

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 19th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Walk in the Light
Fourth Sunday in Lent
Ephesians 5:1–14

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!

Thanks be to God for such great mercy.

Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Thanks be to God for new beginnings!

God has given us the ministry of reconciliation through Christ Jesus.

Together we will make a new beginning in Christ!

Let us worship God with joyful hearts, trusting God to renew us and all things.

We will lift our praises to God with hearts refreshed by grace.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of Mystery and Mercy,
we gather to worship you in humility and hope
because we believe you have the power to change the world;
to change the world for the better with your love.
We gather to worship you
trusting that no one or situation is beyond your concern,
or your embrace.
Such love astonishes us.
Without your grace we cannot imagine such love.
Inspire us with a vision of love
which will change the world and our lives
through the love and mercy we meet in Jesus Christ,
your Son and our Saviour.

Opening Hymn #674: "In the Bulb There is a Flower"

In the bulb there is a flower,
in the seed, an apple tree,
in cocoons, a hidden promise:

butterflies will soon be free!
 In the cold and snow of winter
 there's a spring that waits to be,
 unrevealed until its season,
 something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence,
 seeking word and melody;
 there's a dawn in every darkness,
 bringing hope to you and me.
 From the past will come the future;
 what it holds, a mystery,
 unrevealed until its season,
 something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning,
 in our time, infinity;
 in our doubt there is believing,
 in our life, eternity,
 in our death, a resurrection,
 at the last, a victory,
 unrevealed until its season,
 something God alone can see.

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**God of love and mercy,
 when we pause for a moment in your presence,
 the daily details of our lives press in on us.
 We recall things left undone; opportunities ignored.
 We remember careless words spoken,
 disappointments that trouble our souls.
 We offer to you now our repentance for our misspent moments and missed
 opportunities. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Remember the promise that the apostle Paul declares:
 What can 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, things present nor things to come can separate us
 from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God for such a promise!
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us 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: "Create in Me a Clean Heart" by Melissa Valliquette & Jeff Earl

Responsive Reading

Question 137. What is meant by the fourth petition, "Give us today our daily bread"?

This petition acknowledges our total daily dependence upon God and asks for provision of the necessities of life for all people, especially for the poor and needy.

Pr 30:8, Isa 58:6-7, Jas 2:15-17

Question 138. What is meant by the fifth petition, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us?"

We pray for God's pardon and the grace to pardon others. In this petition, God's forgiveness and ours are closely connected. It is not that we gain the pardon of God by pardoning others, but rather that our failure to forgive makes us unreceptive to God's forgiveness. It is difficult to forgive those who have harmed us. We pray for God's grace to do so.

2 Chr 7:14, Ps 51:1-2, Mt 6:14-15, Col 3:13

Question 139. What is meant by the sixth petition, "Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil"?

In praying this petition, we confess our weakness and inability to withstand the onslaughts of "the world, the flesh and the devil", and we ask that God will protect us in times of great trial and strengthen us so that we may be able to stand firm. We also ask that God will deliver us from the power and tyranny of evil.

Mt 26:41, Rev 3:10-11, 1 Cor 10:1

Children's Hymn #645: "Follow Me, the Master Said" (V1,2,4)

Follow me,' the Master said:
we will follow Jesus.
By his word and Spirit led,
we will follow Jesus.
Still for us he lives to plead,
at the throne will intercede,

offers help in time of need;
we will follow Jesus.

Should the world and sin oppose,
we will follow Jesus.

He is greater than our foes;
we will follow Jesus.

On his promise we depend;
he will hear us and defend,
help and keep us to the end;
we will follow Jesus.

Ever keep that end in view;
we will follow Jesus.

All his promises are true;
we will follow Jesus.

When this earthly course is run,
and the Master says, 'Well done!'
life eternal we have won;
we will follow Jesus.

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Ephesians 5:1-14

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,

**and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”**

Sermon

You may have heard this quote before, ‘Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery’, it is often used when someone creates a piece of artwork, writing or almost anything that closely resembles the works or work of someone much more famous or well known.

However, did you know that that is not the correct quote in its full context.

“Imitation is not just the sincerest form of flattery - it's the sincerest form of learning.”

— George Bernard Shaw

Imitation is also one of the ways in which we learn, in fact it is the best way we learn. I recently had the opportunity to join the 4H maple club on one of their excursions, and I was reminded by their motto, ‘learn to do by doing’. They are shown by people in the various industries the proper way to do a task, and then they do it themselves.

Well, that is essentially what Paul is calling for all Christians to do here in Ephesians chapter 5. Paul is calling for all Christians to become imitators of Jesus and to walk in his light in this world. In the Scripture today, we are going to look at three different ways that we are called to be imitators of Jesus, to not just follow but try to do as he did in this world.

It begins by calling for us to live a life of sacrificial love.

When we become followers of Christ we become part of God's family, we are given the right to call God, ‘Abba, Father.’ Because we are his children, we receive his love, and we should be like him showing our love to the world around us. Love is not optional for Christians; it should be a core component of all we do and all we are.

Yet the way that we are called to live this life of love is not like the love that most of the world knows. The love we are to have is not one that changes quickly or is self-serving or for our own pleasure. The love that we are called to observe in God and imitate is not a love that is concerned about what we get out of it, but one that is instead focused on the other.

The standard of love that we are called to imitate is the Christian love that we saw in Jesus upon the cross, a self-giving and self-sacrificing love. Christ's example on the cross is the example that we are meant to follow in our lives. The self-sacrificing love that he had for us is the same self-sacrificing love that we are called to have for others.

This love is one in which God removed his own anger. We were not followers of God, in fact we were actively in rebellion against him. We were sinners lost in sin, at best

ignorant of God, at worst blatantly defiant against him, we were deserving of his wrath and his anger, we were deserving of eternal condemnation, but instead God set aside his wrath, set aside his anger, and showed us only his self-giving love when he went up on the cross to pay the debt for our sins.

This is not a simple love to have, in fact it is often hard enough for us to love the people we like all the time. How much harder will it be for us to love people we consider rude, or selfish, or full of pride. How hard is it going to be for us to love those people we consider completely unlovely and unlovable.

Yet, if we are to imitate Jesus and 'do by doing,' these unlovable people are the ones we are called to love because that is what Jesus did for us when we were unlovable. God did not wait for us to become better people or become more loveable before he died upon the cross to save us.

The truth is that we often want to wait for others to change before we show them love. We want them to do something that proves that they are loveable, that they are worth loving before we are willing to love them. We want them to show us some form of love before we are willing to love them back. We want some sort of tangible evidence that our love will not be wasted on them. This is the exact opposite of the love that Jesus Christ showed us on the cross.

The command here is for us to love others before they can even begin to love us back. Love them when they have absolutely nothing that the love can offer us in return. Love them when they are completely unlovable, when they are fully self-absorbed, when they are rude and repulsive. Love them when they only love themselves. Love them when you know that there is nothing you will gain from that love, love them like Christ loved you.

Christians are called to love with a sacrificial love, a love that bridges the relationship between those who are still lost in this world and those who are in the family of God. We are called to imitate Christ, to do as he did and love the unlovely masses who are lost to their sin, to love those who are walking around lost in the darkness of their own depravity.

We are called to love them and yet at the same time we are called to reject an immoral life of disobedience. This is what Jesus did with the woman at the well. He loved her, he showed her the grace of talking with her in a public setting where all others shunned her. He also told her lovingly, without judgement or condemnation of her sin.

We are called to be honest about sin, especially among ourselves and in our lifestyle. Being a follower of Christ and trying to imitate him means that we are trying to live our life as he did, in a sinless manner. Remember we are to do as he did, and that is very

difficult for us in our fallen nature, but the standard that we are called to live by is sinless.

Paul calls for us to live without sexual immorality, without impurity, without covetousness, no filthiness, no foolish talking or crude joking. This is the life that Jesus led, and this is the life we are to imitate.

Truthfully, we have become much too comfortable with sin in our world. As Christians we have become comfortable in the presence of sin both in us and around us. We have allowed the world to influence us to the point that we no longer look at sin the way that it is talked about biblically. However, when we look at the scriptures, we see that this is not the stance on sin that God has taken.

Ephesians 5:5-6

⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Sin is a serious thing to God. People who are losing their lives to sin are lost, they are giving up eternal life. Sin does not bring about the love of God, it brings about his wrath. When you are a true follower of Christ you are trying to remove the sin from your life, you are repentant because you want to become a better and better imitation of Christ. You want to love him that same way that he loved you, and you want to show others that same love as well.

God is saying here that if you continue to blissfully live in a life of sin, you are not part of my family, and a few specific sins that have plagued mankind throughout all of mankind's history are mentioned.

'Sexual Immorality' is a very big word, it covers all forms of sexual sin. It can refer to incest, promiscuity, sex with prostitutes, adultery and any other sexual relationship that is outside of marriage. Yet to that is tagged on the idea of impurity which links all forms of sexual sin that occur even within our own minds.

Modern society has gone in the exact opposite direction. Our society is obsessed with sexual sin, in fact in the last few years it has begun to idolize sexual sin and impurity more than ever. Our society no longer recognizes any boundary around sexual expression, we live in a society where sexuality is openly flaunted and the forced acceptance of people doing anything that they want in their sexual expression is demanded. We have young girls dreaming of the day that they turn 18 and can begin selling sexually explicit images of themselves, and our media encourages this behavior by idolizing those who are already doing this.

Our culture has a major issue in dealing with sexual sin and impurity. We have problems with adultery, promiscuity, rape, and sexual abuse which is evident in the number of cases that are reported on every day, and that is only the tip of the iceberg. The idea of love and marriage that is in the Bible has been replaced with pride, power and pleasure that are all sexually based. The idea that sex sells and that it should be a widely accepted and legitimate form of business has corrupted and destroyed all sanity and control for mankind. Pornography, sex chats, and sites like OnlyFans have become billion-dollar industries. In the US alone:

Every Second:

- 28,258 users are watching pornography on the internet.
- \$3,075.64 is being spent on pornography on the internet.
- 372 people are typing the word "adult" into a search engine.

Every Day:

- 37 pornographic videos are created in the United States.
- 2.5 billion emails containing porn are sent or received.
- 68 million search queries related to pornography- 25% of total searches- are generated.
- 116,000 queries related to child pornography are received.

How Online Pornography Affects Americans

- About 200,000 Americans are classified as "porn addicts."
- 40 million American people regularly visit porn sites.
- 35% of all internet downloads are related to pornography.
- 34% of internet users have experienced unwanted exposure to pornographic content through ads, pop up ads, misdirected links, or emails.
- One-third of porn viewers are women.

Things that were considered unimaginable just a few generations ago have now become common place. All standards of modesty and decency in dress, behavior and conversation have dissolved. The current generations of youth now see sex and no different than dating and have multiple apps that are used for 'hooking up.'

This calls for us to reject sexual immorality and impurity goes for both the church and for society as a whole. The sexual industry is just as supported by Christians as it is by non-Christians because we have taken a relaxed stance on the seriousness of sin. As Christians, we have allowed ourselves to be swayed by society because it appeals to our flesh. We justify it by saying that we would never cheat, never be adulterous, after all we are just looking at pictures, however, remember that Jesus said that any man, or woman, who looks on another with lust has committed adultery in their heart. Jesus

said it is better to pluck out the eye than to be condemned. Does that sound like a relaxed stance on sin?

Christians have too easily accepted the lax sexual standards of modern society. However sexual sin and sexual impurity do not fit in with our call to imitate Jesus, to do as he does and to walk in the light. What we do with our bodies matters to God because we are his children.

Our call is to repent from sexual sin and impurity. Do not go to it, do not read it, do not look at it. Do not allow our minds to wander away and dwell where they should not be. We are called to be imitators of Christ, to remove ourselves from compromising situations and to avoid all forms of sexual sin.

Next is covetousness and idolatry. The desire to have more, this is the Jewish context of idolatry as the root of all sin, and it is greed that often leads to the other forms of sin in this world. Idolatry is an act of revolt against God. When we desire something, it often takes the place of God in our hearts, because it is what we desire that we follow and imitate, not God.

Covetous stares back at us in the mirror of this Scripture. In fact, sin has sometimes been described as the desire to get more out of life than God put into it. Even though God has packed our lives with blessings we are not satisfied and we desire more, more money, more fame, more power, more pleasure. When we desire these things, they take over our lives, they distort our thoughts, they debilitate us, they disrupt the way we live, and finally they become our idol, our master, they replace God in our lives. Once that desire takes over our lives it pushes us to always desire more, we are never satisfied in our lives.

The irony is that while many Christians might be willing to denounce sexual sin publicly, they are not willing to do the same with covetous sin.

Our culture does not see covetous, idolatry or greed as sinful which only proves how easily greed can infect our lives and how easily it deceives. We live in a culture that essentially promotes all forms of greed. The music and entertainment industry consistently promote sexual images and ideas, thoughts of wealth and power, they create idols of power, fame, sex, drugs and alcohol. The advertising industry lives off the staple that sex sells, and they have no issues in promoting whatever form of sexual deviation that they feel will sell, they have no alliance to anything but greed. In our culture being self-centered is not just accepted, its promoted, it is seen as desirable, why be a husband and a father or a wife and a mother when you can be whatever you want to be, have what you want to have. The goals of our society are pleasure and possessions, and for many people that means that their life falls out of their control. Greed is the driving factor behind the gambling addictions that plague our society. Idolatry is what drives so many of the issues and addictions that are acceptable in our

society, whether it is a dependence on alcohol, or drugs, a fascination with sports or music, a tv show or an actor or actress, all come from our idolatry. We have moved beyond our own self-centeredness to a widely accepted and promoted, the deadly contagious disease of greed.

Whatever it is that we lust for, whether it is sex, alcohol, money, drugs, power, pleasure or even an interest that becomes our focus of life, it is all a form of idolatry, it all allows something other than God to become the central focus of our lives. Any passion we have that consumes our lives, that begins to define who we are, displaces God from His rightful place in our lives. When a hockey fan says that his team defeating their archrival is 'the greatest day of his life' it is idolatry of the most foolish kind.

As Christians we need to be self-reflective, to name the idols we have in our lives, to repent from them and try to live in the light, to walk with Christ, to imitate him and do as he did.

Finally, we reach foolish talk and crude joking, shameful and indecent language. Foolish words and crude language both lead to a Godless lifestyle. They are things we should avoid as followers of Christ. This one is very important for our youth, as their generation has now reached a point where coarse language is considered the norm. This warning is meant to make us aware of all forms of godless language, vulgarity, defiance of God and innuendos and double entendre.

Christians may be tempted to use this language to prove that they are tough, that they know the ways of the world. However, it will take us residence in their minds and begin to make these things acceptable to them. When we speak in this way we are playing with sin in our lives, it becomes easy and amusing and as imitators of Christ this is not the language that we should be using.

This is not an exhaustive list of the sins we are to avoid. There is not mention of murder or violence or any of the other sins that God warns against. However, the language we use and the idols we have in our lives often lead us to other sins. They are the gateway, the way that sin gains entrance into our lives. If sin gets into our lives, other sins, like sexual immorality and impurity will often follow. Sexual sins are where pride, power and pleasure are concentrated, it is the sin that can pull us the furthest from God because it so easily seems to satisfy our needs in this world, even if it is only fleeting, it attempts to replace the relationship we should have with God. Sexual sin is the one sin that has the greatest power to defile that intimacy we can only find with God.

Ephesians 5:8

**⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.
Walk as children of light**

Finally, we are called to transform a life of darkness when we imitate Christ in our lives. We have seen lots of Scripture that calls for us to walk in the light, to recognize that Jesus is our light, to reflect the light, but here Paul says that we are the light.

Paul wrestled with his own human nature, he wrote of the struggle between doing what God wanted him to do and what his flesh wanted him to do. Yet here he is telling us that we are light. This verse would be so much easier if Paul had said try to be light, or we are part light and part dark. However, Paul is speaking to us truthfully here, he is telling us what we are when we are in Christ. In Christ we are light, when the Light of Christ is in us, it transforms us from the darkness that we were into his light. It is not instantaneous, but it happens as we imitate Christ, as we 'do as he does' in our lives.

The truth is that we become like the people we are with, our sphere of influence. People take on the character, the beliefs and the nature of the people they surround themselves with in their lives. Once Christians lived in the darkness and were darkness. After being in Christ they live in the light and are light. We do not become light ourselves, it is only when we are in Christ that we become light, because his light is within each of us.

When Paul calls for us to be separate from the darkness, he is not calling for us to remove ourselves from the presence of darkness. He is not thinking that we should run away from sin and sinful people to social distance ourselves from them and avoid all contact, instead he is talking about the refusal to partner in their sinful nature and actions. Contact with the lost of this world, with non-Christians, is necessary if the light of the Lord is to accomplish its purpose.

The purpose of light is to reach into the darkness and expose the things that are hidden in it. The real question for Christians is whether exposing sin is something that is negative or if there is also a positive aspect when the light shines into the darkness. We saw with Jesus when he spoke to the woman at the well the light exposed her sin which allowed her to be transformed by his words. When we are the light of the world we serve two purposes, to expose the sin and to bring the light into the lives of the lost. It is the Light that exposes and convicts, it is the Holy Spirit that transforms the lives of others.

Christians are meant to have a transforming influence on the world. Through our lives we are meant to bring the light of Christ to the world, to penetrate the darkness of our society and to transform those who are lost in the dark into light. Through the words we use, the actions we take, the choices that we make, through the way that we love those outside of the church, the way that we treat our brothers and sisters, through the way that we choose to do what is right when it is so easy to do what we know is wrong, this is how we shine a light that penetrates the darkness of this world. It is a life of light that imitates Christ, a light that shows that Christianity is indeed different from this world.

Max Lucado tells a story about some candles in a storage closet when a storm knocks out the electricity. It goes something like this:

“A few nights ago, a peculiar thing happened. An electrical storm caused a blackout in our neighborhood. When the lights went out, “I felt my way through the darkness into the storage closet where we keep the candles for nights like this.....I took my match and lit four of them.....”

I was turning to leave with the large candle in my hand when I heard a voice.
“Now, hold it right there.”

“Who said that?”

“I did.” The voice was near my hand.

“Who are you?” “What are you?”

“I’m a candle.”

I lifted up the candle to take a closer look. You won’t believe what I saw. There was a tiny face in the wax.... a moving, functioning, flesh like face full of expression and life.

“Don’t take me out of here!”

“What?”

“I said, don’t take me out of this room!”

“What do you mean?” I have to take you out. You’re a candle. Your job is to give light. It’s dark out there.”

“But you can’t take me out. I’m not ready,” the candle explained with pleading eyes, “I need more preparation.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. “More preparation?”

“Yeah, I’ve decided I need to research this job of light-giving, so I won’t go out and make a bunch of mistakes. You’d be surprised how distorted the glow of an untrained candle can be.....”

“All right then,” I said. “You’re not the only candle on the shelf. I’ll blow you out and take the others!” But just as I got my cheeks full of air, I heard other voices.

“We aren’t going either!”

..... I turned around and looked at the three other candles.....”You are candles and your job is to light dark places!”

‘Well, that may be what you think.” Said the candle on the far left.....” You may think we have to go, but I’m busy..... I’m meditating on the importance of light. It’s really, well.....very enlightening”

“And you other two,” I asked, ‘are you going to stay in here as well?”

A short, fat, purple candle with plump cheeks that reminded me of Santa Claus spoke up. “I’m waiting to get my life together. I’m not stable enough.”

The last candle had a female voice, very pleasant to the ear. “I’d like to help,” she explained. “but lighting the darkness is not my gift.....I’m a singer. I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly.”

.....she began a rendition of “This Little Light of Mine”the other three joined in, filling the storage room with singing.....I took a step back and considered the absurdity of it all. Four perfectly healthy candles singing to each other about light but refusing to come out of the closet.

When I left the closet, and walked into the other room, stumbling along the way and bumping into chairs and counters, I met my wife who asked where the candles were.

I explained that craziness that I had experienced in the closet and the candles refusing to come out, to do the work for which they were intended, bringing light to the world. She looked at me and said quite plainly, that makes sense, they are church candles.

The task of Christians is to live as the light of the Lord in the world, not in the closet. Our light is meant to always be on, we are called to imitate Christ in all we say and do, in every instance, in all of our choices. However too often we live as the light for a few hours on Sunday, then we go on with life in the world. We might be light in the presence of the Lord and his people, but we have one foot on the train of darkness and a seat reserved.

Too often as evangelical Christians we focused on personal sin and neglected social sin. Too often we focused on sexual sin and forgot about social sins like racism or abuse of wealth and greed. In the last twenty years and the last five in particular, we have done just the opposite; social sin has been our focus and we have completely ignored and forgotten about personal sin. Sin is not one or the other, it is both, personal and social and we are to be the light that shine into the darkness of both. God’s justice is different

from social justice. God's light is meant to shine on cultural issues like the inhumane working conditions of illegal immigrants, or the education quality in low-income neighborhoods, just as brightly as it shines on personal issues like pornography and idolatry. Christians are meant to bring God's light to the dark, all of the dark, to turn on the light and leave it shining there, so that those who are trapped in the dark can be transformed by the light.

We are called to shine the light on sin, yet we are also called to love. This is a balancing act that we saw so often in the life of Christ, in the woman at the well he shone the light, a light that was from love with no condemnation, no judgement. Too often we can become people who become spiteful, people who become condemning and judgmental of sin in others. We need to know that even when we shine the light into the darkness and provide a way for the lost to transform, there will be some who choose the darkness. When they choose the darkness, it should be because they love the dark and not because of the light which made them feel judged and condemned.

John 8: 7-11

⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."

⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

We should not be like the elders who met Jesus and asked for his approval to stone the adulterous woman, Jesus asked that the one who had not sinned to cast the first stone, and eventually they had all walked away starting with the older ones. We need to shine the light like Jesus did in that moment. A light that says as he did to that woman. 'Neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on sin no more.'

The light of our lives in the world and in this community needs to be a place where people find that grace to face the truth of their lives in the darkness and be welcome to step into the light and be transformed by its presence in their lives.

We need to be a light that shows the path through the dark for those who are seeking a way out, allowing them to see the dangers that lay before them in their lives.

So, as we leave today be imitators of Christ, learn by doing as he did, be the salt and light of the world and of this community, bring the mercy, grace, compassion and love of Christ to the world.

Let us Pray,

Preserve Us from Greed and the Cares of this Life

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 in the wilderness your Son fed over five thousand people
 with five loaves and two fish.
 Graciously remain with us and bless us.
 Preserve us from greed and the cares of this life
 that we may seek first your kingdom and your righteousness
 and in all things remember your Fatherly goodness;
 through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Lent 4

Hymn #399: "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness"

Chorus

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
 blow through the wilderness calling and free,
 Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
 stir me from placidness,
 wind, wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters,
 you called to the deep,
 then you coaxed up the mountains
 from the valleys of sleep;
 and over the eons you called to each thing:
 "'Awake from your slumbers
 and rise on your wings.'" (Chorus)

You sang in a stable,
 you cried from a hill,
 then you whispered in silence
 when the whole world was still;
 and down in the city
 you called once again,
 when you blew through your people
 on the rush of the wind. (Chorus)

You call from tomorrow,
 you break ancient schemes.

From the bondage of sorrow
 all the captives dream dreams;
 our women see visions,
 our men clear their eyes.
 With bold new decisions
 your people arise. (Chorus)

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: "Thou Art Worthy"

Thou art worthy,
 Thou art worthy
 Thou art worthy O Lord
 To receive glory
 Glory and honor
 Glory and honor and power:

Chorus

For Thou hast created,
 Hast all things created,
 Thou hast created all things;
 And for Thy pleasure
 They were created –
 Thou art worthy, O Lord.

Pastoral Prayer

All knowing God,

We give you thanks for all the things you provide that make life good and full:
 For the rhythms of nature which water thirsty lands, producing food for all creatures;
 For energy to work
 and for community to share in the produce of work.
 Yet we are still thirsty in this land of plenty:
 thirsty for hope when work fails;
 thirsty for love when friends fail;
 thirsty for justice when sharing fails.

God light of the world
 Thank you for the light you shine in a world filled with complexity
 to bring hope and increase understanding:
 Understanding to address human need and improve daily life;
 Understanding to deepen relationships and mutual respect;
 Understanding to tackle problems and seek solutions.
 And so we seek your light to lead us:
 the light of wisdom to bring people of different perspectives together;
 the light of courage to work for change in desperate situations;
 the light of hope to persevere when change is difficult.

Loving Father
 Thank you for the purpose and potential you create for us in Christ:
 For creating friendships and neighbourhoods that support us,
 For creating co-operation to accomplish goals that seemed impossible,
 For creating gratitude for the gifts we discover in each other.
 And so we seek the gifts of the Spirit we need in these challenging days:
 The gift of confidence to renew our ministries in humility and hope,
 The gift of generosity to renew lives in need around us,
 The gift of faith to trust you for a future we cannot yet see ourselves.

God, The Good Shepherd of our Lives, we give you thanks that Jesus walks beside us and leads us
 on the paths you set before us into the future and we pray that your light will always shine on us
 and through us into the world.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray, Amen

Benediction

People of God, know this,
 God our Father made you and guides your every step;
 Jesus Christ gave his life for you and brings you new life;
 the Spirit keeps you in the Lord's presence and empowers you to serve.
 May almighty God continue to bless you and move you to give thanks. Amen.