

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, June 4th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Make Disciples
Trinity Sunday
Matthew 28:16-20

Welcome

Bible Trivia

God's instruction to "be strong and courageous" is repeated 6 times in this book:

Select one:

- a. Deuteronomy
- b. Joshua
- c. Judges
- d. Ruth

Announcements

Bible Trivia

God's instruction to "be strong and courageous" is repeated 6 times in this book:

Select one:

- a. Deuteronomy
- b. Joshua
- c. Judges
- d. Ruth

Next week's Question:

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

Call to Worship

God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with laughter and songs of joy.

God calls us to worship, and we come,
some from a sense of obligation or habit.

God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with hearts heavy with grief.

God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with distraction or exhaustion.

God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with eagerness and enthusiasm.

God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with stress, loneliness, or depression.

As God's dearly loved children,
**we bring all our joy and pain, hurt and hope
 into this place of Spirit-given grace, love, and hope**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, our Father,
 you seek people
 who will worship you in spirit and in truth;
 and so we ask you to inspire
 and bless the worship week by week in this church,
 in words and music,
 prayers and hymns,
 psalms and lessons.
 Open the hearts and lips of those
 who worship you today all over the world,
 that all of us may listen with humility and acceptance
 to the preaching of your Word.
 We ask this in the name of him
 through whom we have salvation:
 our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #438: "When Morning Gilds the Skies"

When morning gilds the skies,
 My heart awaking cries:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

Alike at work and prayer,
 To Jesus I repair;
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

To God, the Word on high,
 the hosts of angels cry:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!
 Let mortals too upraise
 their voice in hymns of praise:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

Be this, while life is mine,
 My canticle divine:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!
 Be this eternal song
 Through all the ages on:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Triune God,
 we praise you as the God of love and life.
 Though Jesus prayed that we would be one,
 we confess that we fail to live in unity with each other and with you.
 We break our communion through hostile words and unkind actions.
 We long for your Spirit to heal us and to correct us.
 We long for you to help us experience communion
 with you and with each other
 as we gather around your Word.
 Even now, dependent on your grace, we commit ourselves
 to live more fully in the unity you desire.
 Through Christ, our Lord, Amen**

Assurance of Pardon

You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
 but you have received a spirit of adoption.
 When you cry, "Abba! Father!"
 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit
 that we are children of God,
 and if children, then heirs,
 heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, we are forgiven.

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: "At the Cross" Choir

Responsive Reading

Psalm 8

1 O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

**2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.**

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

**4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?**

5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

**6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,**

**7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,**

**8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.**

9 O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Children's Hymn #441: "Can a Little Child Like Me"

Can a little child like me
 thank the Father fittingly?
 Yes, O yes! be good and true,
 patient, kind in all we do;
 love the Lord and do our part;
 learn to say with all your heart,

Refrain:
 Saviour, we thank you, Spirit, we thank you,
 Great God our Maker, we thank you!

For our playing, for our rest,
 for the earth in beauty dressed,
 for the moon and sun so bright,
 for the day and for the night,
 for your patient, loving care,
 for your bounty everywhere, [Refrain]

For the laughter, for the tear,
 for the love that meets us here,
 for the lessons of our youth--
 honor, gratitude, and truth--
 for the great gift of your Son,
 for your work in us begun, [Refrain]

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sermon

One of the most well know teachers of who God is and what God wants us to do in our lives was someone we all know, but most of us probably would not recognize how he taught us about God every week. He did not write great books, or ever short stories. He did not teach in a classroom or give speeches to crowds. He drew cartoons.

Charles Schultz, the man behind snoopy, often injected biblical teachings and concepts into his weekly cartoon and the animated series. Probably the best known was 'Charlie Brown Christmas' where Linus comes on stage and quotes the book of Luke. As he does so, Linus drops his blanket, the only time in any cartoon or animated show in which Linus lets go of the blanket he brings with him anywhere.

Today, I want to talk about another of his classic cartoons, one in which Charlie Brown is at summer camp and taking part in archery. When some of the other characters comment on how Charlie brown seems to be able to hit nothing but bullseyes, Charlie brown says, 'well I do it a little differently. First, I shoot the arrow, then I draw the bullseye around where it hits'.

Charles Shultz was making a point; you can look like you are good at just about anything if you draw the bullseye after you shoot.

This is a common problem in the modern church, we want to do church, we want to be good at our church, and that means we often shoot where we want and then draw our 'good church' bullseye around the things we want to do. There are many modern churches, they redesign God and the Bible to fit what they want, to suit their own needs and desires and then still call it by its 2000-year-old name.

However, unlike Charlie Brown we do not have the luxury of drawing that target after we shoot. When you read your Bible, you begin to recognize that Jesus had a design for his church, it is founded on the cornerstone of who he is and the teachings of the scripture. Jesus knows what his church is called to be and that is why we have the letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation telling those churches what they have right and what they are getting wrong.

Jesus has a design for church and what it is meant to be. In Matthew 16 he says

Matthew 16:18

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Church is not a social club, or a group house, or a place that we get to invent and define. The church of God is a headed by Jesus Christ and serves him in this world, and his followers are given the privilege of participating in the work of God here on earth. Church is not just a place where faithful believers meet on a Sunday morning. As we learned about last week, the church started as an explosion of the Holy Spirit on the day

of Pentecost and that wave is meant to carry on until His second coming and is to reach every corner of the earth. Believers are called to give up all their own desires and ambitions and take part in that wave, sharing the Holy Spirit in the way that they think, act, and speak in this world. No passes and no exceptions.

The church belongs to God and the New Testament never hesitates to point that out to its readers. This is why we cannot just draw our own bullseye after we decide what we want church to be, instead we need to constantly be examining the church and realigning to the design for the church that Jesus Christ lays out for his followers. This all starts with Matthew 28 and the great commission.

After spending three years leading and teaching his disciples, Jesus gives them their assignment. To the ragtag group that he had collected, the tax collector, the fishermen, the political activist and the rest, Jesus says, 'take the message that you have heard from me for the past three years, take the lessons have learned from my life, my death for the sins of believers, my resurrection and my authority over heaven and earth and share it with everyone in the world.'

The Church started from Jesus Christ, and it had a plan and an objective from the very beginning. Just a few weeks after the great commission is given, we have Pentecost, and the beginning of the church becoming the pervading, universal, cross-cultural body it is today. Jesus did not want to create a Jewish Church, or an American Church, or Asian Church. He wanted the Word of God to be brought to every corner of the earth, so that every man, woman, boy and girl, will know who he is and will stop worshipping the false idols in their life and return into relationship with God.

Jesus started a church that would acknowledge that he had died for their sins and that he alone deserves their praise and worship, and that is what he directed the disciples to do, to build that church. He told them to bring that message to all people, everywhere, so that all people would worship God as they were always intended to do. There is no part of the design of the church that Christ gives for compromise with false religions and acceptance of teachings that go against His Word.

Matthew 28 says that the people who belong to Him, people who are his followers, should go forth and share his name all over the planet, should tell people of how the Son of God came to die upon the cross for each of them personally, he died for their sins, and they are called to respond with repentance and obedience to His Word.

Go forth and make disciples of all nations, 'Ta Ethne' in Greek, not just people from every land mass, or every politically defined region, 'Ta Ethne' means of every ethnicity, literally, Jesus is saying to make disciples of every human division of people.

This is clearly seen at the end of the age, when the whole making of disciples is completed in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 7:9-10

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

This directive to make disciples of all nations comes from the head of the church. Jesus alone has authority over the church.

Matthew 28:18

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

There is no worldly authority that sits above Jesus. This means that no angel or demon, no government, no tyrant, no dictator, no political movement, no social movement, no other authority in heaven or on earth that sits above Jesus, they all sit under his rulership. Every authority that we can imagine in this world and beyond, sits under the absolute authority and sovereignty of Jesus Christ and that includes the church.

Paul makes that absolutely clear in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:22-23

²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Jesus is the absolute head of the church, no pastor, priest, missionary, elder, deacon or founding member, or denominational organization, of any church can claim to have ownership or headship over the authority of Jesus Christ in his church. And in his authority, Jesus Christ has told the church, Go forth and extend my authority to every corner of the earth and every person that lives on it. That is a huge task, a pretty daunting objective and this is why the church needs to remember that this is our directive, this was the vision that was given to us by our founder and leader. When the church gets focused on other things, we are no different that Charlie Brown, shooting an arrow and drawing our own bullseye, instead of shooting at the target that was given to us by Jesus.

As a church if we are not out there sharing the name of Jesus Christ and living lives that show people, we are Christians, we need to set aside the things that are distracting us from this task and give ourselves over to this directive, go forth and make disciples.

Jesus wants his name known, the Son of God, who is worshipped by every being in Heaven should also be praised and worshiped by every being on Earth. He wants everyone to come back into relationship with God and have salvation. He wants people to know who he is, what he did, how he changes lives and why people should repent and obey His Word. As a Church this should be our primary focus, if our primary focus is on anything else we are disobeying the first directive of the only one who has authority in the Church.

Jesus has given the church the objective, he tells His church what they are supposed to produce. If we are a shoe factory we make shoes, a soap factory produces soap, a Church of Christ produces followers of Christ. When a church loses focus on if directive, when it loses focus and reason and forgets the purpose of its existence, it starts to produce the wrong things.

Churches are supposed to produce followers, but for many churches the things they actually produce are very different from the thing that Jesus Christ has told them to produce. For some churches there is a sole focus on the social programs and movements, or on the music program, or the fellowship. These are all great products of the church, but they should be producing disciples first. If they no longer produce followers, they are no longer a church following Christ.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Makes followers. For a church to be following Christ it needs to be following his directives and obtaining his objectives. A church needs to be making followers. It needs to be taking those people who do not know God, or those people who might know Jesus in name, but not personally, people who attend a church, but do not have a relationship with God and bringing them into a place where they become faithful, repentant, and obedient followers of God.

Look at the scripture if we were to put it simply it would say something like:

Go forth, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe.

It looks like a command, yet in the Greek form of this scripture has even more of an impact. The directives to go, baptize and teach are all in participle form, meaning they are verbs being used to describe an action. There is only one imperative, one action, in that whole bit of scripture, make, make disciples. The Go forth, baptize them, teach them is all dependent on the making of disciples. That is the primary function of the church of Christ.

At the very heart of the great commission is the command to make disciples. Jesus is telling his own disciples, men who would all go forth and die for him that their primary task in this world is to go and make more people like themselves. Go and make people:

- Who will follow Him, people who would lay aside their own desire, people who would pick up their cross and do His will.
- Who will take on his character as they walk with him and as the Holy Spirit works in them transforming them and their lives.
- Who will obey His Word, not change it, modify it, and ignore it when it does not say the things, they want it to say.
- Who will represent him, in their lives each and every day. People who other will look at and know that they are followers of Christ.

That is the kind of follower that Jesus wants, that is the kind of follower that the Holy Spirit is trying to turn every faithful Christian into. This are the things we go through and learn as we mature as Christians.

Jesus even tells us how to do this, how to make disciples!

Go forth, go to where people are. Do not sit in the church and wait for people to come to you. You do not fish inside the boat, you need to get out on the water. You do not make disciples in the church; you make them in the world you live in! You make disciples at work, at school, at the grocery store, anywhere you go you are making disciples, remember the valley of dry bones, you should be living as a prophet sharing who Christ is by the way you live everywhere you go, in everything you do and in everything you say.

Go forth! This does not mean we need to be heavily involved in missions abroad where people have never heard of God, it means go to the places where people need to hear His message, and there are plenty of those places within stone's throw of this building. Everywhere we go in this fallen world there are people who need to hear His message, need to know what Jesus has done in our lives and need to know what he can do in theirs. We need to be making disciples everywhere we go.

Baptize them! Help them come to a place where they will publicly proclaim their faith, where they are willing to identify themselves in Christ and declare their rebirth in baptism.

Teach them to observe! This is the one that has fallen to the wayside in the modern church. Notice it does not say teach them to love, or teach them to be accepting, or teach them to play well with others, or teach them to be accommodating. It says Teach them to observe, to obey, all that I have commanded you, not just pick and choose, but everything. The church is not just supposed to fill its pews with people, it is supposed to

teach them the truth, even if they do not like it, so that they can come into a real relationship with God and learn to obey him, love him, and walk with him in their lives.

The church is told to produce followers, not fans of Christ. Disciples, people who meet the expectations the Christ set forth for his own disciples, people who follow him, obey him, take on his character and represent him in this world. That is how Jesus build his church 2000 years ago and that is how it is still being built today. There are lots of copies, things which might look like His church, but they are not producing disciples.

You might be asking yourself right now, how can I do this? Most people are terrified at the thought of sharing the gospel in their lives. There are a million excuses, 'I don't know how to talk to people!', 'I am not comfortable!', "I cannot stand in front of a group!", 'I am afraid of rejection', 'I do not want to offend anyone!'.

So, people think you know what, 'Lest hire someone to do it for us, we will support a missionary, or let's make our pastor do it, or let's get a committee together and they can decide the how, why, and when we will make disciples'. There are a million excuses and evasions to going out and making disciples that all would have some merit and some truth if that was the directive given by Jesus and then he left.

However, that is not what happened. He told his disciples, his church. What to do, how to do it and he gave them the resources they needed. Remember the people that Jesus gave this message to, a tax collector, a political activist, a group of fishermen, all normal everyday people. He took the rag-tag group of misfits and turned them into confident powerful witnesses to the world, people who spoke the truth to a world and a culture that was absolutely against their ways and their teachings.

After telling the make disciples, Jesus told them, '**And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age**'. Jesus did not assign an impossible task and then walk away. He gave them a job to do and then said do not worry, I am here to help you.

Remember the valley of dry bones, remember Pentecost.

Acts 1:8

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus gave his disciples the Holy Spirit. Through the sharing of the Word of God from their lips the Holy Spirit began its work. Through the persecution, the fear, the sorrow, the rejections and the successes, the joys, and the conversions the Holy Spirit was present with the faithful.

Ezekiel saw the dry dead bones come to life, Peter got the courage to speak up on the day of Pentecost, the disciples courageously proclaimed the truth of Christ to a world and culture that opposed Christianity all through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The call to 'Go forth, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe.' Might seem daunting to us, but we are not doing it alone, we are doing it as we walk with God. This is a task that is given to the whole church, not just missionaries, not just preachers, not just to the outreach or evangelism committees. Every Christian is to carry out this task, regardless of their age, their understanding of scripture, their social status or economic wellbeing.

Go forth, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe.

Every Christian and every church need to decide, are you going to be part of what Jesus has told his church to do?

- Are you going to live a life that reflects your faith?
- Are you going to get involved in your Church and its ministries that share the teaching of God with others?
- Are you going to get involved in discipleship for yourself and for others?

Are you willing to 'Go forth, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe?' to be the Salt and the Light of the community you live in.

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 #529: "O Holy Father, God Most Dear"

O Holy Father, God most dear,
Behold us round thine altar here;
Accept for sacrifice, we pray,
The common food we here display.
For bread set forth, for wine out poured,
We bless thee, all creating Lord.

O Christ, who at the supper board
Took bread and wine and spoke the word, and,
In that solemn paschal meal,
Gave flesh and blood our wound to heal,
For us redeemed, for life restored,
We bless thee, all creating Word.

O Holy Spirit, be thou nigh
This bread and cup to sanctify, that,
Eating of the food unpriced,
We form one body, one in Christ.
Redeemed, restored in unity,
We bless thee, Holy Trinity.

Communion

Invitation to the Table

This is the joyful feast of the people of God!
They will come from east and west, and from north and south,
and sit at table in the kingdom of God.
This is the table not of one denomination, but of our one Lord Jesus Christ.
It is made ready for those who love him
and those who want to love him more.
So come, you who have much faith and you who have little,
you who have been here often
and you who have not been for a long time.
Our Saviour invites all those who trust him
to share the feast which he has prepared.

Invitation

Jesus invites us to this table and now we do as Jesus did.
We take this bread and this wine, ordinary things of the world.
In these, Jesus has promised to be present.

Through these Christ can make us whole.
Come all of you this is the joyful feast of the people of God.

As Jesus offered thanks for the gifts of the earth,
let us also bless God with great thanksgiving.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you;
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts;
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God;
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three,
You are source of all that exists.
You are beyond the galaxies, deeper than the oceans;
You pour down rain and bring forth the fruit of the earth.
You carry us through deep waters and hold us in the darkest night.
So with all your creatures, great and small,
with angels and archangels, with saints and servants in every generation
we join in the rejoicing of your creation:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy is your Son Jesus, O God,
Walking this earth, feeding the hungry, calling the lost, noticing the forgotten,
healing those who reached out, teaching those who sought wisdom,
he revealed your kingdom in our midst.
Today we thank you for all Jesus shared with us
to show us that you are always with us in times of plenty and times of pain.
And so we celebrate the mystery of our faith in him:

**Christ has died;
Christ is risen;
Christ will come again.**

Holy God,
 When the sounds of our rejoicing fall silent,
 we remember those who cannot rejoice today,
 who face times of pain or fear or upheaval.
 We think especially of those whose countries have been overwhelmed
 by earthquake, flood and storm, by conflict, drought or famine.

Draw near to them in the power of the Spirit
 to strengthen and sustain them through Christ's compassion and ours.

Holy Spirit, come now and settle on us
 and on these gifts of bread and wine.
 May they become for us Christ's body and life blood,
 healing, forgiving and making us whole.
 So may we become Christ's body, the Church,
 loving and caring throughout the whole world
 until that day when all creation feasts with you
 in the fullness of your mercy and peace
 that we savor today in the name of our Saviour
 Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

The Story of the Last Supper

The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread,
 and when he had given thanks for it, he broke it, and said,
 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'
 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying,
 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in
 remembrance of me.'
 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
 you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

This is the body of Christ broken for you.

This cup is the blood of Christ shed for you.

Prayer after Communion

Loving God, Christ our Lord, Holy Spirit,
 you have nourished us, body and soul, in this meal.
 We have heard your love, so send us out to speak it.
 We have seen your love, so send us out to show it.
 We have been fed by your love, so send us out to share it.
 And let all things be done for your glory. 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. standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Closing Hymn #543: "Here, O My Lord I, See Thee"

Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face;
 Here would I touch and handle things unseen;
 Here grasp with firmer hand eternal grace,
 And all my weariness upon Thee lean.

This is the hour of banquet and of song;
 This is the heavenly table for us spread;
 Here let us feast, and, feasting, still prolong
 This fellowship with Thee, our living bread.

Too soon we rise; the symbols disappear;
 The feast, though not the love, is past and gone;
 The bread and wine remove, but Thou art here,
 Nearer than, ever still our Shield and Sun.

Pastoral Prayer

O Lord, we praise you with all our soul.
 We praise you for the abundance of grace and mercy
 that we unconsciously receive from you in so many different ways.
 You overlook our iniquities.
 You bring us back to good health.
 You save us from evil and inundate us with your love and compassion.

Lord, you provide nourishment and rejuvenation
 to our bodies, minds, and souls.
 We also know, Lord, that through you,
 there will be justice for the suffering of your people.
 Thank you for graciously revealing yourself
 to your children so long ago,
 that we might have the privilege of knowing your will.

We are only deserving of eternal death as a result of our evil ways.
 However, rather than eternally condemning your children in anger,
 you bestow your unconditional and boundless love on us.
 Through your incomprehensible love for us,
 you free us completely from the price of our transgressions.
 We cherish your compassion
 just as a child cherishes the compassion of loving parents.
 We know that, without your compassion,
 we would be reduced to nothing but dust on this material planet,
 alive and growing one day,
 then dead and blown away with the wind the next,
 fading away even from human memories forever.

Because of your compassion, Lord, we are allowed a life of eternity;
a gift that you have promised even to future God-fearing generations.
Help us and all future generations to hold tightly
to your precious covenant through obedience to your will.
Lord, from your mighty throne you rule over us all.
We call the angels that surround you, the seraphim that serve you,
and every believer in your domain to join our souls
in praising your holy name! Amen

Benediction

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely;
and may your spirit and soul and body
be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**