

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Bearing Witness  
Fourth Sunday of Easter  
1 Peter 2: 11-25

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Along with all those in heaven, let us cry out together:

**Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!**

Along with the redeemed, let us praise God with joyful hearts:

**For this reason, we come before the throne of God and worship the Lord day and night.**

Called together by the Holy Spirit, let us rejoice and sing:

**We will hunger and thirst no more. The Lamb will guide us to springs of the water of life.**

**Let us worship God!**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of the ages, God of today,

You are compassion, our cup overflows.

You are hope; you lead us into green pastures.

You are truth; you lead us beside quiet streams.

You are life; you restore our souls.

Morning, noon and night, O God, you are the source of our joy.

We gather to worship you as one family of your people,

honoring you as our Creator,

trusting you as our Saviour,

celebrating you as the Spirit who gives us life. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #321: "Praise to the Lord Almighty" (V 1,2,4)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, who rules all creation!

My soul, praise God, who alone is your health and salvation!

Come, all who hear; sisters and brothers draw near,  
joining in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who in all things so wondrously reigning;  
hides you with sheltering wings, ever gently sustaining!  
Have you not seen how your heart's wishes have been  
granted through God's kind ordaining?

Praise to the Lord! And with all that is in me adoring!  
All who have life and breath, come with glad praises outpouring!  
Let the Amen sound from God's people again;  
now and forever adoring!

### **Call to Confession**

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

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Righteous Father,  
we who own more than we use,  
proclaim more than we experience,  
and request more than we need,  
come asking your forgiveness.  
We seek your salvation, then act like we save ourselves.  
We beg your forgiveness, then repeat our errors.  
We experience your grace, then act defeated.  
We rely on your power, but only in hard times.  
We have become confused and misguided.  
Forgive our every defection.  
Bring us to an unbroken commitment  
and a steady trust,  
through Jesus Christ, who is the way of hope,  
the truth of God,  
and the life of love,  
now and always. Amen**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

God demonstrates his own love for us in this:  
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
Since we have now been justified by his blood,  
how much more shall we be saved  
from God's wrath through him!

**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: "I Will Always Be With You"****Responsive Reading****Psalm 23:1-6**

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
 He leads me beside still waters.**

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness  
 for his name's sake.

**4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
 I will fear no evil,  
 for you are with me;  
 your rod and your staff,  
 they comfort me.**

5 You prepare a table before me  
 in the presence of my enemies;  
 you anoint my head with oil;  
 my cup overflows.

**6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
 all the days of my life,  
 and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
 forever.**

**Children's Hymn: "Down in My Heart"**

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart;  
 I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart to stay.

I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart;  
 I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart to stay.

I've got the peace that passeth understanding,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart;  
 I've got the peace that passeth understanding,  
 Down in my heart,  
 Down in my heart to stay.

### Children's Lesson

#### Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

#### Scripture

##### 1 Peter 2:11-25

**11** Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. **12** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

**13** Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

**18** Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. **19** For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in

**his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

### Sermon

The Book of Peter emphasizes the importance of true believers living in the Word of God and by doing so maturing in their faith with Christ as the cornerstone. Peter reminds us that it is once we have Christ as the cornerstone of our life that we are seen as being in Christ by God and that we will begin to experience the transformational powers of the Holy Spirit within our lives as we begin to live a progressively more Christ like life for all of the world to witness.

Peter knew that this journey of change would not be instantaneous, instead it would be a progressive growth in faith, a progressive change in character that would take place in all aspects of a believer's life. The reality is that many times that growth does not begin to take place out of our own will, instead it usually requires our faith to be tested in some way, and by passing through that time of testing our spiritual maturity and faith grow.

The biggest challenge for Christians is even when our faith is being tested to the limits, when we feel as if we want to surrender to temptation or give in to the ways of the world, we need to remember that we are children of God, citizens of Heaven and that we should live lives that are committed to God and reflects the nature of Jesus Christ, we need to maintain a positive Christian witness and testimony in all things. Our testimony, not just our words but the very way that we live our lives is one of the greatest tools we have in teaching other people about the truth of God in this world. To be faithful Christians we need to remember this and stay true to Christ even in the most difficult of situations to be His witness in this ever-darkening world.

That is what the Scripture today is teaching us, what it means to stand as a witness of Christ in the world, the virtues that true believers should be learning to possess and portray into the dark as they stand as the Salt and Light in their communities.

#### **1 Peter 2:11**

**11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.**

As we spoke about last week, we are sojourners or strangers in this land. Christians are strange, we are people who do not give into the ways of the world in regard to the fleshly lusts, sex, drugs, power, money, all of the ways in which sin separates us from God. Instead, we are people who live as citizens of Heaven in this world, focused on the Word of God and on his teachings even when the world teaches something different and more easily acceptable. We need to remember that it is not possible for us to serve

two masters and that the ways of the world and the ways of God are perfectly incompatible. Those of you who study the Book of Revelation know that in the end every human being will wear a mark on their foreheads, either the mark of the Beast or the name of God, there are no other possibilities and Peter is reminding us that we are called to serve the Lord.

We are called to serve the Lord and to refrain from the lusts of the flesh. We are called to literally set aside the ways of the world and pursue the truth of God's Word in our lives. Peter knew and understood that the ways of the world and that the lusts of the flesh would be persistent, that believers would constantly be at war within themselves, a war between the desire to obey the Word of God and a desire to give into the flesh.

Paul knew this when he wrote his letter to the Galatians.

**Galatians 5:19-21**

**<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

These are the things which will constantly test the faith of believers. These are the things which are becoming more and more accepted by those who follow the ways of the world, and these are the things which Christians are called to stand against. These are the things for which Christians will be called strange, odd, prudes or -phobes in this world because they walk in the light and not in the dark.

These are the things on which Peter will now try to give us examples of how we are to live as the Salt and Light of the Word of God in a world which does not.

**1 Peter 2:12-17**

**12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.**

Christians are called to be honest, to walk upright in the truth of God's Word in this world. However, this is not only speaking about the words we use, but also teaching about our behavior as well, we are called to reflect the Truth of God's Word in all we do. This means we cannot live our lives as hypocrites, we cannot live one way on Sunday

and another way the rest of the week, we cannot be Christian just around the people we go to Church with and then be worldly people when we are at work, or doing our hobbies, or out doing what we enjoy.

The Scripture tells us that it is likely that people will speak evilly about us because of our faith, yet it is because of our faith people will take notice and it will have a positive influence on those who are being called to Christ. Simply put, when we walk as the Salt and Light of this world, when we live a life that is honest and honors God's Word, we are witnesses to the power of God in a dark world, we are the light that reaches into the darkness for the lost.

Remember that Peter was writing to Christians who were scattered all throughout the Roman provinces. Christians who were facing constant persecution because of their faith, some who were facing the loss of social status and economic status and many who were facing the reality of losing their life because of their faith. Christians were living in a world that was hostile to them in every way, under a government and social system that was not sympathetic to their faith or their beliefs in any way.

Yet notice that Peter does not call for them to rise together against the government, he does not call for an insurrection or rebellion. In fact, he encourages just the opposite, submit to the authority of the government. Submit to those who were in power, kings and governors, anyone who held a position of power in the governing structure, because by doing so they would put an end to the people who spoke up against them.

Many people would argue that our situation is so different from that of the early Christians that this should not apply to us today. However, the principle and the expectation remain. While we may not agree with everything that the government does or requires of us, we please God when we submit to their authority. In our modern world we have many people who are trying to rebel against the government, yet this is not what God wants because in doing so we often harden the churches image by being perceived as radical and rebellious. God wants us to submit to the government, but also to live by His Word, even if that means we are subject to persecution and punishment for our faith, because when we do this, we are the Salt and Light of the darkening world.

That means we are not able to use our freedom in Christ, our relationship with God to justify our sin or the sins of the world. We are saved by grace, our freedom from slavery to sin purchased by the blood of Christ, and that freedom is not a new license to continue living in sin and indulgence.

William Barclay said this when considering the section of Peter, **'Any great Christian doctrine can be perverted into an excuse for evil. The doctrine of grace can be perverted into an excuse for sinning to one's heart's content. The doctrine of love of God can be sentimentalized into a defense for breaking the law of God. The doctrine of life to come can be perverted into a reason for neglecting life in this world. And**

**there is no doctrine so easily perverted as the doctrine of Christian freedom and Christian liberty.'**

We see this happen in the New Testament. Paul tells the Galatians that they have been called to freedom, but they must not use that freedom as an occasion for the flesh to do as it wills.

**Galatians 5:13**

**<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.**

This is a bit of Scripture that needs to be resounded from the modern church and its pulpits. The ways of the world have infected the teachings of the Scripture and the idea of freedom to do whatever we want and whatever we choose has become the idol of this world. Christians are held to a higher standard, our lives should not reflect the world but Christ in all we do.

Peter sums this up nicely, '**Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.**' Honor everyone, show treat everyone with dignity and respect, even those who do not treat you well. Love and respect the whole community of Christ, not just the people in your local church, but true Christians all around the globe, regardless of their level of faith or their denomination. Christians are Christians first, there is no race, no gender, no ethnicity, and no nationality that comes before Christ. Christians are called to honor God first, to fear God, to treat him and his teachings with reverence and respect, to be devoted to him. Peter is reminding Christians that God should always be the center of our lives, the focal point of everything we do, and this is why we needed to biblically fear him.

Finally, and perhaps the most challenging for many, we need to honor the emperor, the king, the government. For the people of Peter's day, this was emperor Nero, a man who was known for torturing and killing Christians on a whim. Even though everything that Nero did went against the teachings of God and against the things which Christians believed, Peter is telling Christians that they need to show the government of Nero the honor and respect that they deserve, knowing that God had ordained that they are in those positions of power, and even if it results in persecution and death, we are to show them the respect afforded to the position if we cannot respect the person.

**1 Peter 2:18-25**

**18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an**

**example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

Finally, Peter begins to speak directly to the life of the believers. Slavery was not uncommon at the time and within the Roman empire there were many who both were slaves and who owned slaves. This meant that there were Christians who were both slaves and masters, sometimes in the same household. Peter is encouraging them to serve their masters and by doing so to be a true witness of Christ in everything that they do, and it is this bit of Scripture that can also be applied to the modern world and the places in which Christians are employed.

Peter tells servants that they are to respect their masters, not just the good and gentle but also the unjust. It was this submission, in every situation, that would glorify God and would bear witness to the transforming power of Jesus in the life of believers. Peter knew this would not always be easy, in fact he knew it would be difficult at many times, yet he tells us we are called to always be a positive witness for Christ.

Today, we have the same responsibility. Regardless of how we are treated by the world, whether at work, at our hobbies or just out in public, we are called to treat others with respect and dignity, even when they treat us with disrespect, even when they persecute us and yes even if they prosecute us. This is not going to be easy, but it is essential, Christians have the most influence over the world when our lives reflect Jesus and that means having the same grace and love that he had, even when we are mistreated and taken advantage of in this world. It means we need to have the courage to stand up for the Scriptures and God's truth even when it becomes difficult to do so, and do it with love and respect, even when people ridicule and disrespect our faith.

Peter simply tells us we will suffer for our faith. Truthfully when we suffer because of something wrong that we have done, we are getting what we deserve. There is nothing surprising about consequences that follow bad decisions and bad behaviors. However, Christians will suffer for believing in Christ in this world, for living rightly in the world according to the Word of God. Right now, there are Christians in India, China, parts the middle East and all around the globe who are suffering because of their adherence to the Scriptures. They could easily give into the culture, the government, the social pressure, but instead they suffer whatever persecution and punishment is carried out against them, and by doing so they become the Salt and Light of their communities.

Our commitment to Christ is revealed in our lives when we respond to mistreatment, to persecution with grace rather than with bitterness and anger. Jesus was falsely accused and condemned for 5 crimes he did not commit. He willingly suffered ridicule, torture and a society that lashed out against him as he carried his cross to Calvary. He gave himself up upon the cross for our freedom from slavery to sin and as believers we are called to bear witness to our faith in Christ in all we think, all we say and all we do, even when we are in situations that are unfair and unjust. Christians are called to be consistent in behavior with all people, those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and those who treat us with disdain and disrespect. That is true witness of Christ in this world.

Peter is reminding all Christians that they are no longer their own, their freedom from slavery to sin was purchased by God. They were bought for a price, and they belong to the Lord. Every aspect of a believer's life belongs to God; personal, social, and professional all should bear witness to the truth that they are one of God's children. Peter is telling us plainly, that not every situation we find ourselves in will be enjoyable, in fact many will be trying and difficult, they will test and tempt us, but we need to bear a consistent witness to who God is in our lives.

So, ask yourselves today, are you bearing a consistent witness of Christ in your life, personally, socially, and professionally? Is it evident to everyone that you meet that you belong to the Lord and desire to live your life according to His Word? If not, then you need to begin to reflect upon this Scripture and commit to walking with the Lord in all things as you bear witness to Him as Lord and Saviour in every aspect of Life.

Let us Pray,

**By Your Word You Have Brought Us out of Darkness**

Lord God, heavenly Father,  
 we most heartily thank you  
 that by your Word  
 you have brought us out of the darkness of error  
 into the light of your grace.  
 Mercifully help us to walk in that light,  
 guard us from all error and false doctrine  
 and grant that we may not become ungrateful  
 and despise and persecute your Word,  
 as your people did long ago,  
 but receive it with all our heart,  
 govern our lives according to it  
 and put all our trust in your grace  
 through the merit of your dear 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, Trinity 25 / Reformation**

**Hymn: "Christ is Mine Forevermore"**

### **Invitation to Offering**

#### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

#### **Offertory Prayer**

**(Congregant Prepared)**

#### **Closing Hymn #332: "How Great Thou Art" (V 1,3,4)**

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy pow'r thru-out the universe displayed!

#### **Chorus**

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in –  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin! (Chorus)

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
 And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
 Then I shall bow in humble adoration  
 And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art! (Chorus)

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Lord our God, we thank you  
 for the many people throughout the ages  
 who have followed your way of life joyfully:  
 for the many saints and martyrs, men, and women,  
 who have offered up their very lives  
 so that your life abundant may become manifest  
 and your kingdom may advance.

Lord, we thank you for those  
 who chose the way of your Son, our brother Jesus Christ.  
 In the midst of trial, they held out hope;  
 in the midst of hatred, they kindled love;  
 in the midst of persecutions, they witnessed to your power;  
 in the midst of despair, they clung to your promise.

O Lord, we thank you for the truth they learned and passed on to us:  
 that it is by giving that we shall receive;  
 it is by becoming weak that we shall be strong;  
 it is by loving others that we shall be loved;  
 it is by offering ourselves that the kingdom will unfold;  
 it is by dying that we shall inherit life everlasting.  
 Lord, give us courage to follow your way of life.

For your love and faithfulness  
 we will at all times praise your name. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

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