

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, August 7th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Ready and Waiting
Proper 14
Luke 12:32-40

Welcome

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Announcements

Call to Worship

In your wisdom, O God, you call us here to worship you.

We gather, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be fully alive with your life abundant,
ready to listen and respond with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

We listen, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be always watchful for your Word of wisdom,
sometimes startling and unexpected,
sometimes still and quiet,
but always dwelling among us.

We watch and wait for the Word of God.

Prayer of Adoration

In your wisdom, O God, you call us here to worship you.

We gather, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be fully alive with your life abundant,
ready to listen and respond with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

We listen, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be always watchful for your Word of wisdom,
sometimes startling and unexpected,
sometimes still and quiet,
but always dwelling among us.

We watch and wait for the Word of God. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: "Wonderful Words of Life" Philip Paul Bliss

Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words of life.
Let me more of their beauty see,

Wonderful words of life.
 Words of life and beauty, teach me faith and duty.
 Beautiful words, wonderful words,
 Wonderful words of life.
 Beautiful words, wonderful words,
 Wonderful words of life.

Christ the blessed One gives to all,
 Wonderful words of life.
 Sinner, list to the loving call,
 Wonderful words of life.
 Oh, so freely given, wooing us to heaven.
 Beautiful words, wonderful words,
 Wonderful words of life.
 Beautiful words, wonderful words,
 Wonderful words of life.

Call to Confession

Let us confess our sin before God and one another

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
 in your gracious presence
 we confess our sin and the sin of this world.
 Although Christ is among us as our peace,
 we are a people divided against ourselves
 as we cling to the values of a broken world.
 The profit and pleasures we pursue
 lay waste the land and pollute the seas.
 The fears and jealousies that we harbor
 set neighbor against neighbor
 and nation against nation.
 We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,
 of intellect and reason,
 and turn them into bonds of oppression.
 Lord, have mercy upon us;
 heal and forgive us.
 Set us free to serve you in the world
 as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!
 Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,

whose sin is covered.

Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Know that in Jesus,
God embraces you, forgives you,
and strengthens you to live a renewed life.
Thanks be to God.

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 63. Did the Holy Spirit inspire the Bible?

Yes. The Bible itself testifies to the Spirit's inspiration of its writings. The Holy Spirit also guided the church in the selection of the canon, and leads us by an inner witness to accept the scriptures as God's written word to us. Holy Scriptures are necessary, sufficient and reliable for our salvation, revealing Jesus Christ, the living Word.
Tim 3:16-17, Pet 1:20-21, Cor 2:11-13

Question 64. What does it mean to call the Bible the Word of God?

It means that God speaks to us through the Bible and calls us to faith and obedience. At the same time the Bible is also a human word and its writing was conditioned by the language, thought, and setting of its time.
Tim 3:14-15, Jn 1:3-4, Eph 2:19-20

Question 65. What authority does the Bible have in the church?

The Bible is the primary rule of faith and life. It is the standard of all teaching in the church by which we test any word that comes to us from tradition, world, or inner experience. To it no other writings are to be added.
Tim 3:16, Jn 10:34-36

Music Ministry: "Breathe/Potter's Hand" by Jeff Earl

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 12:32-40

³² “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

³⁵ “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!
³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Children’s Hymn: “Sing Hallelujah” *Linda Stassen*

Sing Hallelujah to the Lord!
Sing Hallelujah to the Lord!
Sing Hallelujah,
Sing Hallelujah,
Sing Hallelujah to the Lord!

Jesus is risen from the dead!
Jesus is risen from the dead!
Jesus is risen,
Jesus is risen,
Jesus is risen from the dead!

Sermon

All throughout the scripture in Luke we have been looking at for the past few weeks we see Jesus teaching the disciples and others, including all of us, the principles of Kingdom Living. As we move through His word, we will begin to see that he is focused on teaching them for the time of His crucifixion and the ministry that they will all be expected to carry on after he has ascended.

The scripture today is of particular importance in regard to this because we know when Jesus ascended, we know that we are in the world now and awaiting His return, but we do not know when that will occur, and today's scripture is Jesus telling his people to be ready for His return. In fact, he tells them to always be ready for his return, because he will return in all of his glory when they are not expecting Him.

The parable we are looking at today describes a scene where we see servants awaiting the return of their master from a wedding banquet. The main point being that they are to remain vigilant, ready, and waiting for their master's return. Jesus wants all of us to reflect upon what it means to prepare ourselves for his return, to be vigilant, ready, and waiting for His return, and how we do this in our faithfulness.

Today's scripture begins with a reminder of what we spoke about last week, fear not, do not get caught up in greed and worry about what happens here on Earth. Instead remain focused on God and place all of your trust in Him to provide for all of your needs. Be his servants here on earth, looking after your brothers and sisters, storing up treasure in heaven and not here on earth where it can be taken away from you. And concludes once again with a reminder that what we treasure shows where our heart truly is focused. Reminding us that we should treasure our relationship with God, our Lord and Master above everything else in this world.

Then in verse 35 it tells us to, '**Stay dressed for action**'. This is a very simple visual image for the people of the time to understand. Remember that the people of the time all wore long robes and often they were worn without a belt of any kind, which meant moving around quickly in them was not possible, at least not without tripping over themselves. If they needed to do anything strenuous, they would put a rope belt about their waist and tuck their robe into the belt, allowing their legs more freedom and giving themselves the ability to move quickly and efficiently to get their work done. When Jesus is telling them to stay dressed for action this is what he is telling them, 'Put your belt on and be ready to do some work and move quickly, at all times.'

Next, they are instructed to, '**keep your lamps burning**'. Once again to the people of the time this made perfect sense. We live in a world filled with modern conveniences, flick a switch and we have light, any not just any light, enough light to flood a whole room. In the past it was not that simple, candles and lanterns or lamps were used to light a room, and they were not battery operated. Lamps and lanterns required oil, which was poured through a small opening on the side and then lit, not with a lighter or match, but usually by flint and steel, which required great care and attention when lighting. If you wanted light at night you had to get your lamps ready during the day, and you usually lit them at dusk and kept them burning, some of us here who may have gone camping in the past might remember just how difficult it can be to get a gas lantern lit at night in the dark, even with the modern conveniences. So again, Jesus is saying, 'Be ready at all times, always be preparing for the coming.'

In the parable they are told to always be ready and prepared for the coming of their master. We are told that the master has gone off to a wedding, perhaps even his own wedding and that these servants are awaiting his return.

Wedding in the middle east at the time were always held at night, away from the heat of the day and they could often last for up to a week. This means that they would have no real way of predicting the return of their master, they only assurance would be that he was at a wedding, and he would return when it was over, and that could be at any minute of the day or night.

When we look at these same lines from a spiritual point of view, it seems to tell us that Jesus is away at the marriage feast of Heaven and as assuredly as the disciples saw him ascend into heaven he will be returning. Like the servants we do not know when Jesus will return, so we should always be ready. Jesus wants us watching and waiting, fully prepared for his return. Fully ready to praise and worship him when he comes back here to earth.

We are called as his faithful servants to wait for the return of the Lord. Some do this in a very calculated and methodological way, they understand that Jesus will return, then know all of the facts of his return because of their understanding of scripture and theology. These people often are not overly excited about the return of the Lord, instead it is simply a fact of faith that they accept, it does not drive them in their faith in any way.

Others are more like Queen Victoria. One Sunday after Queen Victoria had heard a message proclaimed by her chaplain, she told her personal friend. How she wished that the Lord would return during her lifetime. Her friend curious to why she would say such a thing asked why she would wish for the Lord's return. She replied, 'Because I would love to lay my crown at His blessed feet in reverent adoration.' The Queen of England, one of the most powerful and respected rulers in the world, hoped to lay her crown, the symbol of all her status here on earth at the feet of Jesus Christ.

This is how many Christians think about the second coming, they look forward to the day that they can offer praise and glory to the Lord in person. They live each day for His glory, for His kingdom and in His service. Their heart is motivated by the thought of His return, and they live each and every day as if it could be the day of His return, full of hope and expectation of seeing our Lord Jesus Christ face to face. Keeping their robes ready and their lamps lit, in hopes of the master's return.

Luke 12:37-38

³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!

Those servants who were readied and waiting for their master's return were blessed by him. It was the master who raised up his own robes and served his own servants while they reclined at

the table. This is the incalculable blessing that comes to the servants who are watching and ready for their master. Jesus will humbly serve those who are ready and waiting for his return.

Notice it does not say, 'Blessed are those servants who, when the Lord comes, he finds working, witnessing, praying, preaching or studying.' It says blessed are those who are watching and waiting, we do not need to be perfect Christians, we just need to be faithful Christians, watching and waiting, girded up and lamps lit, looking for the return of the Lord. We just need to understand that life should be centered around our relationship with the Lord, we can be busy doing other things, but we should be watching and waiting for his return.

No matter what is happening in our lives, whether we are in relationships that are great or struggling, whether we are financially stable or struggling, healthy or in a constant battle of pain and wellbeing, we need to know we are blessed because we have life, a life that the Lord our God gave to us. Blessed because we know that this is just temporary and will all be forgotten in the eternal life we will have in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who are ready and waiting. Jesus again emphasizes the readiness when he once again proclaims that those who are ready in the second watch or third watch. Those who stayed awake through the night in anticipation of the master's return are blessed.

Those who the Lord has blessed are fully aware that the life they live is not all about them, it is not all about their selfishness, their greed, but instead is all about Him. Everything that they have is because of His love, grace, and mercy. They realize we are blessed because our Lord shed his blood and died upon the cross to pay the debt of our sins and brought us back into a relationship with God the Father.

Finally, the last example that Jesus uses to ensure that those listening throughout the ages understand the importance of waiting and readiness is that of the thief in the night. This example is used in Matthew, Thessalonians and even Revelation. If someone knows when they are going to be robbed it is quite simple to prevent the robbery, you can be ready and waiting for the thief and either have the police their waiting or find some other method of preventing the robbery. Luke 12:40 then makes this trilogy of advice on being ready and waiting absolutely clear.

Luke 12:40

⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

We are to be watching, alert and ready, prepared and waiting for the return of Jesus. This verse tells us clearly there will be no warning, no chance to get ready, to prepare, because the Son of Man will be coming at an hour that we do not expect.

Think about all those people who scour through the book of revelation and try to make a guess at the time of Jesus's return. All the people who examine world events and look for a clear sign of the second coming. The people who have had whole ministries based upon an apocalyptic prediction. Did they skip this line in the scripture? As soon as we think we know when Jesus is

coming, we can rest assured that he is not coming, because we would be expecting his return and he quite clearly says that he will come when we are not expecting his return.

Will the Second coming happen in our lifetime? Looking at world events quite possibly.

What about in the next decade? Again, very plausible when you look at the direction the world is moving in, the way that whole societies are glorifying sinful living and the rise in the persecution of Christianity.

What about within the next year? Certainly unlikely, but who knows.

What about tomorrow or even today? Not possible right. That is interesting because the scripture says he will come when we do not expect, and I certainly do not expect the book of revelation and Jesus's second coming to begin tomorrow and certainly not today.

We are being told to be constantly on alert for the possible return of Jesus. If we think that we can calculate, predict or in some other way figure out when Jesus will return, we are wrong. We need to be living our lives, every day, and every moment as if it could be the time of Jesus's return, in constant anticipation of his coming back.

A Christian is meant to always be ready and waiting for Christ's return. That instead of living in fear of not having what we need in this world we should be trusting in God's provision, trusting in him to provide the things we need to make it through this life. We should have our robes girded and our lamps ready to be lit at all times, constantly at work bring the word of God into our lives and the lives of everyone we meet. However, the reality is that we often get lulled into inactivity, because we feel like it could be a long way off before we see the return of Jesus. The second coming will surely not come within our lifetime.

Yet here is Jesus, warning all of us three times to be ready before clearly telling us to be awake, aware, and awaiting his return. Everyday we should be preparing for our eternity, not rushing around at the last minute, but instead slowly and steadily preparing for the second coming of Jesus, living our lives in service to him and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

People who diagnosed with terminal illnesses often go through a stage of sudden realization where they try to repair all of the broken relationships and wrongs in their lives before, they die. Jesus is telling us that we should not be waiting for the diagnosis, we should be working at fixing our relationships and repairing our wrongs each and every day because we are not going to be told of or given any sign of his second coming.

There is a story told of a young monk meeting St. Francis of Assisi while he was working in his garden. The young monk asked St. Francis, 'What would you be doing if you knew you only had one day to live?' St. Francis looked at the young monk and replied, 'I would keep hoeing my garden.'

St. Francis lived everyday of his life expectantly awaiting the return of Jesus. He understood that it should not be our life expectancy that determines how we live. We should not be putting off to tomorrow what we know should get done today. Instead, we should be living each day as if it could be the day of Christ's return, in right relationship with Jesus and with our brothers and sisters. Living righteously, with diligence, and without fear.

Jesus promised to return, Jesus told us how to live while we await his second coming in his scriptures. Here he is telling us that we should be living our lives in anticipation. Awake, aware, and looking forward to his return, our lives and example of our readiness.

Jesus tells us to 'be ready' not to 'get ready.' Those of you who are studying Revelation on Wednesdays know I always say, 'Jesus wins, be ready' and that is what he is telling all Christians here, always be ready for his return. Christians are called to live in a constants state of spiritual readiness, anticipating the Second coming of Christ and the moment that we stand before him in all of His glory.

Jesus is coming. If he were to come Tomorrow or today? Are you ready?

The one thing we can be assured of is that He will be coming again, and when he does there will be no chance for us to go back and change everything we want to in our lives, so we should be about our fathers work today, getting right in our relationship with God, with our brothers and sisters, righting our wrongs, living our lives in His service, knowing He could come at any moment.

Let us Pray,

Your Compassion is Boundless

Almighty, merciful God, heavenly Father,
your compassion is boundless.

You are patient, gracious,
and are rich in love and faithfulness.

You forgive rebellion, trespasses and sin.

We have sinned and have become evil,
and have often angered you.

Against you alone have we sinned
and done evil in your sight.

But Lord,
do not think about our past misdeeds.

Let your great mercy be on us,
for we are miserable.

Help us, God of our Salvation.
Redeem us and forgive our sins
for the glory of your most holy name,
and for the sake of your beloved Son,

our Savior Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Pomeranian Agenda, in Gebetbuch, enthaltend ..., #591. Translated for A Collection of Prayers.

Hymn

Communion

Declaration of God's Invitation and Promises

*Hear the words of the institution
 of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ:
 The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,
 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
 "This is my body, which is for you;
 do this in remembrance of me."
 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,
 "This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
 do this in remembrance of me."
 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
 you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Opening

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right for us to give thanks and praise.

Thanksgiving to God

*It is truly right to glorify you, Father,
 and to give you thanks,
 for you alone are God, living and true,
 dwelling in light inaccessible from before time and forever.
 Fountain of all life and source of all goodness,
 you made all things and fill them with your blessing;*

*you created them to rejoice in the splendor of your radiance.
 Countless throngs of angels stand before you
 to serve you night and day,
 and, beholding the glory of your presence,
 they offer you unceasing praise.
 Joining with them,
 and giving voice to every creature under heaven,
 we glorify your name
 and lift our voices in joyful praise:*

Acclimation of Praise

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of
 power and might, heaven and earth are full
 of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
 Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Thanksgiving to Christ

*We acclaim you, holy God, glorious in power;
 your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love.
 You formed us in your own image,
 giving the whole world into our care
 so that, in obedience to you, our creator,
 we might rule and serve all your creatures.
 When our disobedience took us far from you,
 you did not abandon us to the power of death.
 In your mercy you came to our help,
 so that in seeking you we might find you.
 Again and again you called us into covenant with you,
 and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.
 Almighty God, you loved the world so much
 that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior.
 Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
 he lived as one of us, yet was without sin.
 To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation;
 to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy.
 To fulfill your purpose, he gave himself up to death
 and, rising from the grave, destroyed death
 and made the whole creation new.
 And that we might live no longer for ourselves
 but for him who died and rose for us,
 God sent the Holy Spirit,
 God's first gift for all who believe,*

*to complete God's work in the world,
 and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all.
 When the hour had come for him to be glorified
 by you, his heavenly Father,
 having loved his own who were in the world,
 he loved them to the end:
 at supper with them he took bread,
 and after giving thanks to you,
 he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,
 "Take, eat. This is my body, which is given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me."
 After supper he took the cup, saying,
 "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
 shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins.
 Whenever you drink it,
 do it for the remembrance of me."
 Holy God, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption.
 Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead,
 proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand,
 awaiting his coming in glory,
 and offering to you, from the gifts you have given us,
 this bread and this cup,
 we praise you and we bless you.*

**We praise you, we bless you,
 we give thanks to you,
 and we pray to you, Lord, our God.**

*Living God,
 send your Holy Spirit upon us
 as we share your heavenly meal;
 nourish us with your grace
 so that we are strengthened
 to do your work in this world;
 unite us with you so that we are renewed;
 and join us with your covenant people
 throughout time and space
 so that all divisions will be healed.
 May we gratefully and joyfully remember that Jesus, our Savior,
 lived, died, and rose to give us new life
 and make us new creations in him.
 May we live in the hope
 we discover through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen***

The Apostles Creed (Affirmation of Faith)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. AMEN.

The Passing of the Peace

*Lord Jesus Christ, you told your apostles,
 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."
 Grant us always this peace and guide us
 toward the perfect unity of your kingdom for ever.
 Amen.
 Let us give one another a sign of reconciliation and peace.*

Preparation of the Bread and Cup

We celebrate this feast in obedience to Christ's example and mandate.

(Bread Breaking)

*The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread,
 and after giving thanks to God,
 he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,
 "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
 Do this in remembrance of me."*

(Cup Lifting)

*In the same way he took the cup, saying,
 "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
 shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.*

*Whenever you drink it,
do this in remembrance of me.”*

*Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord
until he comes.*

Invitation

*The gifts of God for the people of God.
Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you
and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.*

Taking of the Elements

*Take and eat.
This is the body of Christ, which is [given] for you.
Do this, remembering him.*

*This cup is the new covenant
sealed by Christ’s blood,
which was shed that the sins of many
might be forgiven.
Drink from it, all of you.*

Response of Praise and Prayer

*Loving God,
you graciously feed us
with the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation.
May we who have received this sacrament
be strengthened in your service;
we who have sung your praises
tell of your glory and truth;
we who have seen the greatness of your love
see you face to face in your kingdom.
For you have made us your own people
by the death and resurrection of your Son, our Lord,
and by the life-giving power of your Spirit. **Amen.***

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

Blessed are you, God of all creation.
 Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.
 Bless what we offer for your purposes.
 Give us courage to offer ourselves more fully to you,
 so that our lives bring you honour and glory through Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

Closing Hymn # 682: "Just As I Am, Without One Plea"

Just as I am, without one plea,
 but that thy blood was shed for me,
 and that thou biddest me come to thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2. Just as I am, though tossed about
 with many a conflict, many a doubt,
 fightings and fears within, without,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

3. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
 sight, riches, healing of the mind,
 yea, all I need in thee I find,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

4. Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
 wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
 because thy promise I believe,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Pastoral Prayer

Living God,
 we give you thanks for life and breath to follow you all our days.
 Thank you for the gift of faith that gives us courage when things are difficult,
 and for the encouragement we find in the faith of others we meet.
 Inspire us to remain loyal to you as our true Source of life and hope.

Faithful God,
 thank you for guiding us when we cannot see the path ahead.
 Thank you for showing us a way through our challenges
 when we cannot see a solution on our own
 Renew our trust in you in these days when so much is confusing and uncertain.

We pray for those who wonder if they can rely on you,
 and for those who are afraid for the future.
 Give them courage to listen for your call and follow your leading.

We pray for those who doubt.
 Give them courage to explore those doubts and questions
 and so discover renewed trust in your promises.

We pray for those who are impatient.
 Bless them in times of waiting for what comes next
 and fill them with kindness.

We pray for those who have chosen a path that has led to trouble.
 Turn their hearts towards you
 and lead them in ways of goodness, justice, and generosity.

We pray for your Church in these days when so much is changing.
 Give us wisdom to discern ways to reach out to our community,
 and faithfulness to keep following Jesus into the future you hold in your hands.

Faithful God, we depend on you.
 Be gracious and bless us, so that our lives may be a blessing to others.
 Together we pray in the name of Jesus Christ,
 Our lord and savior,
 Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 As the one true God,
 Now and forevermore, **Amen.**

Benediction

The love of God the Father, the faithful creator,
 the peace of Christ, the wounded healer,
 the joy of the challenging Spirit,
 the hope of the Three in One
 surround and encourage you
 today, tonight, and forever. **Amen.**