

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, September 11th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

All Are Welcome
Proper 19
Luke 15:1-10

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

O God, you summon the day to dawn,
you teach the morning to waken the earth.
**For you, the valleys shall sing for joy,
the trees of the field shall clap their hands.**

For you, the kings of the earth shall bow,
the poor and the persecuted shall shout for joy.
**Your love and mercy shall last forever,
fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise.**

Great is your name.
Great is your love. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

With you, gracious God,
we move into this time of worship,
grateful that you are never farther
than the reach of our need and our prayer.
You who tower over the universe
are yet intimately present,
always renewing the face of the earth,
always renewing the faith of your children.
Now, in your mercy, make your way past
all that worries and distracts us
to lodge in us anew and to center
our small worship on your great glory. Amen.

Opening Hymn # 442: "Speak, Lord, in the stillness"

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
 speak your word to me;
 hushed my heart to listen
 in expectancy.

Fill me with the knowledge
 of your glorious will;
 all your own good pleasure
 in my life fulfil.

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

Almighty and merciful God,
 we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.
 We have followed too much
 the devices and desires of our own hearts.
 We have offended against your holy laws.
 We have left undone those things which we ought to have done;
 and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.
 O Lord, have mercy upon us.
 Spare those who confess their faults.
 Restore those who are penitent,
 according to your promises declared to the world
 in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
 And grant, O merciful God, for his sake,
 that we may live a holy, just, and humble life
 to the glory of your holy name. 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 71. What does it mean that the church is the “body of Christ”?

It means that Christ indwells his church as its head, and that believers are “in Christ.” We belong to Christ and to one another. By baptism we are joined to Christ and in the Lord’s Supper we share in his body and blood. The church is his body even though it clearly has many flaws and failings.
 Col 1:18, 1 Cor 12:13, 1 Cor 10:16-17

Question 72. How is the church “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit”?

As the church is related to God and to Jesus Christ, it is also related to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s work is to create fellowship or community. Christian fellowship means oneness and solidarity: the strong have responsibility for the weak, the rich for the poor, the healthy for the ill, and the joyful for those who weep.
 Acts 2:42, Rom 8:9, 1 Jn 4:13

Music Ministry: “O Jesus I Have Promised” by Choir

Prayer for illumination

(Congregant Written)

Scripture

Luke 15:1-10

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

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

³So he told them this parable: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it,

she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Children's Hymn: "Psalm 23"

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Children's Lesson

Sermon

Last week we learned about the cost of discipleship. Jesus had explained to the crowd that was following him that the cost of discipleship was their denial of self, something that to many would end up being more than they are willing to pay.

Yet despite this high cost he is calling for people to give up their own lives and become one of his disciples, going against the way of the world in obedience to the Word of God. And people came, as they still come to him today, even in areas of the world where Christianity is outlawed people risk their lives to follow Christ.

In Jesus's time many of those who came to follow him were the outcasts of the worldly powers, the tax collectors, prostitutes, sick and sinners of the time. The elite and powerful, those who were members of the Sanhedrin, pharisees and scribes were appalled by the people they saw Jesus spending his time with, they could not understand why someone who claimed to be Holy could associate with people cast so far away from God and his Holiness. What Jesus was doing was a serious social and

religious faux pas, sitting down and eating with these types of people was unacceptable. Eating with anyone was a serious thing, it indicated a relationship between people that was more than just in passing. So, when Jesus sat down with these sinners, he was taking on their sin, in the eyes of the pharisees and scribes he was losing his salvation because of the people he was associating with, guilty by association.

It was not just the pharisees and scribes that thought this way, this was the prevailing thought of almost every one of the times. In truth this is probably still the prevailing thought in most of the world to this day. Guilt by association still exists. Even in the modern world which claims to be so accepting and open armed people are labeled many times by the people they spend time with, especially if its someone from the 'wrong crowd.' When we see someone on the street hanging out with Gangers, we naturally associated them with the gang, same with drug dealers or sports fans or any other grouping of people we define. It has become so prevalent in modern society that people cannot even risk being associated with someone from the 'wrong crowd' in the past yet alone in the present. If a politician decides to do what is right for the people that voted them into their seat by agreeing with the opposition party instead of going along with the party leader, they are suddenly labeled a traitor and publicly shamed. This form of labelling people has even gotten to the point that we judge people based on where they go to school, where they shop, what they wear, where the live, the type of phone they have. We make a million different judgements on who we think someone is before we even spend one moment getting to know who they really are.

And at the same time as we are making all of these judgements about others, we are fearing that we are being judged in the same way by others, we do not ever want to be associated with the 'wrong crowd', so we often live double lives like spies trying to keep our identity hidden from the people around us. I am sure many of you know what I am talking about; our Christian friends do not know about the less savory characters that we call friends; the ones who are sometimes vulgar, maybe they are pro-choice, or atheists, or the ones who voted for the wrong party, or maybe it is the ones who are obnoxious drunks, and just happen to always be drunk. And with those friends we often hide the fact we are Christians; with both groups we go to great lengths to keep them apart, not letting our dual identity ever be discovered or our whole universe could explode.

The double life does not stop there though, we often put up this false front in other areas of our lives as well. We work hard to make our marriage look perfect, even when we fight and struggle in our relationship, we want to appear to be the perfect model for everyone else to desire. We hide the fact that we are struggling financially, that we have people in our home who struggle with addiction. We hide the truth that our kids are sometime problems, and we have to sort life out for them or bail them out of trouble, or maybe even jail. We try to hide every flaw in our life behind a façade to hide all these non-ideal situations in our lives. And as we do this, we learn that the best defense is a good offense, so we start to point out all the struggles we see others going through, the

easiest way to hide our own issues is through a redirection of our own mind. We compare ourselves to others and think 'well at least we are not them.' This is the reason that many people label Christians as hypocrites, we have all the same sins as society and we often try to pretend we do not, we have fallen into the same line of thinking as the pharisees and scribes, ignoring our own sin and failure.

This was the same way that the Pharisees and Scribes lived, and when they looked upon Jesus and the people he associated with, they found him guilty of sin by association. Jesus acknowledges that he associated with the sinful, the outcasts of society, the sick and the lame and he tells the Pharisees and scribes that that is the reason he has come. Jesus is going to tear down the wall, the façade that the Pharisees and scribes have created about themselves, he is going to tell them to set aside their puffed-up, self-righteousness and come to repentance if they want to follow him in the parables recorded in the scripture we read today.

In his first parable he tells the story of a shepherd that does some odd things. When one out of his one hundred sheep is missing, he leaves his ninety-nine sheep alone in the wilderness to seek the one that is lost. Many Christian commentators throughout time have tried to justify the behavior of this shepherd, they claim there must have been multiple shepherds, so he must have left them in the hands of the other shepherds. This is not what we are told in the parable, there is no mention of any other shepherds, so we need to acknowledge that the shepherd chose to leave his ninety-nine sheep alone to go and seek the one that have become lost. For this shepherd leaving the ninety-nine alone and at risk was worth going out to find the one sheep that was missing. Then when he does find that one missing sheep, the shepherd picks it up, carries it home upon his shoulders and upon returning home he celebrates the fact that he found this missing lamb with all of his friends and neighbors. Sure, finding that missing sheep was great, but was it worth throwing a party over. Often when we look at this parable, we picture ourselves as that missing sheep, the one that our shepherd, Jesus Christ, went out into the wilderness and found, then held a celebration for when we returned.

In the second parable, we see a woman make a big deal over finding a single missing coin. Out of her ten coins one goes missing and she turns her house upside down to find that missing coin. The missing coin was a drachma, at some points of time this would have been worth more than a day's wages, at other times it was worth the fraction of a penny, but the value of the coin does not matter. What is important is that it is a single coin out of ten and to the woman in the parable this one missing coin is precious, priceless, and she is willing to go to great lengths to find where it has disappeared to in her home. The woman searches her whole house diligently, high, and low, in all of the nooks and crannies to find the coin. When she finally spots the coin, she is filled with a joy beyond measure. When she finds that single missing coin, she calls her friends and neighbors together to rejoice with her because what has been lost has been found.

These are great stories; they give us so much hope. When we focus on these stories, we usually think of ourselves as that missing sheep or that lost coin, especially when we are new to Christianity. Once we are mature Christians, we see ourselves as that shepherd seeking out the lost sheep, or the woman looking for that lost coin, the focus of evangelism and outreach becomes our understanding of the parable. These things are both true, we are the lost sheep, we are called to go out into the world and evangelize to those who are still seeking God.

However, if we look at the parable in context, going back to the second verse.

Luke 15:2

² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

We can see that these parables were spoken not to the crowd gathered, not to the people who were already followers of Christ, but to the pharisees and scribes who were judging Jesus, the ones who were filled with their self-righteous pride and religiousness. If these religious leaders were as righteous as they claimed to be they would have been out in the world trying to help people, not condemning them, not judging them, not leaving the sick and blind to suffer and die, like the shepherd who sought out the lost sheep. If they were righteous, they would have been bringing the light of God's word, the hope of God's salvation to those who were lost in the darkness, like the woman seeking the lost coin. But instead, they were so assured of their own salvation through their own righteousness that they fail to see the ones who God seeks, they fail to see the seek to do his will. It is because of their self-righteousness, their failure to act, their failing to seek out others, that they fail to see their own sins. They were so busy judging those that they felt were lost that they did not recognize that they were lost themselves. They did not realize it is hard to see your own shortcomings when you are so busy focusing on the shortcomings of everyone else.

In these parables Jesus is reminding all of us of our call. He is reminding his followers what the cost of discipleship is, a true giving of self and a desire to live a life that is representative of Jesus's life and His word in scripture. Jesus came to bring the lost to salvation, to heal the broken, to bring light to those in the darkness. Jesus came to do the things that we could not do, he came to save us from our own self-righteous pride.

The cost of discipleship is everything, Jesus took on our humanity and died in our place. He became sinful by association and we become saints by our association with him. Everyone who hears the call to follow him in this world, regardless of the cost, regardless of their sin. For everyone in this world who repents and believes there is salvation in Jesus. And it is for these lost people that all of heaven will rejoice.

Luke 15:10

¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

This too was a reminder for the Pharisees and Scribes that they were caught up in their own righteousness. They had a saying ‘There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God.’ Christians today must be careful that they do not give the same impression, especially in their often-appropriate zeal to speak out against culturally popular sins.

The reality is that there is no place at the Table in heaven for people who think of themselves as without sin. We are all sinners and there are no works possible that we could perform to gain our salvation. There is no salvation for people who condemn others based off their own judgement, God alone reserves the right for that judgement. Christians are called to walk in this world humbly, without comparison, recognizing their own faults, failures and shortcomings and being grateful for the grace of God which covers all of them, so we are able to enter His Kingdom.

Notice In the parables the lost sheep and the lost coin were not responsible for finding themselves, they did nothing to help themselves be found. They could not make their own way back to their owner. In the same way we are unable to make ourselves found, we are unable to make ourselves worthy to stand before the white throne and be found worthy of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. It is God that does the work, God that finds us, God that saves us through his grace, through the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Think about the parable of the lost sheep, the lengths that that shepherd was willing to go to, how much he was willing to give up saving the one missing lamb which he then carries home on his shoulders. This is what Jesus did upon the cross for each of us, he seeks out each lost sinner and carries the burden of their sins with him to the cross. It is because of Jesus’s seeking out each of us sinners that we will have a seat at the feast of victory in heaven, all because the Good Shepherd was willing to leave his flock and seek us out.

That is the fullness of these parables, we are called to go further than outreach, further than evangelism, we are not called to be perfect Christians, instead we are called to recognition and repentance for who we are in this world. We are called to recognize our own sinful nature our own sins against our Holy God. We need to be willing to confess our sins to him, to confess our failures to him to recognize that we cannot be righteous on our own, because truthfully, we are lost to our own sins each and every day. And each and every day Jesus calls us back to him because of his grace, love, and compassion for his lost sheep. Jesus wants us to have eternal joy, eternal grace. He is calling all lost sheep, all those who are lost in the darkness, all sinners to come back in repentance where he will welcome them with open arms.

Let us pray,

You Have Given Your Beloved Son to Be Our Shepherd

Lord God, heavenly Father,
in your fatherly goodness
you have been mindful of us poor, miserable sinners

and have given your beloved Son
to be our Shepherd,
not only to nourish us by his Word
but also, to defend us from sin, death, and the devil.
Pour out your Holy Spirit on us
so that as our Shepherd knows us
and provides for us in every affliction,
we also may know him,
and trusting in him,
seek help and comfort in him,
obey his voice with all our hearts
and obtain eternal salvation;
through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Easter 2, Misericordias Domini

Music Ministry: “Just As I Am” by Rob Noyes

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Written)

Closing Hymn: “O My Soul”

O my soul arise and bless your Maker
For He is your Master and your Friend

Slow to wrath but rich in tender mercy
Worship the Saviour Jesus

King of grace His love is overwhelming
Bread of Life He's all I'll ever need
For His blood has purchased me forever
Bought at the cross of Jesus

Prayers for the People

(Congregant Written)

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

As you leave this place this day,
may God's love sustain you,
and may you love those who surround you.
May God's Spirit empower you,
and may you empower all those you meet.
May God's joy fill your hearts,
and may this joy overflow
to the ends of the earth for God's glory,
now and forever. Amen.