he cannot do that for long, eventually he has to work so much that he cannot even do the things he could freely do when he lived in his father's house.

So he goes home to his father's house where his father warmly greets him, treating him like he never left.

We love this story because of this because of the fact he gets to go home and be loved like he has never left. The truth is that even when you do go out and disobey your parents they love you, they probably know all the bad things that you do, and they love you. They know all the times you disobey them, lie to them, and do what you want, and they love you.

We love this story because it reminds us of our own behavior with God the father. We disobey his commandments all the time, but he loves us and always welcomes us home when we repent from our sinful ways. Notice in the story the son did not get to keep living the way he wanted when he returned, he had to go home and live in his father's house again. This is part of the story that many do not talk about. Yes his sins are forgiven, but his life has to change for that to happen.

Finally remember the cost of his return. In the story a fattened calf is sacrificed, but in Christianity it was our Lord Jesus Christ who was sacrificed. Jesus went to the cross to forgive us of all the bad things we do in life so that we could return to the Father's house free of any debts for our sins. Think about that, God gave up his only son so that we could come home, that is what Lent is about. That is what Easter is about.

God's love for you is so strong that even when you go completely against him, he still wants you to come home. So take some time during this week and think about all the things that we have to be thankful for that our earthly parents provide and that our Heavenly father provides for us.

Let us pray,

Loving Father,

We are sorry for the things we have done that have hurt you and hurt other people. We thank you for your love and forgiveness and for all the things you provide us in life. Help us to remember your love is always there for us and for others. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen

Sermon

We are already into the fourth week of Lent. I am praying that through this season you have been reflecting on the service each week and thinking about your own lives. Thinking about how we face temptation in our lives, do we try to overcome it ourselves or do we turn to Christ. Thinking about where our citizenship lies, do we think and act like citizens of this world, focused on getting what we want out of this life, or do we think and act like citizens of heaven, focused on Christ. Thinking about the grace, mercy, and blessings that we are given everyday by a God that loves us and how we spend the time we have, focused on our desires or in service to him.

Lent is a tough season because we are constantly measuring ourselves up against an ideal, we can never attain. We can never be the perfect Christian because the perfect Christian cannot exist except in Jesus Christ. We will make mistakes, we will stumble in our walk with Christ, we might even fall or even like in today's scripture wander away only to return at another time.

In the scripture we are looking at today we see that Jesus is once again socializing with tax collectors and other sinners. This upset the Pharisees and scribes. Tax collectors were hated by everyone at that time because they worked for the Roman rulership, and they often added on taxes to extort money from those they collected from to line their own pockets for their own personal desires. And the other sinners described could have included the wide variety of people who had fallen out of favor with the church of the day; thieves, prostitutes, and other illegal professions, as well as anyone else whom the Pharisees did not deem religious people. In Jesus's time people who considered themselves religious would not want to associate or even be thought of associating with anyone who could be considered a sinner or unreligious. So naturally when he is seen in the company of people who the religious leaders deemed sinners and unreligious the religious leaders began to talk about his behavior.

Jesus knows their hearts and minds; he knows what they are saying and even what they are thinking about him. In response to their hardened hearts, Jesus shares three of the most well-known parables he taught during his time on earth.

The first parable he shares is one that we all know and love, one that is often quoted by people who want to emphasize Jesus's love of his people. The parable of the lost sheep tells us of the shepherd who left his ninety-nine sheep to find the one that had wandered away. The second parable is the story of the lost coin, and how the woman turned her house upside down and inside out while searching for the missing coin.

Now in this third parable the parables take on a much more relatable nature. The story of a young man who has chosen a path that separates him from his father and his family. A story where we get to see the heartache that the father experienced because of his son's behavior and the joy that he experiences at the return of his missing son.

I believe that many people in the modern world can relate to this parable in some way.

It starts off with the younger son decides that he no longer wants to live under the roof of his father. He wants to live his life the way he wants and where he wants to. So, he goes to his father and asks him to give him his share of the estate that he would have received upon his father's death. This shows how self-focused he was, how his only concern was his own earthly happiness, could you imagine going to your parents and asking them for all the things you were going to get when they died right now.

What surprises me is that the father is graceful in his response to this. The father goes out and divests himself of his estate. He sells off all he has so that he can split it between his children. He gives up his wealth and livelihood for the sake of a son that was so disrespectful of him, one that rebelled against him.

The younger son then takes the money and leaves his father's house. He goes far away and lives the life he wants. He does what he wants, buys the things he desires, eats, and drinks as he wishes. He lives a worldly life, focused on his satisfaction and his pleasure. He lives for the day without worry for the future. The younger son is living the life of sinners and tax collectors.

I hope you all see the parallel here. The son leaves the home of his loving father who provides for him, so that he can go out in the world and live the way he wants. How many people are like this, people who have received blessings in their life, the blessing of life itself and they demand more. They want it all right now and they want to go out and live their life as they wish.

The young son enjoys his life and eventually when he reaches at point where he comes to realize his lifestyle has cost him everything. He tries to survive by working, he gets sent out to feed the pigs. Jesus could have used almost any way of making a living in this parable. He could have made the young man a thief, a prostitute, a beggar, a slave, but he chose to make him feed the pigs. Jesus is making it even clearer that this is a man who has fallen away from the father. Pigs were considered, and are still considered by many Jews today, to be both unclean and unholy.

And it is here in the darkness of his sin, in this unclean and unholy place where the young man comes to his senses. He looked at the place he was at, where he was craving the food that he was serving the pigs and recalled at how well his father treated his servants. Servants in his father's house have their needs met, they had food and shelter. So, he decides to return to his father's home, empty handed and to throw himself upon his father's mercy.

Luke 15:20

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

Think about the phrase his father saw him. His father saw him as he was coming home. This means that his father had to be looking for him to return home. His father let him go, his father let him wander off and chase his desires. And his father watched eagerly for his son to return home to him.

Then when he saw his son, he ran to him, embraced him, and kissed him. The father met the son with compassion, with love. There was no anger or judgement about how the son had squandered. There was no anger or judgement on the lifestyle he had lived. There was no judgement or anger about all the time that had been lost while the son chased his worldly desires. There was just grace, love, and mercy.

There is something more though that many people do not see when they read this verse. 'He ran'. In Jesus's day men often wore long robes and sandals. They walked everywhere they went, the religious leaders tried to walk so as if appeared that they were gliding or hovering. Yet here we see the father run to his son; running was seen as a sign of weakness. Running showed a lack of dignity and self-respect in the culture and the father shows a complete disregard for how anyone thinks about him as he runs to embrace his lost son.

Then the son is redeemed. The selfish young man who took everything he could get and squandered it on personal pleasure is welcomed home. Not only welcomed home, but he also receives a ring, robes, and sandals. His status as a son of the father is returned to him.

And a feast is thrown. A fattened calf is killed, and a celebration is to be held because the one who was lost has returned. Jesus brings into the story one of the elements that the religious leaders of the time were having an issue with. Just as Jesus was eating with sinners, here is the father and his household not just eating with a sinner but sharing in a celebration about the return of a sinner.

They celebrate because the one who was dead is alive, the one who was lost is found. The one who was lost and dead to the father has come back and they celebrate that he is redeemed and returned to his father's household.

We love this story. Oh, how we love this story! Everyone can associate with this story; we can all identify ourselves with the prodigal son. Many of us remember the times we have wandered away from God, the times we have foolishly lived in our lives.

The message here is come home. Come home, and the father will run to you. He will celebrate your return to him. You do not need to bring him anything, you do not need to do anything, you do not need to be anything, just come to him, and accept his mercy and his grace.

Just like the father of the prodigal son who showed no anger or judgement when his son returned. Jesus is telling us all that we will face no judgement or anger when we return to our Father in heaven. There will be no penalty for living our lives the way we have, no punishments dolled out for our rebellious ways.

Jesus was the one who came and paid the debt of all our sins. Like the prodigal son, all we need to do is come home. We are saved by the grace of God alone. Grace alone. Creating Faith lone in Christ alone. All for the Glory of God alone.

This is the gospel of the Lord in parable format. This is usually where everyone stops looking at this parable. Everyone is happy, life is good, we can go on knowing that when

we come home to our father, no matter how far away we have wandered that we will be welcomed home.

However, Jesus did not finish the parable there. He did not end it on this happy note where we all want to stop reading. Instead, he continues, Jesus wants to talk about the older brother. The one who had stayed home, the one who had stayed with the father.

Luke 15:25-32

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

This is why we look at this scripture in the season of lent, there is a message here for both those who have left the Lord and returned, and for those of us that have been raised in his house and never left. This parable has something for all of us to reflect upon and this second half speaks to everyone who considers themselves a citizen of heaven.

The older brother is not overjoyed at the return of his younger brother. In fact, he seems pretty upset. To paraphrase him, ‘I stayed home, did as you asked, never questioned you, and you gave me and my friends a goat to eat. He ran off and wasted all you had worked hard for on prostitutes and who knows what else, and you kill one of the prized calves to celebrate!’

Jesus’s parable has two audiences. He is speaking to the Pharisees and other religious leaders as well. They were the ones complaining about him spending time with tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners.

There will be some here today who will remember being the prodigal son, they will remember the day that they came to their senses and returned to our Father’s house. There will be some who wandered far away and other who might have just wandered a little bit away before they came to their senses and turned back home.

There are also more than a few people out there this morning who are similar to the older son. We might recall our time of being lost, we might recall our return, but we

have been serving in the Father's house faithfully since then and like the older brother we can be bothered when someone new comes home and a great celebration is held for them.

So, let's reflect upon ourselves and our relationship with the father. How are we like the two brothers presented in this parable. What characteristics can we see in them that we might see reflected in our own lives.

In how many ways are we like the older brother. While his younger brother was taking his share and running off to live the life he wanted. While the father spent his days looking for the return of his missing son, what did the older brother do? He carried on with life as he knew it. He took care of the estates, he looked after the business. He was not out there with his father looking for his brother. He was instead looking after his father's household, that had become his focus.

Yes, this needed to be done. The estate needed to be cared for, the work needed to get done, but where was his care and concern for his lost brother. It wasn't evident in the older brother's life; we see this clearly when the younger brother returns. He does not joyously run to embrace his brother as his father did, instead he condemns and judges his brother for his wasteful ways and refuses to be part of the celebration.

In how many ways are we like the older brother. We serve in the Father's house faithfully. We participate in praise and worship, maybe a bible study once in awhile. We might even be someone who acts as a greeter, a teacher or small group leader. And like the father in the story, God appreciates all that we do in His house and in his service. However, are we sometimes like the older brother and forgetting the ones that are not here, the lost sheep or the missing coin?

While we are busy with doing God's work in God's house, are we also busy praying for the return of those who are lost? Are we at work living our lives as witnesses to the Lord's power in our lives? Are we looking to help those who are lost back to God by witnessing to them?

There are times in our Christian lives that we can be so busy thinking about everything that we do in God's service that we can begin to think we deserve some kind of special treatment. Just like that older brother. We look at all we have done in service and think we should be the ones who get the fattened calf, it should be the younger brother that gets the goat.

When we first become Christians, when we first find our faith, we are often full of the Holy Spirit, we jump on every opportunity to share our faith, to participate in service to the Lord. We are excited to join others in fellowship, in praise and in worship.

However, as time passes, the world begins to beat down on us. We do not have that same excitement that we first had. Service becomes to feel like work and worship and fellowship take up time we want to spend somewhere else in life. We begin to feel comfortable, entitled to our salvation, and forget that we are called not just to save ourselves, but also to bring the knowledge about who God to others.

Like the older son we become content with the way things are, and no longer look for our missing brother or sister, we do not seek them out and prepare to celebrate with them when they return to the house of our father. We become complacent in our faith.

We start to become cliquish in our church, hanging out with the same group always, not open, loving and encouraging of others. We become possessive of our traditions and ways of worship, praise, and prayer. We become focused more on what is happening inside the church building than on the world we are called to care for and love.

We begin to think someone else will do it when it comes to volunteering for church programs. We want to sit and watch church happen, but not be a part of it like we were when our faith was new. There are hundreds of examples we could give of how the older son had turned everything into a daily activity and lost the love he had for his brother and how it is related to the church and faith.

And then the story ends, with an unasked question, one that is left for all of us to answer.

Luke 15:21-32

³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

Are we going to live our life with the heart of the son or with the heart of the father?

The father was pleading with his older son to celebrate with him. To be joyful and participate in the warm welcome of his younger brother home. But we are never told what happens, the parable ends leaving us to fill in the blank ourselves. Did the older brother listen to the father and take on a celebratory spirit, or did he just continue on as he was comfortable, looking after the estate.

How will you respond? Will you be content just hanging out in our father’s house, looking after the things that we feel are important. Making it to church every week, doing a bible study, praying when we have time.

Or will you respond by finding the joy and passion for the missing ones that the father had in the story. Will you be the ones scanning the world around you for the seeker on

the horizon so that you can invite them into the Father's house and celebrate their return with them.

This is a critical question as we come out of this pandemic. The world is filled with people who have had their faith challenged during covid. Filled with people who might just be discovering their faith. Those little flickers of light that are the signs of someone seeking more than the worldly and if we are looking for them, we can bring them to God's house. We can help them find their way home to the father and join in the celebration of their return.

So, which will it be, the heart of the son or the heart of the father, it is up to you...

Let us pray,

Preserve Us from Greed and the Cares of this Life

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 in the wilderness your Son fed over five thousand people
 with five loaves and two fish.
 Graciously remain with us and bless us.
 Preserve us from greed and the cares of this life
 that we may seek first your kingdom and your righteousness
 and in all things remember your Fatherly goodness;
 through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Lent 4

Music Ministry: "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" by Mark 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 (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer (David)

We place these gifts into your hands, O God. Bless them with your transforming grace so that they may become seeds springing up with new life in the world you love. Fill our hearts with that same grace so we can bring hope to weary and worried lives in Jesus' name. Amen.

Closing Hymn #267: "Rejoice the Lord is King" (V 1, 5)

Rejoice, the Lord is King;
your sovereign Lord adore;
give thanks, O mortals, sing
and triumph ever more.
Lift up your heart;
lift up your voice; rejoice,
again I say, rejoice.

Rejoice in glorious hope,
for Christ the judge shall come
and take the faithful up
to their eternal home.
We soon shall hear
the archangel's voice;
the trump of God shall sound: rejoice.

Prayers for the People & Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God,
you have called us together as your people,
to be the church of Jesus Christ.
Make us one in faith and discipleship,
breaking bread together, and telling the good news,
so that the world may believe you are love,
turn to your ways, and live in the light of your truth.

Creator God,

you made all things and called them good.
 We pray for the earth in its vulnerability,
 depleted by our lifestyle choices and our economic expectations.
 Inspire reverence for the earth in all people.
 Guide us all to make wiser choices for the sake of your creation.
 Help us use resources wisely, with future generations in mind,
 guarding the fragile balances you have set between many precious species.

Jesus Christ, Prince of peace,
 you taught us of God's reconciling grace
 in the story of a father who welcomed back his wandering son
 and invited his jealous son to open his heart.
 Speak to the hearts of all your people
 in this time when so many neighbours and nations sit in judgment on each other,
 provoking conflict and resentment.
 Teach us how to seek peace on earth together.
 Call those in positions of power and influence to work for the common good.
 Turn us away from anger, fear,
 violence or vanity,
 which can turn neighbour against neighbour and nation against nation.
 May all who claim your name be known as makers of the peace.

O Christ, healer of hearts and hopes,
 you desire health and wholeness for each one of us:
 We pray that those who have lost their livelihoods in this pandemic
 may find true abundance.

Grant rest and renewal to those who are broken in body, mind, or spirit,
 and bring comfort and hope to all who face loss and loneliness.
 we lift before you the names of all those on our hearts today.

Spirit of power and promise, embrace us with hope this day
 so that we may live faithfully,
 encouraging each other by the commitment we see in Jesus Christ
 In whose name we offer these prayers. Amen.

Benediction

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