

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

What is Discipleship?  
Proper 8  
Luke 9:57-62

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

God, our Creator,  
from nothing you made our world.  
**You formed us, love us,  
and give us all that we need.**

God, our Redeemer,  
you rescued us from sin.  
**You have given us new life  
and hope of healing to the world.**

God, our Comforter,  
you are with us always.  
**You comfort us, renew us,  
and guide us into your truth.**

Almighty God, for your gracious love for us,  
we praise you. **Amen**

Prayer of Adoration

Loving God,  
we come to you in worship and thanksgiving.  
You are greater than we can understand;  
open our eyes that we may see the wonderful truths  
you have shown to us in Jesus.  
You are more loving than our hearts can respond to;  
help us to give ourselves to you in worship  
so that we learn what you want us to be.  
You are wiser than we can know;  
still our minds as we worship you

so that we can understand the things you are saying to us.  
 Loving God, in Jesus  
 you chose to come to the world in humility.  
 You chose the path the world saw as foolish.  
 You used what the world considered weak.  
 We worship and adore you. Amen

### **Opening Hymn # 452: "Jesus Stand Among Us"**

Jesus, stand among us  
 In your risen power;  
 Let this time of worship  
 Be a hallowed hour.

Breathe the Holy Spirit  
 Into every heart;  
 Bid the fears and sorrows  
 From each soul depart.

### **Call to Confession**

#### **Prayer of Confession**

**Almighty God, we confess how hard it is to be your people.  
 You have called us to be the church,  
 to continue the mission of Jesus Christ to our lonely and confused world.  
 Yet we acknowledge we are more apathetic than active,  
 isolated than involved, callous than compassionate,  
 obstinate than obedient, legalistic than loving.  
 Gracious Lord, have mercy upon us and forgive our sins.  
 Remove the obstacles preventing us  
 from being your representatives to a broken world.  
 Awaken our hearts to the promised gift of your indwelling Spirit.  
 This we pray in Jesus' powerful name. Amen**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

There is no condemnation  
 for those who are in Christ Jesus.  
 For the law of the Spirit  
 of life in Christ Jesus  
 has set you free from the law of sin and death.  
 Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

The old life has gone;  
a new life has begun.

### **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 46. What does the creed mean when it says that Jesus was “crucified, died, and was buried”?**

It emphasizes that Jesus really died. His death was God’s judging and saving act in that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). God did not lay the burden of our guilt on another but bore it himself.

Isa 53:5, Rom 4:25, 1 Pet 3:18

**Question 47. What does the creed mean by “he descended to the dead”?**

To say, “he descended to the dead” or “he descended into hell” means that Jesus not only suffered death for us but also experienced the agony of separation from God, and in his anguish cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). In our severest trials we are assured that Jesus Christ has redeemed us “from hellish anxieties and torments by the unspeakable anguish, pains, and terrors which he suffered ...” (Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 44). Another meaning in the history of the church has been the belief that Jesus, after he died, descended to the realm of the dead to preach to those held captive there, leading a host of them to be with God.

Mt 26:38-39, 1 Pet 3:18-20, Eph 4:8

**Question 48. What do we confess in saying, “on the third day he rose again from the dead”?**

Jesus was raised by the mighty act of God. The loving Father did not forsake the Son. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” at the tomb (Matthew 28:9), to the disciples in and near Jerusalem (Luke 24:31, 36) and in Galilee (Matthew 28:17), and also to over five hundred persons at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). The resurrection is God’s victory over death, and the core of our faith; “if Christ be not raised, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Acts 2:24, 1 Cor 15:3-4, Jn 20:19-20

**Music Ministry: “Ride Up in the Chariot” by Don McLeish**

**Prayer for illumination**

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

**Scripture****Luke9:57-62**

<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." <sup>59</sup> To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." <sup>61</sup> Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

**Children's Hymn # 449: "Lord Listen to Your Children Praying"**

Lord, listen to your children praying,  
 Lord, send your Spirit in this place;  
 Lord, listen to your children praying.  
 Send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.

*Repeat*

**Children's Lesson**

**Music Ministry: "Here I Am to Worship" by Trish Warren**

**Sermon**

**The Road Not Taken – Robert Frost**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
 And sorry I could not travel both  
 And be one traveler, long I stood  
 And looked down one as far as I could  
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;  
 Then took the other, as just as fair,  
 And having perhaps the better claim,  
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
 Though as for that the passing there  
 Had worn them really about the same,  
 And both that morning equally lay  
 In leaves no step had trodden black.  
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
 I doubted if I should ever come back.  
 I shall be telling this with a sigh  
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
 I took the one less traveled by,  
 And that has made all the difference.

This poem has been used by teachers in high schools and universities over the years to remind us of the fact that our lives are filled with choices and that many of the choices we make in our lives, minor and major, often boil down to a decision between two paths on which we choose between to walk in our life. What school do we go to? What job do we take? What career do we pursue? Who do we date or marry? These are all life altering decisions and this poem reminds us that these points in our lives and the choice we make can change our lives entirely.

When we reach these crossroads, we often do what all humans do, we create a pro and con list, we seek out the advice and guidance of others, we do our own research, and although we do not do it enough, we turn to God for guidance. Frost reminds us 'Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back.', once we make a choice, we have taken a step down that path and the other option may never present itself again in our lives.

Robert frost was a Christian man who struggled with his faith. He described himself as an Old Testament Christian, he lived with a fear of the Lord and like the Israelites he struggled with keeping his faith. He was often distracted by the things of this world. However, I think that this poem sums up his heart very well. Life is a road that in the end only has two paths, you cannot walk on both, you have to choose to walk one or the other. You have to obey Christ or obey the world, there is no way to do both because

they are often in conflict with one another. Every Christian comes to this crossroad, they choice between the wide and well-traveled path and the other not so well travelled, not so wide, and kind of dark and troublesome. And once you choose one of these paths, you begin your walk-in life as a disciple of Christ or as a religious Christian of the world.

In the scripture we are looking at today we are about to meet three men who stand at this crossroad in their lives. In Robert Frost's poem the man stands alone at the crossroads and goes through his internal monologue about which path he should walk. In the book of Luke these three men are much more fortunate, they have the Messiah standing there with them giving them advice about the paths that lay before them and the realities of the choice that they will make.

The man who Jesus first speaks with is one that I feel many modern-day church goers can relate to, he is a man who believes that Christ is the Messiah. We know from the other gospels that he is a well-educated man, he has a good job, perhaps a teacher or scribe. He knows Jesus is a great leader and wants to attach himself to Jesus so that he can be a part of the story of the life of Jesus Christ.

He tells Jesus, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' How many people say this, they promise to follow Christ when their lives are going well, when their jobs are comfortable, when there is food on their tables and a roof over their heads, when they are accepted by society in general and do not suffer for their faith. When we are living a life of comfortable Christianity it is simple to tell Jesus, 'I will follow you wherever you go.'

Yet, this is not the truth of the scriptures, life is not always easy for Christians. Jesus is on his way to the cross when he meets this man in the Gospel of Luke. He knows that his followers will suffer, and he tells this man the truth, 'the son of man has no place to lay his head.' There is no rest on the road to the cross for Jesus. There is no retirement plan, no vacation, no days off – Jesus is at work in his ministry every day, he heals on the sabbaths much to the displeasure of the religious leaders of His day.

The comfortable faith that this man is now enjoying when he makes this declaration of faith is not one that he will continue to enjoy if he truly becomes a follower of Christ. The comfort he now enjoys will be removed by the true cost of discipleship. Discipleship is a costly venture; it means that we need to be a faithful follower of Christ everywhere in our lives and that means we cannot live our lives as comfortable church goers. It means we may have to give up of the things of this world to be a true follower of Christ

It means we need to be willing to stand up for the scripture. We need to share with people about our faith and what it means to us. If you say you 'will follow Christ wherever He goes' ask yourself; How many of your colleagues and friends know you are

a Christian? Are you willing to give up the things you have in this world to take up your cross and suffer persecution from the world for standing on the scriptural teaching's about sin in this world? Are you willing to pay the cost of being a Christian?

**John 12:23-25**

**<sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.**

When you follow Christ there is no easy rest in this world, people will never be happy with you and in fact they are becoming less and less accepting of any stance that goes against the inclusive wave that is predominant in our world. Everything is acceptable, permissible and must be affirmed in this world, even if it goes against the teachings of the scripture and that is the first real challenge that many Christians will face in their faith.

When we are disciples, we know that we will lose friends, family, colleagues because of our faith. We know that as the world teaches its inclusiveness and acceptance that it is condoning of sin, and if we truly love someone, we will care more for their eternal life than their pleasures here on earth. We will be willing to give up comfortable church going and become a follower Christ to the cross.

The second man in the scripture is already a believer in Jesus as God. Jesus singles him out and invites him to become a follower. Imagine that; the Messiah, the King of Kings, The Lord of Lords singles you out and calls you to be His follower. How would you respond? Would you gladly give up everything in your life to follow Christ, or would you resist and think of worldly things?

The second man responds to Jesus's request with a simple request of his own, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' That may seem like a simple enough request to most readers, but when we look at his request in the context of the scriptures and with an understanding of the culture, we begin to see it is much more complicated.

Depending on the cultural burial traditions some funerals could last over a year with the mandating mourning periods, and on top of that from this interaction we cannot really know if the man's father has even died yet. His father could still be alive, and the man could be delaying becoming a follower of Christ by many years if he waits for his father's death and funeral to take place.

What this man's response to Jesus actually means is more along the lines of 'No, not right now, I have some things in my life that I think are more important than being a

follower of yours that I want to take care of first, then maybe after they are done, and nothing better or more important to me comes along I will follow you.'

Does this sound familiar? I am sure that everyone of us has felt like this at some point, or perhaps still do, and it is very likely that we know of someone who is like this. Someone who believes in Jesus but for some reason just seems to be caught up in the world and place it as a priority over following Jesus. These are the people who think I would love to get up early and pray, but I need an extra hour of sleep because I work late tomorrow, or I had a busy week, or I need to do my homework first, or I need to do (fill in the blank with anything you wish) first and then I will pray. These are the people who have an opportunity to do something in the church for the furthering of God's kingdom and think, I would love to, but I cannot get time away from work, I need to look after my pet, I probably won't be good at it, or someone else will do that better than I could.

These are the people who think I will fully give myself to God after I, graduated from high school, get my degree, find a job, find a life partner, have job security, get married, have children, when my kids are older, when I am financially stable, maybe when I retire. There is always something of the world that can be used as an excuse to not follow Jesus and this second man is an example of that type of person. Regardless of what is going on they will always have a reason to not follow Christ.

And how does Jesus respond, 'Let the dead bury their own dead', in other words let the secular world take care of the secular world. This is that call to be a citizen of heaven first and a member of the world second. This is the call to put Jesus first in all things in our lives, to place our faith and trust in him in all things, to find our joy and hope in him and to proclaim the kingdom of God everywhere we go and in everything we do. How I wish I would have studied this verse much more seriously when I was a young man, I probably would have come to follow Jesus much earlier in life and not have had God put some many learning experiences in my life path to bring me onto the right road in life.

God calls people, the same way he called this man, and people sometimes in their ignorance put secular and worldly ideals and obligations above the call of Christ. I am personally guilty of this; it took me a long time to be willing to answer the call of God and take on the role he wanted me to preach and teaching His word to His people. I could always justify the delay. I had to have a career, I needed to make enough money to support my family, I lived as a sinner away from God for too long, he would not want someone like me. I came up with excuse after excuse to avoid becoming active in ministry, to keep my faith set off to the side. However, God had another plan, and he came back to me over and over, his patience with me allowed me to come to sit at his feet and listen and learn.

God brought me to the crossroad of ministry more than once in my life, and I often chose the wrong road, yet he always brought me to another crossroad, where I was



given another chance to make the right choice. God did not have to do that, he could have let me walk away at any point, he could have let me go and let me live the life I wanted to; however, I was blessed because he did not choose to do that with me. This is a truth that we need to know and accept, God does not have to save anyone, he can let people chose to live their lives as they wish. We may not always get a second chance to become a true follower, we may not always be given a second chance to become one of his adopted children.

So, think about every time you have skipped a service, avoided a bible study, not joined in on a fellowship event... now ask yourself why did I miss that event? What did I feel was more important than God? What time constraint, what financial constraint, what social obligation, what part of life here on earth is so much more important than our God and our eternal life?

**Deuteronomy 6:5**

**<sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

How do we as people living on this world not become like this second man. We study Gods word; we study the bible so that we can learn more about our God and we can get a clearer understanding of his specific call for each of us. We place him first in our lives, when things happen, we turn to prayer first, we seek God's guidance as we put together our pro and con list, as we seek out others for advice and as we do our own research. We turn to God and do not make choices based on our own secular wants and desires. This means we know and understand that being a disciple of Christ means sacrifice, being a follower of God has a cost, both a public cost and a personal cost. It may mean we need to give up some of the things that we take pleasure in; sleep, games, foods, alcohol, hobbies – to instead spend time glorifying God. The sacrifice comes as we learn to place God first and our worldly desires second. We learn to change the way we think from what will make me happy to one where our thoughts are what would glorify God. What choice, what action, what response glorifies God the most in our personal and public life. This is a sacrifice because as we start to do this, we will begin to see that the choice we want to make and the choice that glorifies God are not always in alignment with one another, and we need to make a choice, we cannot walk down both roads. We will know that we have overcome the challenges faced by the second man when we reach a point in our lives that making the decision to walk the road that glorifies God, the road where we give of our self and our desires, becomes easier to walk along. At that point we have taken another step on the long road to discipleship.

Then there is the final man in this scripture. This man is bold, he has seen the previous men rebuked for their refusal to understand what it means to commit to Jesus as a follower and to be willing to sacrifice of self. He has thought of these things, and he declares to Jesus '**I will follow you, Lord!**' with a small caveat '**but let me first say farewell to those at my home.**'

I believe that almost every Christian can relate to this man in many ways. We have chosen to commit our lives to Jesus, we have chosen to be members of the Church of Christ, we love God first in our lives, we pray faithfully, we make personal sacrifices, we proclaim him publicly, we do his work. However, are we fully committed to it at all times?

Think about all the times when we have been doing God's work or been presented an opportunity to share the Gospel and for whatever reason; friends, family, fear, social pressure, financial obligations we do not take that opportunity.

How often do we volunteer to become part of church committee or event and skip a meeting or miss an event? How often do we have a desire to do something for God and then suppress it because of our own inner fear of not being adequate? Or how often do we volunteer to do so much and get so spread out in the church that we are not able to do anything that we have volunteered to do at 100%?

This final rebuke by Jesus is a great reminder of what we are to do within the church.

**Luke 9:62**

**<sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."**

Farmers will tell you that when you plow a field, you set your eyes ahead and move towards it at a steady pace. You do not look behind you, because if you do you will veer to the left or the right and your furrows will not be straight, your usage of the field becomes less efficient, and you are being wasteful.

This is what Jesus is telling us. Do not be wasteful, when you are about the work of God you need to give it 100% because we are the stewards of his resources. When we are not focused on the field and doing it effectively and efficiently it is not us who suffer but others. It is others who do not receive the fruits of God's blessings, it is others who may be led astray, other who may give up hope or faith, others who may give into temptation in their lives and we are the ones who are accountable for that.

This is the most difficult task along the road of discipleship. This is the part of the road that many of us will fear ever setting foot along because it moves from being a sacrifice of the things, we life, to a sacrifice of ourselves. This is the road that when we walk along it, we know that we need to give 100% to God. It means when we make a commitment to do something for God within his church that that becomes the number one priority in our lives. We put school, work, friends, family, finances, and everything else in our lives aside to ensure that what we are doing for God gets done to the absolute best of our ability. We will fail at this, God knows this, but we should be trying to do this.

This the most difficult road to walk upon because of this commitment, it means that we give 100% to God. The road will be difficult, it will have challenges, it will force us to make sacrifices of self. There will be times when we will want to give up, to walk an easier road. There may be times when we are given a choice again and we will choose the easier path, moving away from God instead of closer to him. It is by staying on the path of discipleship that we continuously grow closer to God and our understanding of his blessings in our lives.

Yet throughout church history there have been many who walked this road, there have been many who have been martyred, people willing to give up their very lives in service to the lord. People willing to sacrifice everything to bring the word of God to those in need of hearing his Gospel, yet there are many more that instead chose to step of the road of discipleship when something challenging entered their lives and fell back into the secular world and its way of life.

The road to discipleship is not an easy road to follow, it is filled with choices, which path to take at every crossroad in our life, there will be some paths that we only see once, and others which may come back over and over. When we hit these times of Choice we should be turning to God in prayer, seeking his guidance in which path we are to choose. Each of these men are an example for Christians who are at different points of life on the walk to discipleship.

The first reminds us that we should be committed to Christ for the right reasons. We should not be committed because of excitement or conformity; we should not become a Christian because it seems like fun or because we feel we have to or because we gain in the secular world by being a Christian. We should commit to Jesus because we love Him and want to serve Him in this world.

The second man reminds us of the real-life sacrifices that we will be called to make when we chose to become a disciple of Christ. We should be seeking to serve him, seeking to help build his kingdom, investing our time into our relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We should be invested in our relationship with God, taking it seriously and looking for ways to grow spiritually and to help others do the same.

The third man is the man that shows us the final step to discipleship. The one who follows up on his commitment to God with all of his heart, all of his soul and all of his might. The one who is willing to miss out on the things of this world to do work for the kingdom of God. The one who understands that the sacrifices that we make in this world are worth the bounty we will receive in the eternal glory of the New Jerusalem.

As the poet said:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

I pray that as each of us gathered here today in body and in spirit as we walk along the road of life, and as we come to these crossroads will chose to walk the path less travelled, the path to discipleship in Christ. That we know we may all be at different points along that path, but we are walking it together as Children of God regardless of how far along we are on the road. That once we take that first step of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, we may wander, we may make wrong choices, but we are on the right path and Jesus will make sure we find the way. That once we reach the most difficult parts of the road to discipleship, we will begin to see we are not only making a difference in our own lives but a difference in the lives of all those who are around us as we begin to bring the word and glory of God to everyone we meet.

Let us pray,

Wondrous and Loving God,  
We ask that our prayers fall upon your ears in a pleasing manner.  
Father may all we all learn to serve your will  
and not the seek our own worldly pleasures.

Lord without you we are nothing,  
without your Holy Spirit to guide us  
we are lost like sheep without a Shepard.

Father,  
Guide us in doing what is right  
and help us become eager to live our lives as disciples of You  
and in doing Your will.

God give us the resolve to live our lives in a Christlike manner.

Strengthen us when the temptations of sin are upon us  
and when we do fall,  
be with us as we seek to repent from our sin.  
Let our repentance remind us of your love for us  
and the sacrifice of your son  
that was made to atone for our wrongs.

Lord help us to find nourishment in your word,  
which brings life to all.  
Fill our hearts and minds with your love  
and strengthen us to keep our eyes upon Jesus.  
Let your Grace empower us to rise above our own human weakness.

Lord, guide us in your ways,  
 for we cannot find our way alone.  
 Be our Shepard, let us know your voice  
 and learn to seek it when we are alone  
 and in the darkness.  
 Lead us with your gentle mercy  
 for left to find our own ways we are not capable of carrying out your will.

Glorious God,  
 Source of all blessings,  
 help us live a graceful life.

One in which we have risen above the temptations of sin and serve you and your will  
 here upon earth.

We ask all of this in the name of your only Son,  
 Jesus Christ,  
 who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit  
 as the one true God, now and forever,  
 Amen

**Music Ministry: “The Answer” by Trish Warren**

**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](mailto: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**

God of glory,  
 receive these gifts and the  
 offering of our lives.

As Jesus was lifted up from earth,  
 draw us to your heart  
 in the midst of this world,  
 that all creation may be brought  
 from bondage to freedom,  
 from darkness to light,  
 and from death to life,  
 through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**Closing Hymn # 499: "Tell Me the Old Old Story"**

Tell me the old, old story  
 of unseen things above,  
 of Jesus and his glory,  
 of Jesus and his love.  
 Tell me the story simply,  
 as to a little child,  
 for I am weak and weary,  
 and helpless and defiled.

Refrain:

Tell me the old, old story;  
 tell me the old, old story;  
 tell me the old, old story  
 of Jesus and his love.

Tell me the same old story,  
 when you have cause to fear  
 that this world's empty glory  
 is costing me too dear.  
 Yes, and when that world's glory  
 is dawning on my soul,  
 tell me the old, old story:  
 Christ Jesus makes thee whole. (Refrain)

**Pastoral Prayer**

With you, wondrous God, we move from this time of worship.  
 Thank you for calling us to worship you and for accepting  
 our praises as a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to you.  
 Thank you, O God, that your Word came to us in power,  
 inspired by your Holy Spirit.  
 Thank you for nourishing us with your Word and Spirit  
 and strengthening us with your grace for the days ahead.

Thank you for listening to prayers that rose to you from humble hearts.  
Thank you for surrounding us with brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ  
who love us, share our triumphs and disappointments,  
and support us in times of need.  
Thank you that our offering may provide relief  
for those who suffer in poverty of body or spirit.  
In the week ahead, O God, may we turn each moment of joy into praise,  
and may we cling to your promise in times of suffering.  
Guide us, O God, so that we can obey you.  
Make your light shine through us  
so that others will see our good deeds and glorify you.  
Fill our lives with love for you, O God,  
and for the world that so desperately needs its Savior, in whom we pray. Amen

### **Benediction**

May our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the one who came with grace and truth,  
also fill your hearts with grace and truth,  
as you serve him in the days ahead.  
And may the joy of the Lord—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—  
be your strength. Amen