

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, May 14th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Life's Priorities
Sixth Sunday of Easter
1 Peter 3:13-22**

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

Let the earth rejoice and be glad,
let the heavens declare your righteousness!

May all people see your glory, O God;
may your ways be known throughout the earth.

Let us worship the God who loves us;
**We come to worship with open hearts,
to raise our voices with thanks and praise.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of promise and purpose,
we greet you this day with thankful hearts.
As flowers unfurl and buds open,
the beauty of your world lifts our spirits in praise.
As children grow and students prepare to graduate,
their energy and enthusiasm encourage us toward your future.
Your world is full of such variety and detail,
we stand in awe of your creation.
Draw close to us in this hour of worship
and show us the promise and purpose in our own lives.
May we unfurl with your gift of new life,
and move into the future, renewed by the energy of your Holy Spirit.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ,
who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit

as the One True God, now and Forever, amen

Opening Hymn #382: “Spirit of God Descend Upon My Heart”

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wear it from earth; through all its pulses move.
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

Hast Thou not bid me love Thee, God and King?
All, all Thine own, soul, heart and strength and mind.
I see Thy cross; there teach my heart to cling:
Oh, let me seek Thee, and, oh, let me find!

Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heaven-descended Dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Eternal and merciful God,
you have loved us with a love beyond our understanding,
and you have set us on paths of righteousness for your name’s sake.
Yet we have strayed from your way;
we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
through what we have done and what we have left undone.
As we remember the lavish gift of your grace
symbolized in baptism, O God,
we praise you and give you thanks that you forgive us yet again.
Grant us now, we pray, the grace to die daily to sin,
and to rise daily to new life in Christ,
who lives and reigns with you,
and in whose strong name we pray. Amen**

Assurance of Pardon

Jesus said, “My peace I give to you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”
May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
Let his forgiveness set you at peace with God and yourself,
and make peace with one another. Amen

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: "Light of the World" Choir**Responsive Reading****Ps 66:8–20.**

8 Bless our God, O peoples;
 let the sound of his praise be heard,
 9 who has kept our soul among the living
 and has not let our feet slip.
 10 For you, O God, have tested us;
 you have tried us as silver is tried.
11 You brought us into the net;
you laid a crushing burden on our backs;
12 you let men ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

13 I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
 I will perform my vows to you,
 14 that which my lips uttered
 and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah

16 Come and hear, all you who fear God,
 and I will tell what he has done for my soul.
 17 I cried to him with my mouth,
 and high praise was on my tongue.
18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
19 But truly God has listened;
he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

**20 Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me!**

Children's Hymn: "The Wise Man Built His House Upon a Rock"

The wise man built his house upon a rock
And the rains came a tumbling down

The rains came down and the floods came up
And the house on the rock stood firm

The foolish man built his house upon the sand
And the rains came a tumbling down

The rains came down and the floods came up
And the house on the sand went splat

So build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
And the blessings will come do

Children's Lesson

**Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

1 Peter 3:13-22

¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into

heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Sermon

Last week we spoke about how we are called to remain focused on Christ in all things, how he is to be the very cornerstone of our lives and of the church. Peter made it sound simple, take off all of those parts of your old life that interfere with you following God, just like taking off a dirty, stained shirt and putting on a clean white shirt.

However, we all know that it is not that simple, in fact it is often much more difficult. Even the most faithful of Christians, people who devote themselves to being a follower of Christ in every aspect of their life, face times when they are forced to make difficult choices in life. Even the most faithful have times when they feel like compromising their faith.

Every Christian will find themselves in situations, where their walk in faith is challenged, whether it is with family, friends at work, or elsewhere. Every Christian will face situations in their life where their priorities in life will be challenged by this world. We are called to have God first, and many Christians will tell everyone that God is in fact first in our lives. However, truthfully, we know that God is not always at the top of our priority list.

In fact, many of us are more like Ray Kroc, the man who founded McDonald's. In an interview a reporter once asked him about his priorities in life. He responded, 'I believe in God, my family and McDonald's.' Then he added, 'When I get to the office, I reverse the order.' This is how many faithful Christians live their lives, God is a priority on Sunday and then on the rest of the week he drops down a few positions in the list.

Many people in this world prioritize their life very differently than Christians. Some people are conscious of their priorities and choices others are not. Often, we see people prioritize wealth in their life. They will do whatever it takes to make money, gain power and influence. For some they are so desperate to have the appearance of wealth that they will drive themselves deep into debt in pursuit of the appearance of wealth and power. Often it takes something drastic or tragic to happen in their life before they recognize how their priorities in life are in the wrong order. A.H. Peuchen was one of the wealthy passengers who took the ill-fated trip on the Titanic. When the ship sunk 11 millionaires died, yet Mr. Peuchen rushed to the lifeboats, not with the \$300,000 worth of cash and Jewelry he had in his safe, but with something he felt was much more valuable in the moment.

'The money seemed a mockery at that time. I picked up three oranges instead.'

-A.H. Peuchen

God knows that sometimes we need to find ourselves in a new situation or new circumstance before we recognize what is actually important in our life.

So, the questions that all Christians need to be asking themselves is, 'How do I get my priorities correct from the start, rather than reacting to the circumstances I find myself in?'. No one wants to receive a wake-up call from God, remember God cares more about your eternal life than your comfort here on this planet.

This is what Peter is trying to make clear to the followers of Jesus Christ, both in his day and in the present day. The world that Peter lived in is not very different from the world that we live in, it was a complex world with a social and economic structure that was based of worldly values and not Christian faith. Christians in Peter's day constantly faced pressure from the people around them to give up their faith and give in to the sins of the flesh, like sex and drugs. Christians were constantly being told that they needed to pursue wealth and their careers if they wanted to get ahead in the culture of the time. Christians were constantly being told that they should give up the foolishness of trying to obey the Word of God and instead begin to worship one of the pagan Gods who would give them a lot more freedom to do whatever they want. The Christians of Peter's day were constantly under pressure to give up their faith, and on top of that they had to face real persecution, with some people losing properties, being tortured, and even executed for their faith.

Just like in Peter's day, Christians today are constantly being pressured to put their faith in a secondary role in their life, or better yet abandon it all together. Give into the ways of the world and pursue those things which will bring you immediate gratification here on earth, even if it's only for a short while. Give up the biblical Christ and instead follow one of the other versions that have been created in one of the false churches of today's faith, follow a Christ that does not require repentance and change, follow one who lets you do and be anything you want.

Peter knew about all of these pressures. He knew that life on earth was filled with challenges, trials, and temptations. He wrote about how we would face both external pressures, like those of the government and internal pressures like those we spoke about last week. He knew that our only way to ensure our walk with Christ through all of these internal and external pressures, temptations and trials was to make Jesus Christ the cornerstone of our lives. He knew that Christians need to understand that they will suffer in this world. That they will not always have it easy and in fact that it will often be difficult to maintain our faith.

Peter reminds us that our way through all of the trials, tribulations, pressures, and problems of this world is the acknowledgement that Jesus Christ is our Lord. Verse fifteen says, '**but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy**'. Jesus is Lord, the Bible states is clearly through all 66 books, Jesus is Lord. There is no debate about this in the Bible, there is no talk of other religions or other paths to salvation, the Bible very plainly and bluntly states that Jesus is the one way to salvation. It was Jesus Christ who died for the sins of his people, it was Jesus Christ who rose from the dead, and it was Jesus Christ who ascended into Heaven.

The Bible never blurs these facts, the Old Testament points to the coming of Jesus, the New Testament in the Truth of his ministry and the book of Revelation tells of his return to claim his people and his kingdom. Jesus is Lord and all of mankind need to respond to that truth in some

manner. Non-Christians and false Christians respond by either fully not acknowledging that he is Lord, or by modifying him to make him more like the Lord that they want in this world. Christians are called to respond simply by making him Lord in our lives. Christians respond by repenting and following him, by being set apart from the ways of this world and living our lives according to His teachings.

We do this by making Jesus the first priority in our lives. God First, God as master and us as servant. Letting the Word of God be behind all of our decisions in this world, putting God in the drivers' seat, this is what is meant by 'Jesus take the wheel'. When all of the pressure, problems, trials, tribulations, and temptations come at us in this world, and trust me they will, we need to have God as our very first priority.

Matthew 6:33 teaches us.

Matthew 6:33

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

God first, then everything else will come. It states quite plainly that God is to be our number one priority in life, then everything else. Seeking out a relationship with God should be an everyday task, not a once-a-week adventure. Our relationship with God is to be an integral part of our life, we get our spiritual 'first milk' from his Word, and it provides us with the nutrients we need for life and the protection we need to face the darkness in this world.

We have to place the biblical Jesus first in our lives. God deserves to be first in our lives. God provided us with physical life and spiritual life. God is the one who grants us salvation and eternal life. When Jesus returns there are only two possible outcomes for each and every human being who has ever lived, either their name is written in the Book of Life, or it is not. Whether you belong to God, or you do not and while both will have an eternity to live out their judgment, the place in which they live out that eternity is very different in nature. You either receive God's eternal blessing or you do not, there are no in-betweens or partialities for eternity.

Peter tells us that because we will suffer for our righteousness, because Christians will be treated differently by family, friends, co-workers, strangers, and governments that they will be blessed by God.

Paul goes further and says that we should rejoice when we are suffering,

Romans 5:2-5

² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

God's love is in his people, His Holy Spirit in each of them, at work in their lives, helping them to make that journey of walking with Christ and learning to always place him first though all of the perils, problems, persecutions, trials, tribulations, and temptations that they will surely experience in their lifetime. These difficult times should not make us more dependent on ourselves, or on the things of this world, they should make us more dependent on God, who is the source of our salvation and our joy.

Peter tells us have no fear of these difficulties in our lives. Non-believers have fear when their life is not going smoothly. They have fear because all they can see is the problem, the trial, the suffering. Why would anyone choose to suffer? They will do anything possible to avoid or get out of the suffering as painlessly as possible. Christians do not need to fear the pain, the problem, or the suffering because we know the result. Christians are like an athlete who pushes their body to the extremes of its potential, suffering all of the pain they can, knowing that the end result of that pain and suffering is better performance and potentially victory.

Christ says that even though we suffer, even though we give into our temptations, when we have him as our priority, we have salvation and because of that salvation we have joy in the suffering. With Christ as our cornerstone, we have our names in the Book of Life and eternal life in God's kingdom as our final victory, and this is why we can withstand all of the suffering we will experience in this world. Christians can go through pain and fear because we are blessed by God.

How are we to know if we have Christ as the cornerstone of our lives? Let's look at the book of Mark.

Mark 12:29-31

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.

Love God with everything we are. With all of our heart and soul, all of our emotions, all of our being. Love God with all of our minds, love him intellectually, seek out his Word so that you can learn more about who He is and who he should be in our lives. Learn what the Bible teaches and think about how our own lives are being lived in comparison to what the Bible teaches us about how we should be living. Faith needs to be grounded and grown both mentally and emotionally. Finally, we are called to love God with all of our strength, with all of our physical being. We are being told that our bodies belong to God, we need to honor him with our body as we live as living sacrifices to Him.

When we are God's people, we are focused on him as our priority and have him as our cornerstone. When we Love God first, we know that no amount of suffering can take us away from God, we know the truth of salvation and what it means for all of eternity, and this is what gives us hope and joy in life. This hope and joy we have, Peter tells us that we need to be able to have this as our defense. Simply put we need to be able to explain how and why we are able to suffer without giving into fear like non-believers.

There is an important lesson here for all Christians, there is no simple defense for Christianity. There are no words, arguments, or ideas that we can memorize and use as our reasoning for our faith. There is no global defense of Christianity other than God's Word, yet Peter is saying that each of us needs to be able to tell others why we believe.

1 Peter 3:15

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

'The hope that is in you!' not the hope in the Bible, not the hope that you learned about on YouTube, or the hope you memorized from that book you read by Billy Graham, not the hope that you heard someone else share in a Bible study or a question-and-answer session. You cannot just copy and paste someone else's hope into your life, or into the lives of others. Christianity is about a one-on-one relationship with God, not a mass marketed product that you can just pick up and share with someone on a whim. If you want others to understand why you have faith, you have to explain it to them, in your words and in your life experience, and then pray that the Holy Spirit helps them to understand.

When you take the time to discover why you have hope and you begin to share it with others, you will find that you are growing closer to God and that prioritizing God in your life becomes easier to do. When you know that no matter what this world throws at you, God is on your side and even if you suffer here, it is insignificant to the salvation you have, it begins to show in the way you live, in the way you talk, and even in the way you walk. You realize that you have a reason to be joyful even in the midst of suffering, because this is temporary, you can sing in the rain because you know that there is pure and beautiful sunshine on the other side of this storm.

And that is what gets the attention of people who have not yet found Christ in their lives. When they attack you, ridicule you, say bad things about you instead of lashing back you can respond with love. You are not threatened by the threats of persecution, slander, anger, hatred, because you know it's only temporary and that gives you the ability to respond with love and respect, and that makes others take notice. They begin to wonder why you're not getting riled up, why you're not reacting like everyone else, and they want to hear your story, they want to know what you know that sets you apart from everyone else. They want to hear your story, your testimony, your witness to who Jesus Christ is in your life, they want to know why that relationship is so much more important than any other relationship in this world. They want to know why you love God first, and why that makes you love them.

When you love God first you naturally begin to love others more, because we no longer need to protect ourselves. We know that God's blessings are upon us in all situations, that they are always for His good and His Kingdom and we willfully go and serve where he calls us to go, because of what He has done for us. We love God by placing him first in our lives, which means we have given up our selfishness and selfish ways, and that is what allows us to love others before ourselves as well. We show our love of God when we love others, we serve others, when we do things for others, not for our benefit, but for theirs.

Peter reminds us once again, Jesus Christ did that for all of us. He suffered for our sin. If we are to be true followers of Christ that means, we need to understand that we will at time be called to suffer for the sake of others. Christ suffered pain, torture, humiliation, ridicule and even death for each of us, he did not protest, he did not resist, he did not try to say it was all our fault. Instead, he suffered, and he said 'Father, Forgive them.'

Jesus suffered a death he did not deserve. He suffered it because of the bigger picture that went far beyond the cross that day, he suffered because he was focused on the lives of His people for all of eternity. He knew that there was a higher purpose, he had his priorities correct and he wants to bring anyone who will be a faithful follower of his, anyone who will repent and obey his Word, into the eternal kingdom of heaven.

So how do we do this in our lives? How do we set our priorities straight? How do we have our heart, soul, mind, and body loving God First and our neighbors as ourselves?

Well, it is going to take an open and honest look at our lives.

We can begin by looking at our schedules. What does our calendar look like? What do we spend our days doing? How about our mornings and evenings? What gets bumped when we are behind schedule? What is non-negotiable, family time, work time, church time? If we were to hand over our weekly schedule to a stranger, what would they say our priority in life is? Projects we are working on? People in our lives? Making a few more dollars? Socializing?

In 1995 Bill Galston, who was the domestic policy advisor to President Bill Clinton had to look at his schedule and decide his priorities. He was at the very peak of his career, even speaking and writing on how the American culture had become socially and culturally poorer because it was no longer putting children first. He was desperately trying to balance all of the pressures in his career and in his life when he received a letter from his 10-year-old son Ezra.

Ezra's letter simply said, 'Baseball's not fun when there's no one there to applaud you' and then listed off all of the achievements that his dad had missed seeing him perform. While Bill had thought he had struck a good work/life balance his son did not seem to hold the same perception. So, Mr. Galston handed his resignation over to the president, it simply stated, 'You can replace me, my son cannot.' He had come face to face with the reality that even as he went

around the country telling people that children need to be put first, that families were important, he was not actually practicing what he was preaching.

After your schedule, pull out your bank statements. Look at what you are spending your money on. If you were suddenly in a situation where someone needed to look over all of your financial records and give you some advice, what would they see? Would you be embarrassed when they saw where and how much you spent on your entertainment or hobbies? Would you be proud because your spending showed a dedication to God?

Research by the Barna group found that Christians in North America gave over 4 billion dollars to Christian causes in a single year. While that might sound quite impressive and sound like something we should be proud of, they also discovered that in that same year, Christians spent 34 billion dollars on diet and weight-loss products and 40 billion on recreation and entertainment.

Jesus said,

Matthew 6:21

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

When you find yourself needing to tighten the belt on your budget what gets cut first, your tithe or your Starbucks coffee? Remember we are called by God to give back to him from all that he has blessed us with, time, talents, and treasures? Yet when things get difficult, time or money gets tight, how often do we do what Ray Kroc does and suddenly reverse our priorities, and God suddenly comes last.

Which brings us to another way we can assess our priorities. Look at what you talk about? What are your conversations generally centered around? What is it you get really excited about and cannot wait to share with someone else? Is the way you talk at church the same way you talk out of Church? What is your focus, sports, money, entertainment, or God?

Jesus taught,

Luke 6:45

⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

A simpler way to put this is whatever is in your heart is what you are going to be talking about. I heard this expressed in an interesting way, the eyes may be the windows to the soul, but our words are the living room that that window looks upon. Through your words, what do people see in you?

The last way we can examine our priorities is what we do when we are alone. What are you like when you are by yourself, or an anonymous person on the internet? What do you think, say, and do when no one else is looking? Having the wrong priorities in life often begins when we are alone, when we feel like no one is watching. Yet when we have our priorities wrong when we are alone it often starts us down a path of wrong priorities in all things, kind of like buttoning up a shirt or a blouse. If you get that first button wrong, every button that follows will be out of place.

Paul is telling us to get our priorities correct because it is the most important thing we do in this world. We do not need to worry or be fearful about the things we suffer here, because they are temporary in nature. We should be living our lives in a way that shows we love God first with everything we are and by doing so reflecting that love into the communities that we are in as we live as Salt and Light in this world.

Let us pray,

Grant Us Your Holy Spirit to Protect Us

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 through your Son you promised us
 that whatever we ask in his name you will give us.
 Keep us in your Word
 and grant us your Holy Spirit,
 that he may govern us according to your will,
 protect us from the power of the devil,
 from false doctrine and false worship.
 Defend our lives against all danger
 and grant us your blessing and peace,
 that we may in all things
 know your merciful help
 and praise and glorify you as our gracious Father
 now and forever;
 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 5, Rogate

Hymn: "His Mercy is More"

What love could remember no wrongs we have done;
 Omniscient all knowing He counts not their sum
 Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore
 Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

CHORUS

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more. Stronger than darkness new ev'ry morn
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more.

What patience would wait as we constantly roam
What Father, so tender, is calling us home
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

Chorus

What riches of kindness He lavished on us;
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost.
we stood "neath a debt we could never afford;
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

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. 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 #375: "Fairest Lord Jesus"

Fairest Lord Jesus,
Lord of all creation,
Jesus of God and Mary the Son,
Thee will I cherish,

Thee will I honor,
O thou, my soul's delight and crown.

Fair are the meadows,
fairer still the woodlands,
robed in the verdure and blooming of spring:
Jesus is fairer,
Jesus is purer
he makes the saddest heart to sing.

All fairest beauty,
Heavenly and earthly,
Wondrously, Jesus, is found in Thee;
None can be nearer,
Fairer, or dearer,
Than Thou my Savior art to me.

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, gracious Father,
in the presence of your bounty keep us humble,
in the presence of all people's needs make us compassionate and caring.
Give us faith in our praying and love in our serving,
knowing that by your power
all may find a new balance in living and a new victory in adversity.
We pray for all unhappy lives,
those who are bitter and resentful, feeling life has given them a raw deal,
those who are sensitive to criticism and quick to take offense,
those who desire their own way, whatever the inconvenience
or cost to others.
May your judgment and mercy be for their healing.
We pray for those who are lonely,
who are shy and self-conscious,
who find it hard to make friends;
those who are nervous and timid,
who ever feel themselves strangers in a world they can scarcely understand.
May your presence inspire confidence and ensure companionship.
We pray for those who live with bitter regrets,
for loving relationships brought to ruin,
for opportunities freely given and woefully abused,
for the bitterness of defeat or betrayal at another's hand,
or for failure in personal integrity.
May your grace give new hope to find victory in the very scene of failure.
We pray for all in illness and pain,

weary of the day and fearful of the night.
Grant healing, if it be your will,
and at all times through faith the gift of your indwelling peace.
Bless the company of Christ's folk, the church in every land.
Make her eager in worship,
fearless in proclamation of the gospel, and passionate for caring.
Bless our country. Bless our leaders.
Bless our children and grant us peace within our borders.
Grant us as a nation to be found effective in establishing peace
throughout the world.
Bless us, each one, in the communion of the saints,
and keep us ever mindful of the great cloud of witnesses that,
following in their steps, as they did in the steps of the Master,
we may with them at the last receive the fulfillment
promised to your people.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ,
who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit
as the One True God, now and Forever, amen

Benediction

May the grace of Christ, which daily renews us,
and the love of God, which enables us to love all,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which unites us in one body,
make us eager to obey the will of God until we meet again,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.