

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, July 31st, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Stuff
Proper 13
Luke 12:13-21

Welcome

Those who love Jesus and those who are searching, welcome!
 Today, we gather to hear from God, to learn from God, to talk to God.
 If we have any visitors here today, we are eager to share with you the joy we have in knowing Jesus.
 May we all grow in our knowledge and love of Christ as we worship our God.

Announcements

Call to Worship

All who thirst, come to the water.
 Come, all who are weary;
 come, all who yearn for forgiveness.
 The Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ has washed over us,
 and our gracious and holy God beckons and blesses us.
 Drink deeply of these living waters.
Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

Prayer of Adoration

Spirit divine, inspire our prayer
 and make our hearts your home.
 Descend with all your gracious power;
 come, Holy Spirit, come!
 Come as the light, reveal our need,
 and lead us on paths of life.
 Come as the fire, cleanse our hearts with purifying flame;
 let our whole life be an offering to our Redeemer's name.
 Come as the dove, spread your wings of peaceful love;
 and let your church on earth become as your church above.
 Spirit divine, make this lost world your home.
 Come, Holy Spirit, come! **Amen.**

Opening Hymn # 293: "Come, Thou Almighty King"

Come, thou almighty King,
 help us thy name to sing;
 help us to praise.

Father all-glorious,
o'er all victorious,
come and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.

To thee, great One in Three,
eternal praises be
hence evermore!
Thy sov'reign majesty
may we in glory see,
and to eternity
love and adore.

Call to Confession

Spirit divine, inspire our prayer
and make our hearts your home.
Descend with all your gracious power;
come, Holy Spirit, come!
Come as the light, reveal our need,
and lead us on paths of life.
Come as the fire, cleanse our hearts with purifying flame;
let our whole life be an offering to our Redeemer's name.
Come as the dove, spread your wings of peaceful love;
and let your church on earth become as your church above.
Spirit divine, make this lost world your home.
Come, Holy Spirit, come! Amen

Prayer of Confession

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.
Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!
**If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?**

But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.
**I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning.**

Assurance of Pardon

O Israel, hope in the LORD!
 For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
 and with him is great power to redeem.
 It is he who will redeem Israel
 from all its iniquities.

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 59. What is the significance of Pentecost?

Beginning with Pentecost, God's Spirit came to dwell with the church in a new and ever-present way. All Christians share in the Spirit, "being baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). By the Holy Spirit, Christ's Church comes alive, is sustained, and guided. And the Spirit also works freely in the world bringing goodness and justice.
 1 Cor 12:13, Eph 4:4, 1 Thess 1:5, Acts 9:31

60. What does the Holy Spirit give to the Church?

A variety of gifts is given to individuals in the Church. These gifts fall into three main groups: those concerned with preaching and teaching, those concerned with service, and those concerned with leadership (1 Corinthians 12:28). Each Christian has his or her own gift and is called to exercise it in the service of Christ.
 1 Cor 12:4-7, 1 Cor 7:7, 1 Pet 4:10

Question 61. How should we regard the gift of speaking with tongues and of healing?

Scripture regards them as gifts of the Spirit and gives instruction for their exercise. The Apostle Paul counselled that their public use be orderly. What is important is that these gifts witness to Jesus Christ, build up the Christian community, and be motivated by and received with love and understanding.
 1 Cor 12:8-10, 1 Cor 14:39-40, 1 Thess 5:19

Question 62. How can we tell when the Holy Spirit is present?

The evidence for the presence of the Holy Spirit is seen not only in the spectacular and the unusual but also in what the Bible calls "the fruit of the Spirit": love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Acts 19:6, 1 Cor 14:18-19, 1 Cor 13:1

Music Ministry: “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho” by John McEwen & Morna Douglas

Prayer for illumination

Almighty God, you have spoken to us through your Son.
 Let your written Word now be spoken and heard by each of us.
 Give us ears to hear and hearts to understand,
 that we may not refuse your calling or ignore your voice.
 May we all be taught by you through your powerful Word.
 Bring our every thought captive to obeying Christ,
 to the glory of your holy name. **Amen.**

Scripture

Luke 12:13-21

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” ¹⁴But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” ¹⁶And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ ²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Children’s Hymn # 292: “Father I Adore You”

Father, I adore You
 Lay my life before You
 How I love You
 Jesus, I adore You
 Lay my life before You
 How I love You
 Spirit, I adore You

Lay my life before You
How I love You

Sermon

Over the Last few weeks, we have been touching on many of the practical aspects of being a Christian. Last week we spoke of prayer and its importance in developing our relationship with God. The week before we talked about understanding the need to get rid of the white noise in our lives, the things which distract us and in essence keep us from praying to and listening for God in our lives.

This week's parable of 'The Rich Fool' deals with one of the most common forms of white noise we have in our lives. Perhaps the one that all of us fall victim to most often in our lives, the one that distracts us most from spending time in prayer, in talking to and listening for God in our lives. STUFF!

Now before we dig to deeply into this, I want everyone to note that this is the parable of 'The Rich Fool', not the parable of 'The Rich Man'. It is not teaching that we need to give away all of our valued stuff, money and possessions, to be a good Christian. In fact, there have been many great Christians who have been both rich and extremely faithful throughout Christian History. Instead, this parable is focused on the fool portion of its name, and it could be applied to both the rich in material goods or poor in material goods, the rich in fame and popularity or the poor in fame and popularity or any other thing which we place value in within our lives here on earth.

To keep it simple today though we will be focused on the material possessions that we all have, our stuff. Our money, our clothing, our house, our car, all of our possessions make up our stuff. We all like our stuff, I know I like my stuff and I am sure that all of you like your stuff as well. What this parable is doing is warning us that we should not let our stuff become the focus of our lives.

Matthew 15:26 tells us ' ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?'

Matthew 15:26

²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

For many people the whole focus of life is stuff. There is a saying that is often repeated by those in business and seeking wealth, in the words of Malcom Forbes, the man who established Forbes magazine, one of the premier magazines on wealth and investment. Forbes said, 'He who dies with the most toys wins', and there are many people in this world who live their whole existence based on these words, doing whatever it takes to amass wealth, toys, and the things that the material world values. Yet at the age of 70, Malcom Forbes died of a heart

attack in his home, and all of his wealth, his business, all of his toys, stayed here on earth and meant nothing to him after his death, so did he really win?

This parable would indicate that he in fact did not win. The truth of life on earth is that no matter how many possessions we accrue, no matter how much wealth or fame or popularity we have, we die, and when we die nothing, we have done on this planet in terms of earthy matters has any value beyond our life here on earth.

So today we will be talking about stuff, about earthly possessions and wealth. This is not a message that will be on tithing, at least not directly, but I want to touch on it a little here at the beginning because I do believe that it relates to the over parable. If you think of your wealth, your assets in property and other possessions, your money or even just your paycheck as a percentage, all you have is 100%. What percentage do you give to God in tithing? 1%, 3%, 7%, 10% or more? Do you do it on the gross or on the net? How do you think about what you tithe? I am not telling you this because I want everyone to open up their wallets and drop money in the tithe, I am asking because how you think about your tithe will help you understand the parable of 'The Rich Fool'. Do you think it all belongs to you and you are giving money to help God and the Church, or do you believe it is all you have is a gift from God and you are keeping a portion to help you continue to do work in His name here on earth?

Luke 12:13

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

Which is why this parable starts by saying, 'someone in the crowd'. No name, no class, no title, just someone. This parable is given no specifics because it can be applied to every human who has lived, is living and will ever live here on earth equally. It tells us all of the real consequences of our life if we live like the fool while we are here on earth.

This someone interrupts Jesus to ask him to settle a dispute between him and his brother over an inheritance. The someone was concerned that he was not getting a fair share of the stuff, a share he felt that he deserved, and he wants Jesus as the Rabbi, the teacher, to go to his brother and use his authority as a teacher to tell his brother to share the inheritance equally. This is not an odd request; the rabbis were often the supreme authority on matters in the Israelites culture and would often make rulings on things of all different kinds that were brought to them by the people.

Yet Jesus responds to him in a very different manner than he probably expected. Jesus tells him 'Who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?'. Jesus was breaking out from expectations; The Pharisees and Sadducees of the time enjoyed their role as rulers over the people and an opportunity to show their authority and judge in case like this would be relished. However, Jesus rebukes the man instead.

Jesus rebukes him and confronts the man over his greed. This someone is seeking out stuff that was never his, its an inheritance. In Old Testament law the answer to inheritance is clear, the inheritance always goes to the eldest son, fully and completely. This was law because it prevented fights, it prevented conflict, it prevents farms, homes, and families from becoming divided over things that only mattered here on earth. Jesus rebukes this someone because if the man was a true believer, he would not question the law of God in the Old Testament and seek out more stuff here on earth.

Think about the world we live in, people are so involved in stuff, material goods that they will legally go after relatives all the time over inheritances. Family disputes, fights and even long-time alienation has occurred over inheritances. Brothers and sisters going their entire lives not speaking to each other, not supporting each other, not loving one another.... over stuff.

So, Jesus looks at the someone and responds ‘, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”’ Or to put it simply, do not get caught up in the pursuit and collection of stuff. I hope you see the parable and its relationship to how you think about your own stuff? Where do we draw the line between what we need and what we greed? That is the teaching that Jesus laws forth in the parable of ‘The Rich Fool’.

Greed is the enemy of a heart bent on service to God. Greed is the attitude that will create so much white noise in our lives that spending time with God in prayer and in listening becomes a constant challenge. Greed makes it hard to listen to and obey the teachings of the Lord, it makes us want to hoard all of our time, talents, and treasures for ourselves.

Greed makes people believe that everything that they currently have, everything that they will ever have belongs to them and them alone. Greed says I owe this to me, I deserve this, and I deserve everything I get because I earned it, its all mine. Most people whose lives are driven by greed will not admit to it, but greed comes from fear, fear of not having enough, fear of not having what makes them stand out, or leaves them feeling vulnerable and not ready for their own future. Greedy people cannot trust in God to provide, they feel the need to do it for themselves.

So, it is fear that leads to greed and greed that leads to this need for a bigger barn that ‘The Rich Fool; has in the parable.

In the parable, we are presented with the story of a man who has been blessed with a bountiful harvest. A harvest much greater than he may have received in the past. In fact, the harvest was so great that he had more than he needed to continue to live as he was living.

His first thought is what should I do with this blessing. This is the first thing anyone does when a sudden windfall comes there way. What am I going to do with my stuff? The man comes up with a plan to ensure he can enjoy his bountiful harvest for as long as possible. He decides the

best course of action is to tear down his current barns and build bigger ones. With a bigger barn he will have more space to store his bounty to enjoy it for many more years.

This is what society teaches all of us. Store it up for the end of your life, when you retire, so that you can enjoy your remaining years here on earth. Or if you are one of the younger generations maybe you live your life a little differently, you believe in YOLO (you only live once) so the philosophy is not to save up for retirement but instead eat, drink and be merry after all this is your time to live. The focus is on self, looking after self-first either in retirement or in pleasure. This is the greed that we are being warned about.

The bible calls for us to be good stewards of the gifts that God gives us, our talents, our time here on earth and the treasures we amass while living and working in the world. The bible would seem to indicate that the YOLO lifestyle is not good stewardship of the life and the blessings which God give us in this world, after all that lifestyle means we are always putting those things at risk for our own pleasure and not God's glory.

However, the same could be said of a lifestyle that is focused on amassing wealth, because that is what 'The Rich Fool' is guilty of in the parable. We are called to be good stewards of our blessings. Saving up for a rainy day, or for our kids or grandkids education, to buy a house or a new car, these are all good and wise decisions for us to make with the blessings of wealth that God has given each of us, but when is it enough?

When you have a home, do you always need a bigger one, with more rooms, the need for more furniture, more entertainment, more space often means more costs in heating and electricity. Do we always need a bigger and better car, do we need the top of the line or baseline? Can we buy used or does it have to be new. For many people this is perhaps best seen in phones. Apple has specifically designed its phones to have a lifespan of around 3 years, they support them for 5 years which is the legal requirement, they constantly push people to get new, keep in line with the current trends. Spend, spend, spend, earn, earn, earn, not for the betterment of yourself or for society, but so that you can own that next best thing that everyone else envies you for having.

When is enough, actually enough? How much money do you need saved up in a bank account or in RRSPs? How much do you need for your child's or grandchild's education? How much is needed to be saved for a rainy day? At what point do we look at our account and think, that is enough!

This does not mean that we go and empty out our savings, or rainy-day safety net. It does not mean that Christians are not allowed to own nice things, we can buy a nice new big SUV, we just need to be able to say this is enough and not get caught up in the world which says always chase the material, at the sacrifice of the spiritual.

It does not mean that we have to go out and divest ourselves of our excess, we do not have to go out and actively give away all of the extra's we have, we can still have extra, we can still

enjoy the blessings of the wealth of time, talent, and treasure that God has given us. What it means is that when we are living in an excess of these things, we should be willing to share from our excess, out of our desire to be Christlike and our desire to love our brother and sister as ourselves.

It is kindness, mercy, grace, and love that stops greed, that chases it from our lives. When we remember all that Jesus has done for us, we seek to do the same for others. When we love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and body we begin to honestly love our neighbor as ourselves and that means we begin to drive the greed we all know out of our lives.

Jesus told the man who had wanted his brother to split the inheritance that it is not abundance of stuff that God is looking for in our lives. No where in the bible does it say that those who are wealthy live longer, no where in the bible does it say that God does a quick financial background check to see your credit score before you are allowed into heaven.

Jesus often teaches just the opposite, that we can lose our eternal life if we focus too much on the material in this life.

Matthew 6:33 says that we are to seek his kingdom first, and then we will receive all of the other blessings we need in this life.

Matthew 6:31-33

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

‘All things will be added to you’, all of our needs will be fulfilled by our God, maybe even some of our wants. Our faith in God means that we will have peace in our life, that peace of mind that means we no longer need to live in fear. When we no longer are living in fear, we can start to live a life that desires to share our blessings with one another in this life, so that they can discover the blessings of the father and the peace that he brings for themselves.

The scripture tells us that we are not to store up treasures here on earth. In fact, the book of Matthew goes even further.

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Simply put, do not build barns here on earth when you can instead be building barns in heaven. Everything we have here on earth will be lost, but the things we have stored up in heaven we will have for all of eternity.

‘The Rich Fool’ had been blessed by God with a bountiful harvest and his first thought was greed. His first thought should have been of thanks to God for providing him the harvest, it was God that provided the sunshine and the rain that made the harvest possible. Yet here in the parable the man is focused on his own greed and not on the blessing he has received from God. Just look at how many times he says I will.

Luke 12:16-19

¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully,

¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’

¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” ’

So, Jesus reminds this man through the parable that all you have here on earth is at the grace of God.

Luke 12: 20-21

²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.’

Everyone dies, everyone, death has been proven to be 100% effective on 100% of all humans that have ever been born. Everyone dies and when we do our stuff does not follow us, it stays here on earth and is divided up.

All of that stuff that you save up, you may never get to enjoy if your time of death comes before you reach the point of planning you had made.

There is a modern version of this parable that is similar, it tells of a man who finds a genie in a bottle. He rubs the bottle and is given one wish, being a smart businessman, he asks for a financial news paper from the near future, knowing that if he invests wisely, he can make a fortune and reap the benefits of his bountiful harvest for years to come. The genie grants his wish, and he receives the paper, and the genie disappears. He quickly flips to the stock market pages and begins to make notes on all of the stock prices and how they have changed from the current day. He calculates and tabulates and figures out all of the stocks which will make him the most profit. Finally satisfied he sits down and begins to read the rest of the paper out of curiosity of what will happen in the future. Its all well and exciting until he comes to one page of the paper that leaves him in shock. There on the obituary page, he reads of his own death, all of his work and wishing will mean nothing as he will never live to enjoy what he had done.

We can work hard, study hard, earn wealth, power, fame and do it all for our own benefits here on earth. We can hoard up these things and think about how wonderful our remaining years will be and lose it all in an instant. When we are full of greed and focus on self, we forget the most important blessing we have been given by God, our lives.

‘The Rich Fool’ never saw beyond himself. His own little piece of the world. He never thought about when he had enough, he just always focused on saving more. The Romans use to say that ‘money was like sea water; the more you drink the thirstier you become.’

This is the heart of the fool is the polar opposite of what Christianity is meant to be! ‘The Rich Fool’ is not invested in the kingdom of heaven, he is not storing in the barns of heaven by sharing his blessing here on earth. He is more concerned with storing up the things he thinks he needs here on earth than on the blessings he can share now and store up in heaven for later.

Does the name R.G. Letourneau sound familiar to any of you?

I am guessing the majority of us have never heard of him. I had never heard of him until I sat and started to dig deeper into today's scripture. Mt. Letourneau never made it past seventh grade, but he had a mind for invention and engineering. He taught himself the things which he didn't learn in school and eventually got into the earth moving industry. He was the man who invented many of the earth moving machines that were used by the engineering corps of the allies during WWII and in the development and constructing of the highway and road infrastructure across North America.

He was also a believer. In his thirties he fell into debt and in his need he turned to the Lord. He discovered in doing so that a call from God into His service does not mean just being a missionary, or evangelist or preacher. God calls people from all walks of life into His service, regardless of their education, their financial well being or their choice of careers.

So, he asked God to be his business partner. He took it seriously, and when his company enjoyed success, he shared those success with the Lord. He believed that it was through the blessings of the Lord that he was successful and that he should share those blessings back to God and to his fellow man.

So, he did something that would be considered unheard-of in the modern financial world. He consistently gave away 90% of the profits of his company and lived on the 10%. He believed the question that Christians should ask themselves is not how much of the money I have should I give to God, but instead how much of God's money should I keep for myself?

R.G. Letourneau knew the importance of placing God first. He experienced great blessing, wealth, and life. However, he always thought of God first in his life. He understood that his success and the money he received through it was a blessing given to him by God and for that

reason he sought to share his blessings with as many people as he could. To share his blessings with others and by doing so to spread the message of the Gospel.

He even went so far as to establish LeTourneau University which still stands today as a Christian based technical institutes in the state of Texas. His legacy here in earth continues to give unto future generations of Christians. Think of how much his legacy will differ from that of 'The Rich Fool'.

Money is a blessing we all get in this life, but when we hoard it, worry over it, seek to only focus upon it we lose the chance to use it to bless ourselves and others through the work of the Lord.

Whether we are rich or poor the message is the same for all of us. Do not let greed rule our hearts and interfere in our relationship with God.

Instead, we need to live our lives without fear and in his peace sharing all of our blessings of time, talent, and treasure with others, building up the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

We all need to ask ourselves are we giving to God what we can spare out of our blessings or are we keeping for ourselves what we need and using the rest to spread the glory of God's kingdom?

Let us pray,

Direct Us in All Our Doings

O Lord,
 with your love
 direct us in all our doings,
 and always help us,
 that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you,
 we may glorify your holy name;
 and finally, by your mercy obtain eternal life;
 through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

Source: 1789 U. S. Book of Common Prayer, Prayer to be Used at Sea

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. standrewspertchoffering@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

We thank you, O God,
for the gifts of time, talent, and treasure
that come from you alone;
for the time of those who have planned
and those who have practiced
for this, our time of worship together;
for the talents of readers, musicians, and authors of hymns;
for the talents of preachers, presiders, and writers of prayers;
for this treasure of money earned by your gift of our labor,
so that we might offer it in love to you
for the work of your kingdom. Amen.

Closing Hymn # 357: "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds"

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,
and drives away our fear.

O Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend,
my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.

Pastoral Prayer

We praise and thank you, O Lord,
that you have fed us with your Word.
Grateful for your gifts and mindful of the communion of your saints,
we offer to you our prayers for all people.

God of compassion,

we remember before you
 the poor and the afflicted,
 the sick and the dying,
 prisoners and all who are lonely,
 the victims of war, injustice, and inhumanity,
 and all others who suffer from whatever their sufferings may be called.

O Lord of providence
 holding the destiny of the nations in your hand,
 we pray for our country.
 Inspire the hearts and minds of our leaders
 that they, together with all our nation,
 may first seek your kingdom and righteousness
 so that order, liberty, and peace may dwell with your people.

O God the Creator,
 we pray for all nations and peoples.
 Take away the mistrust and lack of understanding
 that divide your creatures;
 increase in us the recognition that we are all your children.

O Savior God,
 look upon your church in its struggle upon the earth.
 Have mercy on its weakness,
 bring to an end its unhappy divisions,
 and scatter its fears.
 Look also upon the ministry of your church.
 Increase its courage, strengthen its faith,
 and inspire its witness to all people,
 even to the ends of the earth.

Author of grace and God of love,
 send your Holy Spirit's blessing to your children here present.
 Keep our hearts and thoughts in Jesus Christ, your Son, our only Savior,
 who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit as our one true God,
 now and forevermore, Amen.

Benediction

May you, people of God, know that
 God our Father made you and guides your every step;
 Jesus Christ gave his life for you and brings you new life;
 the Spirit keeps you in the Lord's presence and empowers you to serve.
 May almighty God continue to bless you and move you each day. **Amen.**