

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, September 25th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Say it!
Proper 21
Luke 16:19-31

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Here God speaks to us words of challenge and comfort.
Here Jesus stands among us, calling us to acts of mercy.

Even now, the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst,
filling us with hope and inspiring us to faithfulness.

Let us worship God, ever Three and ever One.
Let us praise God's holy name together!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Creating God,
beauty and harmony mark your creation.
As the seasons change,
we see you are still at work in the world,
transforming hearts and situations.
We praise you for all you do to heal this world
to bring peace to places of conflict,
working for goodness to prevail.
You offer us new possibilities day by day,
and so we place our trust in your redeeming power.
Renew our energy for mission this autumn
and open our eyes to new opportunities to reach out in Jesus' name.
Through the power of the Spirit, make us participants in your work,
bringing justice and joy into the world you love.
Amen.

Opening Hymn # 377: "Come Children Join To Sing"

Come, Children, join to sing
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Praise to our King;
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Let all, with heart and voice,
 Saved by God's gracious choice;
 Now in this place rejoice.
 Alleluia! Amen!

Come, lift your hearts on high,
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Let praises fill the sky;
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Christ calls his people friends;
 Lost, out-cast he defends;
 With love that never ends.
 Alleluia! Amen!

Loud now our voices raise,
 Alleluia! Amen!
 No power can still our praise;
 Alleluia! Amen!
 On heaven's blessed shore,
 God's goodness we'll adore,
 Singing forevermore,
 "Alleluia! Amen!

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

**Compassionate God,
 you open your heart to those in need,
 and to your aching creation.
 We confess we often turn away
 so that we do not have to see pain, suffering or injustice,
 right before our eyes.
 We don't like to feel uncomfortable
 or pressed into service.
 Forgive us, and
 give us courage to love others as you love us
 and reach out with the care we have witnessed in Jesus. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

The prophet Micah declared that God requires of us three things:
to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

To all who repent, who act for justice and seek to serve God and neighbour in kindness,
God offers forgiveness and peace.

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen.

Music Ministry: "There Comes a Time" by Choir

Responsive Reading

Question 76. Why does the Presbyterian Church have elders?

The Greek word for elder is "presbyter" from which the Presbyterian Church derives its name. Elders were chosen in ancient Israel to join with the priests and Levites to govern the people. Paul appointed and ordained presbyters and instructed Titus to appoint elders in every city. Elders are elected and ordained to share with the minister in the leadership, pastoral care, and oversight of the congregation. Their rule is exercised not individually but corporately through church courts: sessions, presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly.

Num 11:16, Acts 14:23, 1 Tim 5:17, Titus 1:5

Question 77. Why does the Presbyterian Church also have a diaconal order?

The early church had deacons as well as presbyters. The word comes from the Greek "diakonia" which refers to the church's ministry of service. Today members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries are designated to various ministries in the life of the church. In addition, some congregations have a deacons' court to care for the sick, the suffering and the needy.

1 Tim 3:13, Phil 1:2, Rom 16:1

Question 78. Who are the needy?

All of us stand in need of God's grace and healing. But in particular, the needy are those identified in Jesus' parable of the Last Judgement (Matthew 25:31ff); the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. In these and others in

need, we encounter our living Lord. The church proclaims the good news of salvation not only by word but also by action.

Js 1:2, Ps 41:1, Mt 25:40, Lk 4:18

Children's Hymn: "When He Cometh"

When He cometh, when He cometh
To make up His jewels,
All His jewels, precious jewels,
His loved and His own.

Refrain

Like the stars of the morning,
His brightness adorning,
They shall shine in their beauty,
Bright gems for His crown.

He will gather, He will gather
The gems for His kingdom;
All the pure ones, all the bright ones,
His loved and His own. (Refrain)

Little children, little children,
Who love their Redeemer,
Are the jewels, precious jewels,
His loved and His own. (Refrain)

Children's Lesson (on Hold)

Prayer for illumination **(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

Luke 16:19-31

The Rich Man and Lazarus

¹⁹ "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ And

he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' ²⁷ And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' "

Sermon

'Say it if it's worth saving me' these are some lyrics from a Nickelback song that was written 15 years ago. The music video for the song tells the story a young man who is saved from being hit by a car as he goes to cross the road by a homeless man. Then after he is saved, he begins to see a countdown clock of how long someone has to live above the heads of all the people around him. He realizes that he is the only one who sees this, that he alone knows exactly when every person around him will die. He watches as an old woman is wheeled into an ambulance as her timer ticks down from one minute and sees it hit zero as the paramedics put her in the ambulance only to realize that she has died. He then wanders around the city, looking at these countdowns above the heads of the people around him, everyone else looks at him like he is crazy, they all move away from him, shun him. Until finally he sees a woman with a countdown timer that is under a minute getting into a car, he rushes over and pulls her away from the car just as a piano that has fallen from an apartment above them lands on top of the car. Then as he looks around, he no longer sees the timers, the ability to see the countdown of everyone's life has been passed onto the woman.

Imagine if you had this ability, to look around you and see the amount of life left in the people that you interact with every day, how would that change the way you live? What if you only knew the exact time of your own death, would that change the way you live? I know it would, some people would become heroes, risking their lives for others, others would think about how to get rich, or live wildly enjoying their last moments, some would gather together with friends and family, others might seek out solitude, some would just continue on like any other day, and some would wrestle with and realize their need for Christ in their lives.

However, we do not have this ability, we cannot know our future and our time of death. Instead, we need to live the life we have been blessed with, knowing that God has a plan for all of his creation. This is a truth that we are taught in the scripture, God is

always in control, he always has a plan, and his will is always done. And it is because of this lack of knowing the extent of our life and not fully trusting in God that we often put our trust in other people and other things in this world, things that are not always true. The reality is that we live in a post-modern world now, one in which everyone can define their own truth. The idea is that if you do not like the truth you are living just make up a new one and as long as you believe it no one can contradict you or tell you that you are wrong. We see this playing out over and over in the media today, with people getting further and further from reality and it being accepted and encouraged by worldly organizations and government regulations. But Christians need to know that it is not believing in something that makes it true, only the truth of God is true, and God's truths upsets many people in this world because they do not like his truths as they often require us to recognize our self-centered and sinful nature.

Truth is fact and cannot be dismissed simply because I do not want to believe in it. Likewise, as much as I want to believe in something I cannot believe it into existence and make it my truth. As much as I want to flap my arms and fly, it can never happen. Even if there are people out there that say that it is possible and support and encourage me in my belief. Truth is a reality created by God and personal belief in what we want is often a dangerous fiction.

In New York state they have the New York Thruway, it is a major route of travel which connects almost every major city in the state from Buffalo, through New York and all the way down to the Ohio Border. Many believed it to be one of the safest ways across the state. However, on the morning of April 5th, 1987, at 10:40 am in the morning the Schoharie creek bridge collapsed. As it collapsed one car and a semi that were on the bridge plunged into the water below, then before anyone was able to block off the road three more vehicles sped past them and plunged into the waters below.

Every person in those five vehicles believed that section of highway was safe, they all believed that the bridge was there, and they would happily continue on with their lives after crossing it to whatever their destination was that day. The reality is that the first two had their lives suddenly taken from them and the rest could have been saved if only someone had been there to warn them, to wave them off, or in some other way prevent them from crossing that bridge that fateful day.

If you were there, what would you be willing to do to prevent them from driving onto that bridge? Would you wave frantically from the side of the road, screaming and yelling at them? Or maybe jump out onto the road with a sign? How far would you go to prevent them from plunging off that broken bridge to their death?

What if you know the bridge was going to collapse and you met them at a rest stop or gas station just five minutes away. What would you be willing to say or do to prevent these people from driving over that bridge?

How do you think that they would react to you trying to convince them that the bridge they were about to drive over was going to collapse? You have the truth, but they all believe the bridge is solid and they will reject your truth because it goes against what they believe to be true.

Trying to convince someone to accept the truth and save their lives is often much more difficult than we think. Just look at the number of kids today still smoking or vaping. The rampant use of drugs and alcohol in our society? People do what they want, even when they know it can kill them because the pleasure, they get from it outweighs the truth of what it is doing to their bodies.

The truth is that Jesus came to earth to save us. He came to save us from our own sinful nature and many people refuse to believe that they need saving from what they believe because they do not believe in the dangers that come from those beliefs. In fact, the minute anyone speaks out against their sin of choice, the thing they believe is good for them, that person is immediately assumed to be an enemy, someone who is against them. Even when someone is speaking out of love, trying to warn them of the danger of their false belief.

The modern world loves to paint the church as a group of radicals who are trying to do something to people, to take away the things that they find pleasure in, rather than for people in trying to warn them from the dangerous path they are walking along.

People do not think that they need to be saved from their belief and for that reason they do not want to listen to what the church or the scriptures have to say about salvation.

Think about your own lives, how many of you were warned at some point by a friend or family member about doing or saying something, which you promptly ignored and later thought after things had gone in a different way that you thought they would thought, 'I wish I had listened to them'.

Well, that is what has happened in the scripture we read today. In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus tells us the story of a man that is living the dream life of many people. He is dressed in the finest of clothes, his wants and desires were fulfilled by his servants who surrounded him and catered to his every whim. He lived in a giant house, built to just the way he wanted it. He was the talk of the town, the top dog, the elite. He seemed to have everything that anybody on earth could want or desire. In fact, he did have pretty much everything he could want on earth, the only thing he did not want or have was a relationship with God. He did not believe in God because believing in and obeying God would interfere with his pursuit of his own happiness. Sure, he had heard the stories of the Old Testament, he knew of Abraham and the prophets, but what they taught was just too restrictive to the lifestyle he wanted to live. He was a proud atheist living the dream life with all of the pleasure he wanted whenever he wanted.

Psalm 14:1 starts by teaching 'The fool says in his heart, there is no God.' Atheism is not a new phenomenon; it has existed since the beginning of time. People will always reject the idea of God because of how faith in God interferes with their desire to live a life centered on themselves. Pride refuses to let them set aside their own desire. Telling this rich man that he needed a relationship with God would be like telling one of the Hollywood actors, or sports stars of this world that they need to get a 9-5 at McDonalds to support their lifestyle. In their minds if there was a God, they must already be in good standing with them because of all the worldly things they possess. That God must have loved them and blessed them in their minds. All their thoughts and actions are always centered on them and their lifestyle and their belief in their own personal happiness as the most important thing in this life.

Yet just outside this mans house lives another man, a beggar named Lazarus. He is disheveled, covered in sores and he lays at the entrance to the rich man's estate. He is struggling to get even the basics of life, he would happily eat the leftovers and scraps of the rich mans table, he would probably even be satisfied digging through the rich man's garbage for a meal. The rich man could have easily afforded to send out the scraps of his meal, or his thrown away clothing to help Lazarus.

If many of us were to see these two men side by side, we would naturally assume that the rich man is blessed, and that Lazarus is cursed. We might presume that the rich man has a relationship with God and that Lazarus is one of the lost in this world. This should serve to remind us that none of us truly knows a man's heart, none of us knows the relationship that any person has with God. We can only know our own relationship with the Lord.

For his own reasons God wills that these two men die upon the same day. The rich man likely had a huge funeral with hired mourners, weeping, meals, and lots of important people speaking on the man and how wonderful his life was and how privileged they were to know him. While Lazarus's body was likely dragged away and tossed in the garbage dump where it will either rot away or be burned.

Yet Jesus is showing us what happened on the other side of the grave. He wants to show anyone who is willing to read the scriptures the truth that no one really wants to accept. He is going to reveal the afterlife, something which many people today either no longer believe in or they have modified to create the afterlife they want to believe in. There are many modern-day church goers who say that they do not believe in hell because they do not want to accept the truth that Jesus reveals about what hell is and who it is that goes there.

It is the angels who come to collect Lazarus, and they bring him to heaven, to the side of Abraham, the father of the covenant between God and mankind. The beggar who lived

his life on Earth struggling for the bare necessities of survival was a child of God, blessed to live eternally in heaven, to feast with Jesus and live in eternal Joy.

The rich man however went somewhere very different, he was in Hades, hell. A place of great torment, a place of torture and pain. A place in which eternal fires burn and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus tells us this because he wants us to know the truth about what happens after this life. He wants us to be aware of the realities of the afterlife so that we know what both heaven and hell are like while we still have time in this life, for ourselves and for the people we interact with each and every day of our lives.

The rich man did not end up in hell because of his riches, his mansion, or his servants. He did not even end up there because of how he ignored the needs of Lazarus. The rich man is in hell because he refused to acknowledge his need for God in this life, because he refused to yield his own selfish desires to the will of God in his life.

The rich man had heard the scriptures, he knew who Abraham was, he knew the teachings of the prophets, but they did not fit the lifestyle he wanted to live. He thought he did not need the teachings that Abraham or the prophets had shared while he lived a life of luxury here on earth. But now that he is in Hades, he is desperate to have the help of Abraham. It is interesting that while he had been alive, he had many opportunities to relive some of the suffering that Lazarus had been enduring but had not, yet here in Hades he was desperate for the relief a single drop of water from the fingertip of Lazarus could bring him in his torment.

He calls out to Abraham and asks for Lazarus to dip his finger into water and drip the water to his tongue just to give him a moment of relief from the agony of the fires he is engulfed by for all of eternity. Could you imagine what would have happened if Lazarus had reached out and touched anything the rich man had owned while on earth, he would have shunned him at best, or had him beaten or arrested. Yet in hell he is willing to have Lazarus drip water from his fingers into his mouth.

Abraham reply was probably not easy for the rich man to hear, the truth often does not make us feel better about ourselves because it points out our flaws, failings, and sinful nature. And the truth always seems to hurt us more when it comes too late, when it comes after we have solidified our inability to go back and change the choices we have made in life.

The truth that Abraham shares with the rich man likely hurt him. He reminds the rich man that he had enjoyed all of the good things he desired during his time on earth and that Lazarus had been the one who suffered. Now that their roles are reversed for all of eternity there is nothing that can be done to change that, he even tells the rich man that

there is a giant chasm that separates them so that even if he wanted to, Lazarus cannot cross over and help the rich man in his suffering and agony.

The reality of his eternity in hell suddenly hits the rich man.

He moves from the concerns he has for himself and his suffering to concern for his family who are still alive. He wants them to change their ways before they too end up in hell alongside him. He wants them to know and understand how the choices they make about their life and their relationship with God are much more important than they know. He suddenly is a believer and wants his family to be believers as well.

For Christians this should serve to remind us of the importance of not just our relationship with God, but also our need to share the truth of scripture and salvation in Jesus with others. It should be our love of God that motivates us to go out in this world and share the good news in the same way that Jesus did while he walked on earth. Jesus told us that if we love Him, we will do what he tells us to do, and he tells us to go to the four corners of the earth and spread the good news. We should also be motivated to share the good news because of our love of others. We should love other enough that we want to do everything we can to keep them from suffering the eternal damnation of hell, because like the rich man has understand the truth is that hell is filled with pain and suffering that is very true and very real.

The truth is that many people will not come to Christ, people will not turn their life over to God or give up their selfishness. Many people will follow in the footsteps of the rich man, and like him once they are in hell for all of eternity, they will know the truth and they would probably be willing to do anything to prevent their loved ones from following in their footsteps.

The rich man does this by asking Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers, who were living the same lifestyle which he had lived. He wants his brothers to know that they are walking along the path to damnation if they continued to live their life without a relationship with God.

Yet once again Abraham replies with a truth that might be hard for the rich man to accept. The rich man had known of the teachings of Moses and the prophets, and he had ignored those teachings so that he could pursue his own desires. His brothers had been given the same opportunity, they had the scriptures available to them, and people who taught them, and if they chose to ignore the scriptures and live their lives the way that they want they could not claim to have no chance of knowing how God has said he will hold the sinful accountable for their sin.

The rich man once again has trouble accepting this, after all he had the chance to know and study the teachings of Moses and the prophets and he had ignored them. He understood that his rejection of God was why he had ended up in hell, and he knew his

brothers might do the same. It is for this reason that the rich man thinks that something more needs to be done to save his brothers. He wants Lazarus to go to the houses of his brothers and teach each one of the truths of hell. The rich man believes that if Lazarus was to appear to each of his brothers from the realm of the dead, they would recognize their need to repent. Yet we all know that even if Lazarus was to come back and warn them of the realities of hell, they would likely just believe it was all a dream, or ignore him, thinking he was just a crazy man.

The world we live in today has the same problem that the rich man had with listening to God. Like the rich man the world ignores the truth of the scriptures. They say why should anyone believe in the scriptures, especially when there are so many other options here in this life? Why should anyone take the bible seriously, especially when there are so many other religions to choose from in this world? Why should they be giving things they find pleasure in up when they can just live in pursuit of what pleases them here on earth? After all, God requires people to give up their sinful nature, to humble themselves and recognize their need for him, to accept his truth. This is instead a world that likes to create its own truths and obeying God and his scriptures just did not work for the rich man, very much the same way it does not work for many people in the modern world.

So, once again Abraham's response should be no surprise to us. He tells the rich man even if Lazarus was to return from the dead and visit the brothers they would not come to faith. Think about this, even though Jesus came down from heaven and died upon the cross to pay the debt we owe for our sins. Even though he was raised from the grave and continued to teach the truth and this was witnessed by many people, the world ignores those teachings. When Jesus rose from the dead, instead of becoming his followers, many people in the world sought to keep the truth of his resurrection a secret. His followers were beaten, jailed, and bribed to keep silent about the truth. In fact, the persecution of Christians is well documented for the first three hundred years after his resurrection, and even with all of the persecution that happened then and still continues in many places now the truth of Christ's resurrection still prevails.

This is our call as Christians to continue to let the truth prevail in world that tries to suppress the God and the truth of the scriptures. Christians are called to look at all the people in the world around us and be willing to share the truth of God's word with them, even if it makes us outcasts, even if it hurts us in our social or financial settings. The desire we have to share God should come from our love of God and our love of people, our desire to see them saved by Jesus from the eternal sufferings of hell.

Everyone is worth saving, and we do not want to ever look back on our lives and regret not taking the opportunity to help someone come to faith and save their eternal life. When we know and accept all of the realities of hell, as the scriptures teach about them, we should not want for anyone to have to suffer in hell. Our Love and compassion for others should be motivating us to reach as many people as we can today, because we

do not know what tomorrow will bring, we do not know who will be here tomorrow and who will be gone from this world. We do not want to be living in this life regretting we did not find a way to share our own experience with God's mercy into the lives of others.

Let us Pray,

Grant Us Your Holy Spirit to Protect Us

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 through your Son you promised us
 that whatever we ask in his name you will give us.
 Keep us in your Word
 and grant us your Holy Spirit,
 that he may govern us according to your will,
 protect us from the power of the devil,
 from false doctrine and false worship.
 Defend our lives against all danger
 and grant us your blessing and peace,
 that we may in all things
 know your merciful help
 and praise and glorify you as our gracious Father
 now and forever;
 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 5, Rogate

Music Ministry: "Goodness of God" by Erin King

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 Prepared)

Closing Hymn: "Speak O Lord"

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
 To receive the food of Your Holy Word
 Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
 Shape and fashion us in Your likeness.

That the light of Christ might be seen today
 In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
 Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
 All Your purposes for Your glory

Teach us Lord, full obedience
 Holy reverence, true humility
 Test our thoughts and our attitudes
 In the radiance of Your purity.

Pastoral Prayer

Loving God,
 together we have heard you speak to us,
 welcoming us, forgiving us,
 teaching us, challenging us.
 And we have responded to you
 with praise and confession,
 listening to your Word,
 praying in thanksgiving and intercession,
 and committing ourselves to you anew.
 It has been good to be together.
 As we prepare to leave this place,
 we await your blessing
 so that we may be comforted
 by the assurance that you will
 be with us during the coming week.

Continue to speak to us as we seek your face.
Guide us by your Holy Spirit.
Keep us close to you, we pray,
in every aspect of our daily lives,
that we may seek your honor and glory
wherever we are and in whatever we do.
We pray, anticipating your blessing,
for we pray in the name of Jesus,
our Savior and Lord., who lives and rules
with you and the Holy Spirit as the one true God. Amen.

Benediction

May the grace of God,
freely given through Christ, our Lord,
and sufficient for all our needs,
and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
who testifies with our spirit
that we are God's children,
guide and sustain us this day
and forever. Amen.