

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth**  
**Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Handle with Prayer**  
**Proper 24**  
**Luke 19:1-8**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

- Study Club for Students!!!! M&W 3-5. Need Volunteers
- Halloween

**Call to Worship**

God promises us justice,  
**and teaches us persistence.**

God promises us compassion,  
**and teaches us not to lose heart.**

God promises to be with us  
**and teaches us to tend to each other.**

So let us worship our God of comfort and challenge,  
**We will offer prayers and praise to our God of hope and healing.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit,  
you breathe life into all things and nourish your whole creation.  
You are a rock and refuge for your people,  
for you are trustworthy in all things.  
Your desire for peace with justice can never be defeated.  
You alone can bring life out of death,  
and restore wholeness to broken lives,  
so we praise you and rejoice in the hope you offer.  
For your love is the power at work in every situation,  
seeking goodness and revealing truth,  
a love that will never let us go.  
In our time of worship, we offer you our love and loyalty  
through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Opening Hymn #172: "As With Gladness Men of Old"**

As with gladness men of old  
 did the guiding star behold,  
 as with joy they hailed its light,  
 leading onward, beaming bright,  
 so, most gracious Lord, may we  
 evermore be led by thee.

Holy Jesus, ev'ry day  
 keep us in the narrow way;  
 and, when earthly things are past,  
 bring our ransomed souls at last  
 where they need no star to guide,  
 where no clouds thy glory hide.

In that heav'nly country bright  
 need they no created light;  
 thou its light, its joy, its crown,  
 thou its sun which goes not down.  
 There forever may we sing  
 hallelujahs to our King!

### **Call to Confession**

#### **Prayer of Confession**

**God of our hopes and our hearts,  
 You provide the gift of faith but we lose heart quickly.  
 Troubles weaken our trust and  
 disappointments eat away at our commitment.  
 Forgive us and create in us clean hearts and in  
 your love, give us peace and perseverance.**

#### **Assurance of Pardon**

Remember the promise St Paul declares:  
 What will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword?  
 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loves us.  
 Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come  
 can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.  
 Let us rejoice that, no matter what is happening around us,  
 no matter what we have done,  
 God's deep love will never let us go.

### **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:** “Jesu Our Hope and Our Heart’s Desire” by Choir

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Question 84. Who may participate in the Lord’s Supper?**

All those who love the Lord Jesus and belong to any Christian church may participate. We come to the Lord’s table not because any individual goodness gives us a right to come, but because Christ welcomes us. He loved us, gave himself for us, and invites us to receive his body and blood to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Baptized children may participate if they have their parent’s permission, the session’s approval, and have received instruction in the meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

Acts 2:42, 1 Cor 11:8-29, Lk 12:39.

#### **Question 85. What do we affirm when we speak of “the communion of saints”?**

As believers we have communion with God the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus Christ we are “saints”; that is, we share in holy things, such as Holy Communion, and we are united with all the saints past, present and future. Indeed, we are surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses” who inspire us to run with determination the race that is set before us.

1 Jn 1:3, 2 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:19-22, 4:4; Rom 1:11-12.

### **Children’s Hymn #339:** “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

He's got the whole world in his hands.  
 He's got the whole world in his hands.  
 He's got the whole world in his hands.  
 He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the sun and the moon in his hands.  
 (Sing three times)  
 He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got you and me, brother, in his hands.

He's got you and me, sister, in his hands.  
 He's got you and me, brother, in his hands.  
 He's got the whole world in his hands.

### Children's Lesson

#### Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

#### Scripture

##### Luke 18:1-8

#### **The Parable of the Persistent Widow**

**18** And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. <sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' <sup>4</sup> For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' " <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? <sup>8</sup> Will he delay long over them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

#### Sermon

I have a strong conviction about the power of prayer. Prayer is a critical component of our relationship with God. It is a way for us to grow and develop in our relationship, we can call out to our God in any way, at any time, in any place and He will be there listening to our words. We can take everything in our lives and lay it at the feet of God, however, we tend to only do this when we think things have become too difficult for us to handle, instead we should be coming to God in times of success just as often as in times of trouble.

Prayer should be an important part of the Christian life, but there are many people who treat pray like an emergency phone line, calling out to God only when they experience trouble in their lives and then stopping when God does not answer their prayer in the way they want and according to their timeline. What Jesus is teaching his followers today is that we are to keep praying, in all situations, we should always be praying. We should not expect immediate results, or results according to our timelines, or even the results we are praying for, but we should keep praying in all things. We should be petitioning God in prayer, over and over, unceasingly.

The reality is that many Christians do not know how prayer works, it is a great mystery. For some Christians they treat prayer like a duty, it becomes a checklist of things they feel they need to do in every prayer. For others prayer is challenging, they question themselves about what words they should do and when, and where they should pray, the concept of prayer and the prayers themselves causing them stress, especially if they are trying to pray publicly.

Truthfully prayer is something much simpler, it is a gift given to us from God so that we can reach out to him and be in relationship with him directly. Think about how critical that is, how awesome that is, God the creator and sustainer of all things we know wants to be able to talk to you directly. This is why prayer is just as important to Christian life as eating, drinking, even breathing. Those things keep us physically alive; prayer keeps us spiritually alive.

For that reason, in this parable Jesus is teaching the disciples the importance of not giving up in prayer. Even when they feel like giving up, he is telling them to be persistent in their communication and requests to God. This is important for all Christians to know and understand, because Jesus is teaching this to His disciples just before he enters Jerusalem and his crucifixion. He wants them to know the importance of prayer while they await his second coming.

All throughout his ministry Jesus was an example of prayer life to his disciples. He was living as an example of how the disciples would find strength in prayer after his death, resurrection, and ascension.

Martin Luther said, 'To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing!' Why do you think he believed this? The answer is simple, hold your breath and see how long you live, each and every breath, every time we inhale and exhale, it sustains our life; prayer does the same think for our relationship with God, it sustains our spiritual life. Prayer is more than just life-sustaining, it is soul-sustaining, this is why we need prayer in our lives.

Corrie Ten Boom put the question a little differently, she asked, 'Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?'. Think about that, is prayer something you use every day to guide your life, to ensure you are traveling the right roads in this world? Or is prayer your spare tire, you only pull it out of the spiritual trunk when something goes wrong in the life you want, and you just need it to get by to the next stop.

If we want a strong spiritual life and a strong relationship with God, we cannot treat prayer like a spare tire. This is why Jesus says in today scripture we 'ought always to pray'. ALWAYS! That single word adds a lot of meaning to this verse, it means there is never a time we should not be in prayer. Prayer is always appropriate, in all things and at all times. Prayer should be how we start our day and how we end our day, and it should be scattered throughout our day.

Paul taught us:

**Philippians 4:4-7**

**<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

The peace of God is what is promised to us when we pray. Jesus says in today's scripture that we will not lose heart when we pray. What this means is that when we pray and give up these things to God we do not need to worry, we can place our trust in the Lord that everything will work out according to his plan. How often when we pray is it because we are worn out, tired of the situation or people we are having to deal with, to the point of exhaustion or wanting to give up. Prayer is when we had all of that over to God and let Him handle it, while we trust in Him.

This message on the importance of prayer that Jesus is giving to his disciples is critical, because once he is crucified their real ministry will be started and they will suffer persecution, persuasion, and temptation to fall away from their faith in him from the world. The spreading of the truth of Jesus as Lord and the gospel message will be dependent on the strength of faith of man, and for that they will need a strong relationship with God so that they can endure the hardships that will come, even to the point of execution and martyrdom. A strong prayer life will keep them rooted in the Lord when the whole world turns against them, it will keep them grounded in Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is why Jesus said, **'that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.'** Praying once in a while was not an option.

To make this clear to his disciples he gives them a parable, a story that was related to his instruction to pray always. He starts by telling them about a judge who lived in a certain city. Later in the parable we learn that this was an unjust judge, this is important for them and for us to know. Because the Lord is a difference between what the judges of mankind find just and unjust and what the one who is truly just, the Lord God almighty, defines as just and unjust.

This judge is unjust in the eyes of the Lord for a few reasons. Jesus makes it clear when he says that the judge, **'neither feared God nor respected man.'** Essentially, he had an attitude that it did not matter, his only focus was on himself and what he could gain out of the situation. This is not what God would define as a judge. A judge to God is supposed to work under and judge by the rules of justice in the scriptures, they are to uphold the truth of the Lord and seek to always do what is right and just. They are to be fair and impartial in all that they held judgement over, and it is obvious that this judge is not such a judge.

Furthermore, this judge has no fear of God, meaning he has no respect for God and God's laws. This means that when he makes a decision, he will not uphold any of God's laws or even take them under consideration. This judge will place his own thoughts and ideas first in every decision he makes. We can see examples of judges like this all through mankind's history, so it should not come as a surprise to us. Yet, we should also know that just as God holds teachers of the scripture to a higher standard, he holds judges to a higher standard. In the book of Isaiah, it says:

**Isaiah 10: 1-4**

**Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees,  
and the writers who keep writing oppression,  
<sup>2</sup> to turn aside the needy from justice  
and to rob the poor of my people of their right,  
that widows may be their spoil,  
and that they may make the fatherless their prey!  
<sup>3</sup> What will you do on the day of punishment,  
in the ruin that will come from afar?  
To whom will you flee for help,  
and where will you leave your wealth?  
<sup>4</sup> Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners  
or fall among the slain.  
For all this his anger has not turned away,  
and his hand is stretched out still.**

Judges were expected to help those who sought their assistance, regardless of how they personally felt about what was happening or they would suffer judgement.

The only other character in the parable is a widow. In Jesus's time widows had a particularly rough life. Without a husband their lives could turn very disastrous very quickly as the rights of women were severely limited by the cultures of the time. Widows often fell prey to people seeking to take advantage of them, and often because the victims of unscrupulous people who would rob them of all they had and leave them destitute in the world.

For this reason, there are many pieces of scripture that deal with the protection of widows.

**Exodus 22:22**

**<sup>22</sup> You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.**

**Deuteronomy 27:19**

**<sup>19</sup>“Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’**

These ideals are repeated in the New Testament as well.

**James 1:27**

**<sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.**

This widow had come to the judge seeking justice for an injustice that she had undergone. She came to the judge because she had no one else in the culture who could help her seek justice. He was the one who was supposed to help her, suppose to ensure she was fairly treated, to ensure that justice prevailed over the unjust acts of others. She had no where else to go, no one else to turn to, if the judge would not help her, she would be forced to accept the injustice and suffer its consequences. For this reason, she refused to give up, she kept calling on the judge and asking for justice.

The judge tried to ignore her, tried to just leave it alone and not get involved, but she was persistent. No matter what he said, or what he did the widow just kept coming to him and seeking justice. Finally, he succumbed to her persistence. He did not give her justice because he had suddenly realized the truth of God’s law and his duty to uphold the justice called for in the scriptures. He did not give her justice because he had suddenly decided that the justice of the land was important, and he should adhere to it in his life. He did not give her justice because she had finally worm through his tough exterior and he had developed a fondness for her and sought to help her in her circumstance.

He took up her case and helped her receive justice because she persisted, even when he tried to deter her. He ensured that she received justice, because he knew if he did not, she would continue to call on him for the rest of his days as a judge. Essential she wore him down; she came to him over and over with her plea for justice. She did not just try once, or twice, or three times, she kept going, over and over until he finally gave in and sought our justice for her.

Jesus tells us that the unjust judge gave in because of the incessant plea of the widow. God is not unjust, God is not uncaring, God is not worn down by incessant prayer. God is loving of his creation, so how much more will a loving God do when he hears the pleas of his people?

The lesson is to be unceasing in our prayer, to never give up or give in to the circumstances of this world. Be diligent in prayer, even when it seems like nothing is



happening in the way we want. Be diligent in prayer and know that God is at work, fulfilling his plan, even when we do not see or understand what He is doing.

This lesson was vital for the disciples who were about to be left alone in the world and suffer the persecution, persuasion, and temptations of the Roman world. And I would argue is just as important today when we live in a world that is moving further and further away from the teachings of the scriptures and God's laws. A world in which the persecution, persuasion and temptation of sin is continuously becoming a stronger force in the world. Christians need to be diligent in prayer.

Christians need to keep turning to God, keep petitioning God, keep handing things over to God. They need to continuously turn to God as the source of all things in their lives. They need to learn to handle everything with prayer. In the same way that the widow refused to be silenced, Christians need to refuse to be silenced, and turn to God in prayer about every aspect of their lives.

God gives this open invitation of prayer and relationship to all of His People. God will answer every prayer in His time, according to His perfect and Holy will. This means that we may not get the answer to prayer that we are hoping for, but that we can rest assured that our prayer will be answered. There may be times when we feel like God is not listening, he does not hear our prayers, or he does not answer our prayers, times when we are being persecuted, or treated unfairly. However, the truth is that even in the worst of circumstances God hears our prayers and he will ensure that we receive justice. In the end of times, God's justice will be delivered upon all of mankind and those who have treated his people unjustly will receive eternal punishment.

Every injustice will be repaid. Every wrong will be righted. God's people regardless of the circumstances they experienced in this life will be rewarded for their persistence in prayer and in keeping His Holy word. Those who persist and Love the Lord God first and foremost in their lives will see a righteous end when they stand before the white throne of judgement.

Faith and persistence need to go hand in hand in the Christian Life. They cannot be separated and that is why Jesus speaks of faith at the end of the parable. He is saying that God will always do his part, He will always bring justice. When His people cry out to Him, God hears their cries, and He will do something about them. He will give them justice and he will do so speedily and without hesitation.

Truthfully, he may not give His justice when we expect, it may not be speedily according to our timeline, but as we know, God is always there at the right time. He may make us endure, to bear a long suffering, to undergo persecution, to endure through persuasion and to fight to resist temptation, but he will always be there at the critical moment for His people. He will answer our prayers.

Just as God is patient with us in our sin, we need to be patient in our suffering. James teaches us this.

**James 5:7-8**

**<sup>7</sup> Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. <sup>8</sup> You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

Yes, life will be hard, persist in prayer. Yes, life will be unfair, persevere in prayer. Yes, you will be wronged against, you will be hurt, you may be persecuted, people may try to persuade you to stop following God, or temptation to sin might try to overwhelm you. However, in all of these things we simply need to turn to God in prayer and He will hear our pleas. We need to turn to Him and seek Him in everything.

Which brings us to Jesus's final question in the scripture, 'Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'" If you join us on Wednesdays when we study the book of Revelation you will see that persecution, persuasion and temptation are topics of discussion, as the end of days approaches these will only begin to intensify and permeate Christian life. Jesus is asking if when he returns, will he find the faithful still on the earth. Will people have the strength to endure and resist the ways of the world?

The widow was unrelenting in her pursuit of justice. Are we unrelenting in our pursuit of faith? True faith requires one to persist through all of the challenges and not yield to the pressures of the world.

When Jesus asks if he will find faith on Earth, he is telling his followers to put their faith in perspective. They will endure hardships, persecution, persuasion, and temptation to turn away from his teachings, as will all Christians. However, our faith in Christ and obedience to his teachings is the key that unlocks the door to our salvation. Our faith and trust in Christ should strengthen us, so that we are able to endure the persecution that is leveled against us as His faithful, it should strengthen us so that we can stand up against those who seek to persuade us to give up His ways and follow the ways of this world, it should strengthen us so that we can resist the temptations that come our way and seek to draw us into sin and disobedience of His word. Our faith should give us the ability to persevere through whatever comes our way, especially when we strengthen it with prayer. We need to keep going, keep faithful and keep praying.

Jesus is coming back, of that there is no doubt, so we need to keep praying, be faithful and be ready for his return.

Let us pray,

**Holy Trinity, Keep Us in Your Grace**

Almighty and eternal God,  
 God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit,  
 you have shown your rich grace and mercy to us.  
 Eternal Father,  
 you created us at the beginning.  
 Eternal Son of God,  
 for us you became truly human,  
 and for our sins you bore the cross.  
 Eternal Spirit,  
 you proceed from the Father and the Son from eternity,  
 and through your holy Gospel you give us faith and holiness.  
 O one, eternal and almighty God,  
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
 keep us in your grace until our life's end  
 in the eternal blessedness in the life to come.

*Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity (1)*

**Ministry of Music: "Why Me Lord?" 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](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

**Offertory Prayer**

**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Closing Hymn: "Lord I Lift Your Name On High"**

Lord, I lift Your name on high  
 Lord I love to sing Your praises

I'm so glad You're in my life  
I'm so glad You came to save us.

You came from heaven to earth to show the way  
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay  
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky  
Lord I lift Your name on high.

### **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. 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