

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
 Sunday, November 20th, 2022
 Rev. Gerry Gallant

Christ the King
 Reign of Christ
 Luke 1:67-79

Welcome

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

As God has greeted us with his peace, so let us pass the peace of Christ to each other.

Announcements

- Study Club – Monday and Wednesdays 3-5 – Need MATH people
- Bible Study Groups Monday and Wednesdays
- Youth Group – Fridays at 6pm
- Alpha Tuesdays at 6pm
- RightNow Media
- Bell Ringer Salvation Army
- Christmas Parade Volunteers

Call to Worship

O come, let us sing to the LORD;
 let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth;
 the heights of the mountains are his also.
 The sea is his, for he made it,
 and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Lord God,

when we struggle to worship you as Lord,
 show us again the beauty and power of your rule.
 Teach us again that serving you is the path to true freedom.
 May your Holy Spirit strengthen us today,
 leading us to honor and worship you more deeply,
 not only with the words we sing
 but also with the lives we lead before your face,
 through Jesus, our reigning Lord. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #746: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

What a friend we have in Jesus,
 all our sins and griefs to bear;
 what a privilege to carry
 every thing to God in prayer.
 Oh what peace we often forfeit,
 oh what needless pain we bear,
 all because we do not carry
 everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
 Is there trouble anywhere?
 We should never be discouraged:
 take it to the Lord in prayer.
 Can we find a friend so faithful,
 who will all our sorrows share?
 Jesus knows our every weakness:
 take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
 cumbered with a load of care?
 Precious Saviour, still our refuge:
 take it to the Lord in prayer.
 Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
 Take it to the Lord in prayer;
 in his arms he'll take and shield thee;
 thou wilt find a solace there.

Call to Confession

Let us confess our sin before God and one another

Prayer of Confession

Righteous God,
 you have crowned Jesus Christ as Lord of all.

We confess that we have not bowed before him
and are slow to acknowledge his rule.
We give allegiance to the powers of this world
and fail to be governed by justice and love.

Assurance of Pardon

Do not weep!
See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.
With his blood he has purchased people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
He has made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.
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.**

Music Ministry: "Holy, Holy, Holy" by Choir

Responsive Reading

Question 94. What do we believe regarding "the resurrection of the body"?

Just as God raised up Jesus from the dead, so too shall we be raised. The resurrection of the body means that when he returns, we shall be transformed to be like him.

1 Cor 15:20, Rom 6:5, 1 Cor 15:51

Question 95. What is the nature of our Christian hope?

Our hope is in God, who by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, has given us a living hope. We hope for a transformed world in which justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. We also hope for a new heaven and a new earth, when death will be no more, and crying and pain will have passed away.

Ps 71:5, 1 Tim 1:1, 1 Pet 1:3, Am 5:24, 2 Pet 3:13

Children's Hymn #705: "God Who Made the Earth"

God, who made the earth,
the air, the sky, the sea,
who gave the light its birth,
still cares for me.

God, who made the grass,
the flower, the fruit, the tree,
the day and night to pass,
still cares for me.

God, who made the sun,
the moon, the stars we see,
who sees life's clouds come on,
still cares for me.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination **(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

Luke 1:67-79

⁶⁷ And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;
⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
⁷⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

**79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”**

Sermon

The scripture we are studying today is called ‘The Benedictus,’ it is the song of prophecy sung by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. In it he saw what God was doing in the world was not random events in world history, but instead a divine plan which he was carrying out from the very beginning of time. Each event was not something new but a continuation of His plan for His people. God’s plan was always to create a people with whom he could share Himself. We saw this in the story of creation in Adam and Eve, and we see it again in the story of God’s relationship with Abraham. God comes to Abraham and does something that becomes the norm for God in establishing a relationship with someone, he establishes a covenant.

We often think of a covenant like a legal contract. A joint mutual agreement between two parties, however, the truth is that a covenant has a much deeper meaning than that of a modern-day contract. A covenant was a binding commitment between both parties making them both committed to each other and the terms of the covenant under the penalty of death. This binding covenant could not be broken, and it was often based upon the honorable character of the parties involved.

God covenant with his people is clearly defined in Jeremiah 31:33-34

Jeremiah 31:33-34

33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

God promises that he will fulfill all of his covenant with the people of Israel and bring the Messiah into the world to redeem His people. The Messiah would bring God’s people back to him and give them new hearts.

As we begin into the Christmas season, we should recognize that Christmas was the fulfillment of God’s covenant with his people. He was coming to redeem his chosen people, to raise up the cup of salvation and fulfill his Holy covenant that he had made with Abraham.

Christmas teaches us that God’s covenant with us is relational. We often think about God as God and us and us, two separated beings, with no real connection or relationship. However, God wants to be in a relationship with each of us, He wants to be with His people, so much so

that He was willing to send His son to earth to redeem each of us into our adoption as His children.

Psalm 103:13-14

**¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
¹⁴ For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.**

God wants to be in relationship with us and as we grow closer to him, we want to be in relationship with him and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Truthfully, many of us know that if our relationship with God was purely dependent upon us, we would never get to know him, because like Adam and Eve we often tend to run and hide from God when we sin against Him. We know we sin; we know we fail at keeping the things that we commit too, but God continuously calls out to us to 'come to Him' and be in relationship with him. Throughout the Old Testament we see God call out to His people over and over, every time they stray, because he is our God and He wants us to be His people.

God needs to do this because over and over God's people reject him and want to live their lives independent of a relationship with Him. As Jesus was entering into the city of Jerusalem he said.

Matthew 23:37

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

Remember this is one of the aspects that sets apart God, from all of the other false gods that were worshiped at that time. The gods of the other peoples delighted in torments and dominating their people. They were willing to cause pain and suffering to their people on a whim, to cast them away unless the people were willing to sacrifice everything, they had to appease their false god. Yet, here is the God of Abraham, not demanding appeasement, but instead in constant pursuit of his people calling them back to the covenantal promise he had made with the patriarchs.

Our God is not content to just leave us in this world. He is constantly seeking us out. God did not just create the world and walk away, waiting to see what happens like a scientist in the lab, instead he is constantly interacting with his people, seeking a personal and direct relationship with each and everyone of His children.

This is what God is seeking for each and every one of you. He does not want a superficial connection. He does not want people who simply come to church on Sunday out of routine. He does not want people who teach Sunday school, sing in the choir, volunteer for different groups or anything else in the church because they feel a duty to do so. He wants people who have a

personal connection with Him and because of that personal connection with God they want to share their lives with others, helping them to find their own personal connection with God. When you have a personal relationship with God your whole viewpoint about the church begins to shift from something you feel you need to do, to something you look forward to being part of everyday. If you are missing that personal relationship with God, you are missing a fundamental part of the covenant that God has with his people.

Which brings us to another important thing for us to understand about the covenant we have with God that we can see through Christmas: God is faithful. This is something we all repeat easily, 'Trust in God,' we think we understand it and believe in it, until we actually need to, 'trust in God.' When it actually becomes something, we have to do, we often try to figure out everything on our own, look for simple ways out, seek the simplest solution for ourselves and we forget that we can just forget it all and hand it all over to God and trust in him to do what he intends when he intends to do it. We need to understand that even when we fail to trust in God, even when we are stressed, panicked, figuring out things on our own, trying to escape a difficult decision, God is still faithfully at work in our lives. 2 Timothy 2:11-13

2 Timothy 2:11-13

**¹¹The saying is trustworthy, for:
If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
¹²if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
¹³if we are faithless, he remains faithful—
for he cannot deny himself.**

We see this in the Abrahamic covenant itself. Have you ever carefully read the account in Genesis 15 about the covenant agreement between Abram and God. It begins by following the common covenantal practices of the time. They gather animals, a goat, a heifer, a ram, a dove, and a pigeon, and cut them in half from head to tail. These halves are separated and spread out so that there is a path to walk between the two halves of each animal. In a covenantal agreement each party would walk the full length of the path between the two animals, one after the other, essentially agreeing that if either party were to break the covenant that they would be split in two the same way as the animals were. The animals' pieces were then gathered up and prepared in a covenant meal that they shared sealing the covenant as they made it part of themselves through the meal. Yet in Genesis 15, after the animals were gathered and split in two and laid out in the covenantal path, a deep sleep came over Abram, and it was God alone that walked the path of the covenant. It seems like God knew that Abraham and his descendants would never be able to keep the agreement of the covenant, he knew that they would constantly wander from God and give in to sin, so he created a way to have the covenant placed only upon himself. In Genesis 15:17 God walks the path alone in the form of a smoking pot and blazing torch, a unilateral covenant, in which even when Abraham and his descendants violated the terms of the covenant by failing to obey God, God would always uphold his side of the covenant. The book of psalms tells us this.

Psalms 105:8-10

⁸ He remembers his covenant forever,
 the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
⁹ the covenant that he made with Abraham,
 his sworn promise to Isaac,
¹⁰ which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
 to Israel as an everlasting covenant,

Our relationship with God is based upon this covenantal relationship. We are reminded of our covenant with God every time that we participate in communion. It is the body of the broken Lamb of God, that we eat and his blood that was shed that we drink in communion. This should remind us that God has bound himself to us through his covenantal love. We have a faithful God, one who will never abandon us, and seeks to remind us of this constantly. Scripture also reminds us that we can always have hope because God is always faithful in his covenantal promises.

Hebrews 10:23

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

This hope that we have in Christ is one of the greatest blessings we can receive. This constant reminder of God's faithfulness, even when we cannot remain faithful is a blessing that we can turn to at even the most difficult points in our lives. Hope is vital in this world. Perhaps this is most clearly defined in what is known as the rule of threes in most survival training courses, 'You can survive 3 weeks without food; 3 days without water; 3 hours without shelter; 3 minutes without air, but not three seconds without hope.' Christians are constantly reminded of the hope that they have because of Communion, however, it is made clear to the whole world that they have hope at the time of Christmas, a time where we remember that we can survive difficulties in our lives with God's help, but we ultimately will receive the ultimate reward because we have an almighty God who was willing to send his Son to be sacrificed upon the cross to pay the debt of our sins and by doing so reconcile all who believe in him to the covenantal relationship and adoption into his Kingdom.

The third thing that we need to be aware of is that God is always at work in the world. Zechariah knew this in his prophecy. He knew that God had been at work in the world since its very creation. There are many people in the world who believe that the world is cyclical, this is even an argument that is presented in the secular world, the saying that 'history repeats itself, because nobody listens.' Implies that the world is just constantly revolving, kind of like the movie Groundhog Day, ceaselessly repeating itself without purpose or reason. They believe we will just keep repeating the process until we get something right and then move on to the next challenge. We see this symbolized in eastern religions quite often as the snake or dragon that eats its own tail. The endless cycle of futility, never changing and never ending.

Yet we all know that this is not how the world works, their beliefs, faiths, and religions are based on pessimism and despair, a sense that they are the only ones who know reality. They do not recognize the changes that happen, they do not see the miracles, because they do not want to see them. They cannot have the hope of the world changing from the vicious cycle that they believe it is in.

However, Christians know that even if we cannot feel, see, or understand the changes that are taking place in the world around us that God is active, God is changing things in ways that we may never know. God is working out his plans in this world according to his schedule. The preacher of Ecclesiastes said this beautifully,

Ecclesiastes 3:11-15

⁹What gain has the worker from his toil? ¹⁰I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹¹He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. ¹²I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

¹⁴I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. ¹⁵That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away.

God is at work. God is working out his ultimate plan for mankind that we will see come to fruition in the events of the Book of Revelation. There is a meaning to our lives, we all have an eternal life, which we hope to spend with our God in the eternal city of New Jerusalem. The world is not caught up in a vicious cycle, but instead was created and is sustained and governed over by a loving God, and we are all recipients of that Love. We are called to be his children and Christmas is a reminder of this for everyone in the world, Christians and non-Christians, a reminder for those of faith of the gifts they will receive and a reminder for those who have not come to faith that God has called out to them, even if they chose never to respond.

The Bible is filled with this message, full of Jesus calling people to him in repentance, calling for people to be watchful and attentive in their lives. Jesus did not come to the Israelites in the manner that they wanted or expected, he came as God intended and when he returns it will be the same, he will come at an hour that we do not expect and when the world is not ready. Jesus tells everyone in the scriptures that they are to always be ready because he will come like a thief in the night. The bible teaches us a few things, Jesus is going to return, Jesus is going to judge everyone for all of eternity, and we better be ready for that today, this very minute.

The truth is that many people do not recognize the realities of God in their lives. He is present in the lives of every human on this planet, but they prefer to believe in a God that does what they want when they want, so they create their own false idols. They all seek out a God who they can understand fully, maybe have some control over or at least agrees with all the things

they want in their lives. However, God does not do these things, God breaks out of the mold that mankind keeps trying to lock him within. God will make good on the promise of the covenant that he made with Abraham, and he will use any means necessary to ensure that He brings His people to Him, by any means at his disposal. He will work through the world to open people eyes to the Truth of his Word by any means, even means which we may consider wrong, because he is more concerned about our eternal soul than our mortal happiness.

No one was expecting Jesus in the first century. The thought of the Messiah being born was not in the minds of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Scribes. It was not in the minds of the Jews or the Gentiles, yet the Lord had determined that this was the time according to His plan. The Lord announced his plans for the birth of his son to the virgin Mary, he assured her husband Joseph. On the night of His birth the skies opened, the angels sang, and a baby's cried was heard in a small manger in the town of Bethlehem. To anyone looking at the baby born in the manger from a perfectly worldly view it would seem like an insignificant event, but it was all part of God's plan, and it radically changed the world then and is still doing so today.

To the people of the world, Christmas is a season of songs, good feelings, presents, dinners, and kind words. Christmas is a season filled with warmth and emotion, but to Christians Christmas means much more than these simple things, it means recognizing God's plans in this world. Christmas should give all Christians hope because we see that God was faithful in fulfilling his covenantal promises to mankind, even when His people were not fulfilling them. Christmas means that we believe that the salvation of the world is in the hands of God and it is going according to his plan.

The same is true of Christ's second coming, we do not know when or how it will take place. However, we can be assured that it is coming. God's plan for salvation will take place, even in a world that continues to move further and further away from Him and His teachings. God's divine providence will be known when all of mankind stands before him in Judgement at the white throne.

So, Christmas is a season that should remind all Christians that regardless of what is happening in this world, regardless of the trials, tribulations, or troubles we find ourselves in, we can have hope. We can always have hope because Jesus is king and, we need to be faithful and ready at all times because his plan will be carried out under his sovereignty.

Let us pray,

Sanctify, Calm, Cleanse, Strengthen

Lord God,
 Father of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ,
 your name is great,
 your nature is wonderful,
 your goodness is inexhaustible,
 you are God and Master of all things,

and are blessed forever.
 You sit between the cherubim,
 and are glorified by the seraphim.
 Before you stand thousands of thousands
 and ten thousand times ten thousand,
 the hosts of holy angels and archangels.
 Sanctify our souls and bodies and spirits,
 calm our fears
 cleanse our consciences,
 and drive out every evil thought,
 every selfish desire,
 envy, pride, hypocrisy,
 falsehood, deceit, anxiety,
 covetousness, arrogance, laziness,
 malice, anger, grudges,
 blasphemy, deeds, or thoughts
 that are contrary to your holy will.
 O Lord, since you love us all,
 give us the strength to boldly call on you
 in the freedom of Christ,
 without condemnation,
 with a pure heart and a contrite soul,
 with undivided attention
 and with sanctified lips,
 as our holy God and Father in heaven.

Source: Liturgy of St. James, from Ancient Collects, ed. William Bright, p. 1#1.

Music Ministry: “ God Will Take Care of You” by Walter Gemmill & Rick Richardson

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. standrewsperthoffering@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: "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.

When I wake, I know that He is with me;
 When I'm weak, I know that He is strong.
 Though I fall, His arm is there to lean on:
 Safe on the Rock of 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.

When I wake, I know that He is with me;
 When I'm weak, I know that He is strong.
 Though I fall, His arm is there to lean on:
 Safe on the Rock of Jesus.

And I will sing for all my days
 Of heaven's love come down.
 Each breath I take will speak His praise
 Until He calls me home.

When I wake, I know that He is with me;
 When I'm weak, I know that He is strong.
 Though I fall, His arm is there to lean on:
 Safe on the Rock of Jesus.

Stir in me the songs that You are singing;
 Fill my gaze with things as yet unseen.
 Give me faith to move in works of power,
 Making me more like Jesus.

When I wake, I know that He is with me;
 When I'm weak, I know that He is strong.
 Though I fall, His arm is there to lean on:
 Safe on the Rock of Jesus.

Then one day I'll see Him as He sees me,
 Face to face, the Lover and the loved;
 No more words, the longing will be over:
 There with my precious Jesus.

When I wake, I know that He is with me;
 When I'm weak, I know that He is strong.
 Though I fall, His arm is there to lean on:
 Safe on the Rock of Jesus.

Prayers for the People

Pastoral Prayer

Sovereign King,
 we praise you for your just and righteous reign over the cosmos:
 for the order you give to creation . . .
 for your sovereign rule over the nations . . .
 for your faithfulness to your church . . .
 for your lordship in our lives . . .

You are at once King and servant, willing to give your life
 and caring even for what we might count as insignificant.
 So we approach your throne knowing you will listen to our prayers
 for creation and its care . . .
 for the nations of the world . . .
 for our nation and its leaders . . .
 for this community and those who are in authority . . .
 for the church universal as it works on your behalf . . .
 for this local church in its ministry . . .
 for persons with particular needs . . .
 We pray in your name, O Christ, our sovereign servant King. **Amen.**

Benediction

Grace to you and peace
 from him who is and who was and who is to come,
 and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,
 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,
 the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
 To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,
 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father,
 to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. **Amen.**