

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, April 16th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Easter People
Second Sunday of Easter
1 Peter 1:3-9

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Joyful is the sound we make this morning!
For this day liberates us from doubt and fear.

Thankful is the song we sing!
For this day moves us past darkness and despair.

Hopeful is the prayer upon our lips!
For this day awakens in us long-awaited new life.

May his peace and presence be known to you.
And also, to you

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow,
we rejoice in this new day you have made.
We praise you for the abundant life with which you bless us,
and for all the beauty that surrounds us as spring takes hold again.
We praise you for your Son Jesus,
and the power of new life promised in his resurrection.
We praise you for your Spirit at work in human history,
to restore and redeem our hope with that power of new life.
God of steadfast love,
we worship you with the Spirit and the Son,
and claim your gift of new life,
even in the face of any doubt or danger within the world you love.
All praise, honor and glory be yours, O God,
now and evermore. Amen.

Opening Hymn #267: "Rejoice, the Lord is King" (V 1,2,3)

Rejoice, the Lord is King;
 your sovereign Lord adore;
 give thanks, O mortals, sing
 and triumph ever more.
 Lift up your heart;
 lift up your voice; rejoice,
 again I say, rejoice.

For Christ the Saviour reigns,
 the God of truth and love;
 when Jesus purged our stains,
 he took his seat above.
 Lift up your heart;
 lift up your voice; rejoice,
 again I say, rejoice.

His reign can never fail;
 he rules o'er earth and heaven:
 the keys of death and hell
 are to our Saviour given.
 Lift up your heart;
 lift up your voice; rejoice,
 again I say, rejoice.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**O God of might and mercy,
 in raising Jesus from the dead, you showed us your power
 to defeat all that brings fear and sorrow to our lives.
 In his resurrection, Jesus promised to be with us everywhere and always.
 Yet we confess we are sometimes uncertain about your promises.
 We doubt the promise of resurrection for our own lives.
 Upheaval and anxiety eat away at our peace.
 Forgive us when we struggle to trust your goodness
 and your steadfast love for us.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel.
 In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free from sin and sorrow.
 In Jesus Christ, God offers us the gift of peace.
 May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts this day.

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: "Blessed Be the Name" Choir**Responsive Reading****Psalm 16**

¹ Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

² **I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
 I have no good apart from you."**

³ As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
 in whom is all my delight.

⁴ **The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
 their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
 or take their names on my lips.**

⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
 you hold my lot.

⁶ **The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
 indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.**

⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
 in the night also my heart instructs me.

⁸ **I have set the LORD always before me;
 because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.**

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
 my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰ **For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
 or let your holy one see corruption.**

¹¹ **You make known to me the path of life;
 in your presence there is fullness of joy;
 at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

Children's Hymn #266: "King of Kings"

King of kings and Lord of lords, glory, hallelujah!
 Jesus, Prince of Peace, glory, hallelujah!

Children's Lesson**Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)****Scripture****1 Peter 1:3-9**

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Sermon

The empty tomb of Jesus Christ taught us many things, it taught us to be humble, it taught us the cost of sin, it taught us of our own mortality, and it taught us of the eternal life that we have in Jesus Christ. Jesus's death upon the cross was an incredible demonstration of God's love for his people, the greatest sacrifice ever made because it was Christ's blood that became our new Covenant with God, that allowed us back into a relationship with him, even in our fallen nature. However, it is the empty tomb, the risen Christ that shows us the power of God in our lives, death and hell have no victory – we can be filled with hope, joy, and faith because God raised Jesus from the grave.

George Beasley-Murray said, 'If the Church had contemplated the Empty Tomb as much as the cross of its Lord, its life would have been more exhilarating and its contribution to the world more positive than has been the case.'

The center of the Christian faith should not be focused on the cross but instead should be focused on the empty tomb, the tomb is the center of all we believe. We are an Easter people and should be focused on the lessons of the empty tomb and the Easter Gospel, 'He is Risen, come and see.'

Eugene Patterson said, 'If there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we learn in church is smoke and mirrors, and everything we have staked our lives on is smoke and mirrors...And if Christ wasn't raised, then all we are doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever...If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we are a pretty sorry lot.

Jesus's life is more than an inspiration, he was more than just a great prophet, or a moral teacher, He is the risen Lord, and this is why we can find Hope in the empty tomb. Remember when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary left the tomb they left with fear and JOY!

There is joy for anyone who comes to the empty tomb of Christ and finds faith there. Everyone who learned of the empty tomb and Jesus's resurrection found faith, hope, and joy. The empty tomb changed the disciples, changed the church, and changed all of our lives.

Perhaps the one who knew this best was the apostle, Peter. A week before the resurrection he had his doubts. Peter offered to lay his life down for Jesus, only to betray him three times on the night of Jesus's arrest. Three times before the rooster crows he denies Christ and that was the last time he saw Jesus alive, just before he denied him. Think how heavily that hung on the heart of Peter after Jesus's death and burial, how much that guilt and shame weighed on his mind.

Then on the morning of the resurrection Mary Magdalene and the other Mary rush back and tell the disciples of the empty tomb.

According to the book of Luke this is what happened.

Luke 24:10-12

10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, 11 but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

They were all skeptical, except for Peter, he ran to the tomb, and when he looked into the empty tomb, instead of being filled with confusion, he was filled with hope. In the empty tomb of Jesus Christ, Peter found God's grace. If you have ever been like Peter, denied Christ, looked away from or walked away from God, made the wrong choice, done things that did not glorify God, not fulfilled your commitments, or simply sinned, that empty tomb is full of God's grace for both you and me. The Tomb is full of grace for all of God's people. That is what 1 Peter 1:3-4 is teaching us, what God's grace means to God's people.

1 Peter 1:3-4

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus

Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

In the first two verses we learn to be full of hope in this world. God did what he did through His Son, Jesus Christ, so that we could be brought back into relationship with Him, so we could become the adopted children of God and fully partake in the inheritance of God. People of God we were not created to just survive here on earth, we were created to spend eternity with God in His kingdom, this world is just a layover on our trip to Heaven.

We were not created to wander away from God, to give into the ways of this world, to try to adapt to this world. God is our one and only Hope, our one and only salvation – not ourselves, our family, our jobs or our governments, God is our only hope and the hope we have in God is more than we can possibly fully understand.

We have a living hope. Meaning we can hope of the impossible, when we are in situations where it seems like there is no way out or no solution, we can still have hope, because God can do the impossible. Even in the direst of our situations, God is always there with us, and we can always turn to him with hope and find comfort.

Whenever we feel tired, frustrated, alone, when nothing is going right at work or at home, when we are feeling overwhelmed and underequipped, we have hope. God is there with us, and we can lay our burdens on him and turn to him in prayer and find comfort there. God cares about you, personally, he hears every prayer and answers them all, just not always in the way we expect, or sometimes not even in the way we want.

We have this hope, this relationship with God because we have been born again. We have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, washed clean of our transgressions and iniquities by the blood of the lamb, our debt of sin has been paid in full.

We are born again and that means we are living a new life in God.

Romans 12:2

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We have a living hope because we are born again, we are changing from our old self into a new self in the image of Christ. This means giving up our fallen nature, our sinful ways and becoming more Christ like every day through the power of the Holy Spirit. It's not instantaneous, how I wish it was, you believe and are instantly transformed into a Holy sanctified person. Instead, it is a struggle, a constant battle between our fleshly nature of sin and reborn nature which wants to obey God.

We have to work at it, read our Bibles, pray, listen to sermons, engage others in talk about God and God's Word. If you do not work at it, you will be distracted, you will wander away and you

might find yourself believing things that go against God's teachings in His Word. If you are not grounded in your faith, you can easily begin to believe things that contradict the Bible and contradict Christ.

This is the Devil's greatest weapon against Christianity, spiritual warfare of the dirtiest kind, he corrupts people and teaches them things that go against God's Word and God's will. Think of how he convinced Eve to eat the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

'Did God actually say?' Those are the words we need to begin to recognize and then begin to question the intent behind them. When people begin to debate, does the Bible actually say their sin of choice is a sin, we need to understand that they are being led astray. Satan likes to twist God's Word just a little bit, just enough to lead people astray and away from the complete salvation that is offered in the resurrected Christ.

That is what the Devil is counting on, he uses leaders, athletes, Hollywood stars, even unfaithful pastors to lead people astray by having them alter God's Word just a little and hoping we do not go back to our Bibles and ensure that the things we are learning are true to God's Word.

So, Peter tells us that we are born again, and we need to grow and mature in our faith, through prayer, study, and fellowship. We need to be constantly renewing our minds, constantly transforming ourselves into God's image with the help of the Holy Spirit. This is our Hope because we are also told that when we do this, we receive an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade that is kept in heaven for us.

For Peter and for all Christians there is hope in the empty tomb, a living and secure hope. Remember that when things are at their worst, when you are exhausted and overwhelmed, look to the empty tomb and find hope and comfort in God.

1 Peter 1:5-7

⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We can find hope and rejoice in times of trouble and tribulation because we know that faith that is not tested never grows.

Churches all over the world are filled with people who come to church once a week, never pick up their Bibles, never join in fellowship, never join a Bible study, never volunteer, or do mission work, even never pray. People who come every Sunday for an hour and complain if it is five minutes longer than it should be, people who never grow in their faith because they never nurture their faith.

This is not who Christians are called to be, we are called to be the faithful, to always be putting on the armor of God. Our faith is the shield that protects us, and that shield is strengthened by God's power.

Peter tells us that we are Guarded by God's power, and we need that, we need God's power because Satan is determined to keep as many people from salvation as he can, and he is not going to give up.

When you place your faith in God and try to live your life according to his Word you will need the shield of faith. You will find that your faith will not make others like you, in fact it may turn friends and family against you, it might turn co-workers and colleagues against you, it may even turn the world or the law of man against you.

The devil will use every way he can to whisper in your ear 'Did God really say?' or 'Can God really use me?' maybe even 'Am I good enough?' or 'I have done so much wrong God would never accept me' The devil wants you filled with despair, filled with questioning, filled with grief or shame or pity. Christians do not need to listen to the devil, they just need to put on the shield of faith, turn to God's Word in prayer, in the Bible and in fellowship and take hope and comfort in God.

Our faith will be tested, that is a truth of the world we live in, it will be tested in many different ways, and that is a good thing. Because when our faith is tested, we grow in our faith, we spiritually mature. We need to rejoice in the testing, knowing that the trials and tribulations are bringing us closer to God.

On the night that Jesus was arrested Peter was there, when the guards arrested Jesus, it was his sword that was drawn and chopped the ear off the guard. Jesus told Peter to put away his sword, that it was God's will that was being enacted that evening.

Think on that a moment, Jesus knew everything that was about to happen to him, and he willingly went to his death. Jesus was humble and obedient to death and that is what we are all called to be in this world.

When our faith is tested, when we go through trials and tribulations, it is not always for just us, everything we do on this world is meant to be for the glory of God. Our faith does not glorify us, it glorifies Jesus and the empty tomb. When our prayers go unanswered in our mind, when our hopes are crushed by the world, when the realities of the world we live in seem to get more

and more difficult and nothing seems to be going our way, what should we do? Trust in God, remember God's primary concern is not our well-being here on earth, his primary concern is our salvation, our eternal life. We endure, we persevere, we stand strong in our faith and bear the shield knowing that God's power is behind it.

Paul knew of this when he wrote.

2 Corinthians 12:10

10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

There might be points in our life where the only thing we have to lean on, to rely on is God. God is always there with us, and he is the strongest thing that we can turn to and rely on in troubles. God gives us the strength, wisdom, words, and endurance to carry out the things he has planned for us in those trials and tribulations, if we just turn to him and ask.

When we learn to turn to God in those times of trouble and tribulation, we will begin to glorify God more in our lives. God will take the things we do and use them for His glory. We see this over and over again in the life of Peter. When Peter trusted in God he walked on water, when he doubted, he sank, when he was standing at the last supper, he said he would lay down his life for Christ then he denied him three times. Peter is a wonderful example of us all, we all talk the talk as Christians saying we fully trust in God, but then when things get difficult, we doubt. We need to learn to trust fully in God, we need to learn to trust in Him and not ourselves.

1 Peter 1:8-9

**⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,
⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

This is why Peter found hope and faith in the empty tomb of Jesus Christ, but he also found one other thing there, immeasurable joy. Peter found in the empty tomb a joy that never fades, never ends and that is not dependent in the things of this world, it is only dependent on the salvation offered through faith in Jesus.

Peter's joy says that 'I am redeemed by the blood of the lamb, and I am able to press on in Christ, no longer burdens by the shame, the guilt or the debt of my sin as a child of the One True Living God.'

Peter's joy, and our joy, is not an empty or meaningless joy, it is a result of our salvation. Peter tells us that we are receiving from God this joy, this hope and faith, that is constantly being refined and growing until the day that we finally meet Jesus' face to face.

The joy that Peter speaks of, is fulfilled in the future to its completion, but it is active in our present. When Christians take time to look back and reflect upon their lives, they often find great joy when they recognize God's hand at work in their life. As they mature in faith, they take more and more pleasure in serving God, in studying His Word, in living their lives in His will. They take pleasure in seeing how they have been transformed through the Holy Spirit from the person they once were, living in a fallen nature, to the reborn person they are now, living according to the will of God.

Mark 16:1-7

16 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

Last week we looked at the story of the resurrection in the book of Matthew, here in the book of Mark we learn one more interesting little bit of information. See how the angel of the Lord mentions that they should go tell the disciples and Peter. After all of his denials, all of his failings, all of his wanderings, the angel of the Lord wants Peter to know that Christ is Risen indeed, and that he is worthy of God's immeasurable love, mercy, and grace. That is the truth of God, His mercy, His love, and His grace are bigger than anything we could every do.

When Peter wrote, he was writing from experience. He knew of the immeasurable love, mercy, and grace of God because he himself had felt it in his life and that is what makes his writings special. Those simple words spoken by the angel of the Lord, asking Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to bring the news of the empty tomb to Peter, speaks volumes of the grace of God.

Jesus told Peter to 'come and see' and Peter did. Peter came to Jesus, came to his empty tomb, and saw with his own eyes the love of Christ and the Grace of God. Peter stood in that empty tomb and fully grasped that even though he had failed Jesus many times in many ways, Jesus had never failed him and would never leave him. He fully understood the grace of God on fallen man.

This is what God has for all of his Children, Immeasurable love, immeasurable mercy and immeasurable grace. God accepts that we will fall short of his expectations, that we will fail at living up to His Word. But he will still use us for his Kingdom and His glory. The tomb is empty and because of the empty tomb we can all have hope, faith, and joy because we understand the love, mercy and grace of a God that calls us to 'come' with him so that we can be all that he calls us to be.

Let us Pray,

You Have Given Your Beloved Son to Be Our Shepherd

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

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

Hymn #275: "Jesus Shall Reign Where're the Sun" (V 1,3,5)

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
 does its successive journeys run;
 his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
 till moons shall wax and wane no more.

People and realms of every tongue
 dwell on his love with sweetest song;
 And infant voices shall proclaim
 their early blessings on his name.

Let every creature rise and bring
 the honours due our glorious King;
 angels descend with songs again,
 and earth repeat the long Amen.

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 #290: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" (V 1,3,4)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes;
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
and wither, and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render: oh help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Pastoral Prayer

We thank you, God, for the many ways you provide for our needs:
for air and water, for food and shelter, for work to do and rest to sustain us.
We pray for your creation, too often at risk because of the choices we've made.
Help us care for the earth and all its creatures and relationships.
Show us how to cherish the gifts you have given
and protect them for future generations.

We thank you, God, for family:
the families we were born or adopted into,
the families we married into,
and other families who welcomed us into their midst
as friends and neighbours.
We pray for those who have lost family members and relationships,
and for any who know abuse and pain within the family circle.

God, we also thank you for friendship:
for friends who have supported us through months of pandemic restrictions
and for those who bring us joy and wise counsel.
Help us extend the gift of friendship
to those who are experiencing isolation, loneliness, or grief.

We thank you, God, for the peace and freedom we enjoy in Canada,
and pray that the conflict over what these gifts mean
will be soothed with deeper understanding among us all.
We pray for those who know neither freedom nor peace:
those living under oppressive regimes or in conflict zones,
and those who have fled their homelands, in search of safety.

Give us courage to stand up for people who cannot stand up for themselves,
so that they too will know peace and freedom.

We thank you, God, for your Church,
for our congregation and its leaders,
and for all who volunteer time, talent, and energy
to the work we undertake in Jesus' name.
By your Spirit, guide us as we shine your light in this community
and inspire us with new insight into mission and ministry.
We pray for other churches in our community and in our presbytery,
and the sense of mission that guides each one into service.

Fill us with a deeper sense of unity
so that we can model relationships that transcend differences
in this divided world.

O God, thank you for the gift of your Son,
whose resurrection empowers us to look to the future with hope.
Thank you for the gift of your Spirit
who draws us into unity with you and one another,
as together we offer our prayers to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **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.**