

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, June 11th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

I Desire Steadfast Love and Not Sacrifice
Proper 5
Matthew 9:9-13

Welcome

Bible Trivia

Ecclesiastes talks about the vanity of many things. Which of these is not discussed?

Select one:

- a. Vanity of wisdom and knowledge
- b. Vanity of pleasure
- c. Vanity of labour/toil
- d. Vanity of moral life
- e. Vanity of the natural world
- f. d & e
- g. All of the above are described as vanities.

Announcements

Bible Trivia

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Next week's Question:

In Romans 14, Paul addresses this particular issue that is dividing believers in the church and apparently causing great distress:

Select one:

- a. Women speaking in the church
- b. Women taking roles of leadership in the church
- c. Requiring believers to be circumcised
- d. Eating meat and drinking wine

Call to Worship

O Lord, our Lord,
there are many places we could go this morning,
but we have desired to come to your house.

There are many voices to which we can listen today,
but we desire to hear your voice.

It would be easy to scatter,
but we have chosen to gather.

We need to behold your beauty,
to inquire in your temple,

to be wrapped in your love,
and to experience your renewing Spirit.

Come close, Lord Jesus,
to fill us and renew us. Amen

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

With you, gracious God,
we move into this time of worship,
grateful that you are never farther
than the reach of our need and our prayer.
You who tower over the universe
are yet intimately present,
always renewing the face of the earth,
always renewing the faith of your children.
Now, in your mercy, make your way past
all that worries and distracts us
to lodge in us anew and to center
our small worship on your great glory. Amen

Opening Hymn #500: "Open My Eyes, That I May See"

Open my eyes that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key

that shall unclasp and set me free.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my eyes, illumine me,
 Spirit divine!

Open my ears that I may hear
 voices of truth thou sendest clear,
 and while the wave notes fall on my ear,
 ev'rything false will disappear.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my ears, illumine me,
 Spirit divine!

Open my mouth and let me bear
 gladly the warm truth ev'rywhere.
 Open my heart and let me prepare
 love with thy children thus to share.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my mouth, illumine me,
 Spirit divine!

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Almighty and merciful God,
 we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.
 We have followed too much
 the devices and desires of our own hearts.
 We have offended against your holy laws.
 We have left undone those things which we ought to have done;
 and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.
 O Lord, have mercy upon us.
 Spare those who confess their faults.
 Restore those who are penitent,
 according to your promises declared to the world
 in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
 And grant, O merciful God, for his sake,
 that we may live a holy, just, and humble life
 to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

Assurance of Pardon

The scriptures say, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

The forgiveness we seek is ours through the grace of Jesus Christ. May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, be with you.

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 Keep My Eyes On You" Choir**Responsive Reading****Psalm 33:1-12**

1 Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous!
Praise befits the upright.

**2 Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!**

3 Sing to him a new song;

play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

**4 For the word of the Lord is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.**

5 He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

**6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.**

7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;
he puts the deeps in storehouses.

**8 Let all the earth fear the Lord;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**

9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

**10 The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.**

11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.

**12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!**

Children's Hymn: "Do Lord"

Do Lord, oh, do Lord, do remember me
Do Lord, oh, do Lord, oh, do remember me
Do Lord, oh, do Lord, do remember me
Way beyond the Blue

I've got a home in Glory Land that outshines the sun
I've got a home in Glory Land that outshines the sun
I've got a home in Glory Land that outshines the sun
Way beyond the Blue

I took Jesus as My Savior, you take Him too
I took Jesus as My Savior, you take Him too
I took Jesus as My Savior, you take Him too
While He's calling you

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 9:9-13

⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Sermon

‘Follow me’, Jesus walks by and sees Levi working away at his tax booth and simply says ‘Follow me’. What can we learn from such a simple phrase?

Levi was a tax collector, imagine someone who works for the Canada Revenue Agency, not the most liked individuals even in modern society. However, in the days of Jesus, tax collectors were even more disliked by the Jews. A better word to describe the job that Matthew filled is publican, a word which is very rarely used today.

A publican was a man who worked specifically for the Roman government as a tax collector. They were collaborators and worked together with the Romans to keep the Jews from rising up and rebelling, and the majority of them were corrupt and thieves.

The Romans had a set level of tax that they expected all of the tax collectors to collect from the people. They had employed Jews like Matthew because they knew and understood the intricacies of Jewish Culture and business. However, many of the publicans would add a few extra coins onto the tax that they collected, to pad their own pockets, and there was nothing that anyone could do about it, because the tax collector had the power of the Roman authorities behind their demands.

The Jewish people hated the publicans, they hated Levi, he was worse than an outcast, he was a collaborator, and a thief, a traitor of the Jewish people. When the people would see Levi in the streets, they did not see a brother, a friend, a father, or even a Jew, they just saw a Tax collector. Even his name indicates his allegiance, Levi means to be attached. What was Levi attached to? Maybe the Roman government, maybe money, maybe power.

Yet Jesus looked upon Levi and did not see an outcast, thieving, lying, traitors cheat. Instead, Jesus saw a sinner attached to his sin. A man with the potential for salvation. So, Jesus tells him ‘Follow me’, and Levi does. Jesus gives Levi a new name, symbolic of his new life, Matthew which means gift from God. When Levi got up and followed Jesus, he was leaving his old life behind and beginning a walk with the Lord that would not only dramatically change his life, but the lives of millions of people in the church.

Jesus and Matthew head to Matthew’s house. Matthew then opens his home to all the people who would like to come and sit with Jesus and share in a meal. He opens his home to other tax collectors and ‘sinners’. Why would the pharisees speak like this? Why would they separate the ‘tax collectors’ and ‘sinners’? They were dividing the concept of private sin and public sin!

Think of private sin like this, people in this world who live a life that outwardly appears to be moral and upright. They might have a good job, show up at church all the time, but they are also the ones cheating on tests, scamming people, and stealing like the publicans did, perfectly legal, but immoral and going against the Word of God.

Public sin was much easier to see! The drunkards and the prostitutes that wandered the city would be the easiest examples in the days of Jesus. Today, it would be anyone who publicly flaunts their disregard for God and his will.

Matthew invites his friends, fellow sinners into his home and into fellowship with himself and Christ. The Institute for American Church Growth once asked 10,000 people what brought them to church. Two percent said they came because of a special need in their life, three percent just walked in off the street and stayed, six percent came because they had heard of the pastor, one percent came because of a visitation, five percent came because of the Sunday School, and another five percent came because of the churches evangelical efforts like Alpha programs and outreach, three percent came because of other programs like Bible studies, and the remainder seventy nine percent came because someone they knew invited them.

Even way back during the life of our Lord and Saviour the best way to grow a church was by inviting people. After all, how else was a sinner or a tax collector to get to know their Saviour unless someone was willing to invite them to meet Him.

The Pharisees look in at this group sitting with Jesus and are appalled. How could a Rabbi sit down and share food with those people?

In the times of Christ and in many cultures today the sharing of a meal is an important event. At that time in the Jewish culture the meal was usually a stew that was placed in the middle of the table, and everyone gathered would dip off pieces of bread and did them into the bowl, similar to the way that we would share chips and salsa.

Only there were no societal rules about double dipping your bread. So many people would use the same piece of bread that they have just used and re-dip it into the bowl. For this reason, the pharisees believed that sharing a meal with those sorts of people would put your righteousness at risk. They believed that sharing that bowl with those sinners would let some of their sin get inside you and make you unclean, a sinner. You see, the biggest difference between the sinners at Matthew's table and the Pharisees, was that the publicans and other sinners at least acknowledged their spiritual condition as sinners and the Pharisees were blinded by their sense of moral superiority.

This is why they ask the disciples, **'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'**. They looked at the people that Jesus was eating with and saw people unworthy of being in the presence of a Rabbi. They had gotten so caught up in their books of laws and rules of religion that they believed in a God that demanded absolute adherence to not just the laws set forth in His scriptures, but also to the thousands of rules that had been added by the Religious leaders over time. They believed in a heartless God that was harsh and unfeeling towards sinners, one who was eager to punish those who were disobedient of the rules they had made.

Yet, this is not who God is! God is not some heartless, unforgiving being seeking to punish sinners. Jesus was showing Matthew and those gathered at that table who God is. Our God is a

God that welcomes all to His table, he welcomes the lame, the blind, the outcasts of society, the drunkards, the thieves, the drug addicts and yes, even the tax collector.

They all have been invited to the table, but their sin is still condemned. God looks upon His people who are attached to their sin and wants to set them free. He sees all of the pain, all the terribleness, all the heartaches and all the filthiness of their sinful ways and wants to separate them from it so they can begin to enjoy a relationship with Him as they were meant to do. This is why consistently in the Scripture Jesus does not just condone the sinners he meets, instead each and every one of them is told to sin no more, to repent and come to Jesus in faith.

Jesus looked at the people who were condemned by the pharisees and by Jewish culture and saw the value of the person underneath the sin. He saw that even though their lives might be consumed by sinful ways, they were His people, and they were worthy of saving.

Look at the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus went against Jewish tradition and crossed through the land of Samaria, the land of half-breeds. The Samaritans and Jews hated one another and avoided all forms of contact when possible. In fact, when Jewish travelers were in Samaria, the Samaritans would often refuse the services or raise prices so as to gouge them for as much money as possible.

Yet Jesus voluntarily goes into Samaria and specifically to the village of Sychar where he meets the woman at the well. A woman who came to the well in the heat of the midday sun because she was an outcast of her people. She was the one they all pointed at, they all whispered about, the one they all felt uncomfortable around and avoided.

Jesus breaks a cultural norm by asking her for a drink. In their interaction Jesus tells her of the sin in her life, her marriage to five men and her current living with a man who is not her husband. He sees everything that the people of Sychar have seen and more, yet he does not condemn her, he sees the value she still has, that she is a beautiful human being and worthy of saving. He condemns her sin and not her, and through that act of grace and mercy the woman is transformed and becomes an evangelist, she rushes back to Sychar and invites those who had treated her so poorly to come and meet Jesus.

Think about the woman who anoints his feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee. She comes off the streets and anoints the feet of Jesus with an ointment and her tears. She weeps and wipes his feet clean with her hair. Simon the Pharisee sees just a woman of the street, an outcast, a dirty sinner some deserving of punishment for their sinful life. How could a Rabbi let such a woman touch them?

Yet Jesus looks upon this woman and sees some worth saving, someone who is truly repentant of their sinful life. Jesus sees a woman seeking forgiveness for the attachment she has had to sin. He saw someone whose life could be forever changed. And he does just that when he tells her, 'Your sins are forgiven, your faith has saved you, go in peace.'

Or how about Zacchaeus. Another publican, tax collector who rushed through a crowd to see Jesus. A man who desired to see who Jesus was so badly that he was willing to degrade himself in the eyes of society even further by hiking up his clothing and climbing a tree, just to lay eyes upon Jesus.

The Jews and Pharisees saw someone worth of condemnation, of exile. Yet once again Jesus saw past the sin and into the sinner. And when he left the house of Zacchaeus, the publican was indeed a changed man, one willing to give back that which he took fourfold. Jesus had seen one that was worthy of saving.

So here at the table of Matthew, the Pharisees thought that in observing Jesus eating with sinners they finally had the opportunity to condemn him, after all he was publicly tainting his holiness by sharing a bowl of food with those people.

The Pharisees still exist today, same as the public and private sinner. The pharisees exist in churches that are so focused on theology and doctrine and righteousness that they cannot fathom why anyone would want to spend time around anyone who is not a member of their church. Churches which have no grasp of the meaning of mercy and grace.

Churches that are so focused on their own righteousness, the idea of holiness, that they will go to any extreme to avoid losing that special status in their own minds. They may not have always been that way, they probably started off with the right intent, but somewhere along the way they wandered off the path. We all know some churches and some Christians that say that even a single drop of alcohol is a sin, somehow forgetting that Jesus turned water into wine.

They create rules for their church, their pastors and their congregations and those rules become the focus of the church, no room is left for the Holy Spirit to be at work. Then before they know it, they have become like the pharisees, focused on the law.

Jesus sees something different, he sees the sin, but he sees the person trapped, attached to it as well. Jesus saw the human need to be saved, the reality that it is only through him we can overcome sin in our lives. Jesus saw people in need of grace and mercy and that is what he offers to them.

Matthew 9:12-13

¹² But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Jesus was walking among those who were living a life of sin and showing them another way to live. He showed them the Love, the grace, and the mercy of God.

Could you imagine a doctor that lived their whole life studying illness and yet never once treated a patient? Could you imagine a doctor telling his staff to turn away all the sick people

that showed up at his clinic, that he would only see healthy people? He would happily tell people who were healthy how to stay healthy, but once they got sick, they were on their own.

Jesus is showing his church what to do, go and make friends with sinners, invite them to eat with you. Show them who God is by showing them mercy, showing them grace, showing them compassion, by showing them the same Love of God that God showed you.

He drives the point home, telling the pharisees, 'I **desire mercy, and not sacrifice.**' Jesus is quoting the book of Hosea.

Hosea 6:6

**For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

The people of Hosea's time had lost touch with the meaning of sacrifice. They saw it as simply a price you paid so that you can sin all you want.

Sacrifice for sin was meant to be a mournful, repentant event. You were meant to approach the sacrifice with a heavy heart, guilty that you were going to take the life of an innocent animal for your sins, knowing that the blood of that animal paid the price that your blood would have had to pay. Sacrifice was a messy, dirty, and heartfelt thing. People were meant to walk away from the sacrifice with a sense of repentance and a desire to walk a life free from sin.

But in Hosea's day it was treated like a punch card for a free sub at subway. People sinned and sacrificed without thought, there was no remorse, no change in character. The people no longer knew the meaning of their sacrifice, they followed the rules but forgot the relationship. Sacrifice had become an empty religious practice.

So, God spoke, 'I desire love, not sacrifice'. The pharisees had done the same thing they had forgotten who God was and what he required. The same could be said today of all the churches that speak solely of God's love and never speak of the sacrifice that is required. They have all missed the mark, they have lost the purpose of the church that Jesus Christ established.

Jesus is telling the pharisees go back to the Scriptures. Forget all of the worldly thing you have fallen into, go back to what God requires. Go back to your task of bring the sinner back to faith.

This is the call that the modern church needs to bring back. Remember last week, 'Go forth, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe.'

Galatians 6:1 tells us.

Galatians 6:1

6 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Go out and spend time with sinners, do not go along with them in their sin, but be there to show them God's love. Spend time with them, share meals with them, show them God's love in your life. Invite them to get to know their Savior.

Be like Jesus, do not see just the sin, just the things this world sees, see past that to the person underneath that is worthy of God's love. Pray for them. Show them grace, mercy, and love whenever you can, especially in a world which may not show them any love. Walk as the Salt and Light of this world as you serve you Lord Jesus Christ, by showing everyone the same love that He has shown you.

A Prayer for Defense and Deliverance

We ask you, Master,
 be our helper and defender.
 Rescue those of us who are in distress;
 raise up the fallen;
 assist the needy;
 heal the sick;
 turn back those of your people who stray;
 feed the hungry;
 release our captives;
 revive the weak;
 encourage those who lose heart.
 Let all the nations realize that you are the only God,
 that Jesus Christ is your Son,
 and that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.
 In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**

Source: Clement of Rome (c. 96)

Hymn: "Bless God"

In the stillness of my soul, I reflect to see
 How God's love and pow'r have grown and moved inside of me

CHORUS

Bless God for all He's done bless God for Christ His Son
 Let us magnify Him for He's holy, holy.
 One voice in unity, one voice of praise to Thee
 With hearts of love and worship we will sing Bless God

You've been my strength, You've been my joy, You've softly dried my tears
 I thank you for the faithfulness you've shown down through the years.

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 #672: "Jesus Call Us, O'er the Tumult" (V 1, 4, 5)

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
of our life's wild restless sea;
day by day his voice still calls us
saying, 'Christian, follow me.'

In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
Jesus calls, in cares and pleasures,
'Christian, love me more than these.'

Jesus calls us: by your mercies,
Saviour, may we hear your call,
give our hearts in glad obedience,
serve and love you best of all.

Pastoral Prayer

Lord, our God,
whose glory is beyond compare;
whose mercy is boundless, and love for us is endless;

look upon us now in your compassion.

We pray for peace that calms our hearts and saves our souls,
and for peace in the whole world and throughout creation,

We pray for the stability of the church and the unity of this congregation,
for the ministries of your church around the world in these challenging times,
and for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada
meeting this week in Halifax,

We pray for our country, our leaders, and all those in public service
for this community, and for every neighbourhood and nation,
and for all who offer themselves in service for the common good,

We pray for the whole of God's creation in its beauty and bounty,
for the wellbeing of every creature and their habitats,
for a willingness to change our ways to protect places and people at risk,
and for generations yet unborn that they too may thrive,

We pray for the safety of those who must travel by land, sea, and air,
for those who long to travel but cannot,
and for all those who are separated from those they love,

We pray for the sick, the suffering, and the isolated,
for victims of violence, refugees, and captives,
and for our protection against all affliction, danger, and distress,

We pray all this to you, Holy God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
To whom belongs all glory, honour, and worship,
now and forever, and to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

Benediction

As you leave this place this day,
may God's love sustain you,
and may you love those who surround you.
May God's Spirit empower you,
and may you empower all those you meet.
May God's joy fill your hearts,
and may this joy overflow
to the ends of the earth for God's glory,
now and forever. **Amen.**