

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, July 23rd, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Water the Land
Proper 11
Matthew 13:24-30 & 36-43**

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
**for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.**

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
**Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Everlasting God,
in whom we live and move and have our being:
You have made us for yourself,
so that our hearts are restless until they rest in you.
Give us purity of heart and strength of purpose,
that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will,
no weakness keep us from doing it;
that in your light we may see light clearly,
and in your service find perfect freedom
through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: "Come, Now is the Time to Worship"

Come, Now is the time to worship
Come, Now is the time to give your heart
Come, Just as you are to worship

Come, Just as you are before your God
Come

One day every tongue will confess You are God
One day every knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure remains for those
Who gladly choose You now

Come, now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are, to worship.
Come, just as you are, before your God.
Come

One day every tongue will confess You are God.
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Come, now is the time to worship
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship
Come, just as you are before your God, come.
Come
Come

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Holy and merciful God,
in your presence we confess**

our sinfulness, our shortcomings,
 and our offenses against you.
 You alone know how often we have sinned
 in wandering from your ways,
 in wasting your gifts,
 in forgetting your love.
 Have mercy on us, O Lord,
 for we are ashamed and sorry
 for all we have done to displease you.
 Forgive our sins,
 and help us to live in your light
 and walk in your ways,
 for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!
 The LORD is faithful in all his words,
 and gracious in all his deeds.
 The LORD upholds all who are falling,
 and raises up all who are bowed down.

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.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 86: 10-17

¹⁰ For you are great and do wondrous things;
 you alone are God.

¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD,
 that I may walk in your truth;
 unite my heart to fear your name.

¹² I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
 and I will glorify your name forever.

¹³ For great is your steadfast love toward me;
 you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

¹⁴ O God, insolent men have risen up against me;
 a band of ruthless men seeks my life,
 and they do not set you before them.
¹⁵ **But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.**

¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;
 give your strength to your servant,
 and save the son of your maidservant.
¹⁷ **Show me a sign of your favor,
 that those who hate me may see and be put to shame
 because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.**

Children's Hymn: "Heavenly Sunshine"

Heavenly sunshine, heavenly sunshine!
 Flooding my soul with glory divine!
 Heavenly sunshine, heavenly sunshine!
 Hallelujah, Jesus is mine!

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴ He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷ And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' ²⁸ He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So, the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹ But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

Matthew 13:36-43

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy

who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Sermon

Now you might be asking yourself what could we have to learn from a parable that Jesus has already explained? Jesus did not explain many of his parables, so when he does so we need to understand that, that parable is of some importance to us. For us to understand what Jesus was teaching about in this parable we need to know a little more about the weeds and the wheat in the parable. The wheat was planted in fields and was a core component of the diet of many, just as it is today. Within the fields of wheat in the region there was a weed that grew called a bearded darnel, and it looks identical to wheat. It is called false wheat in some areas, and what makes it such a horrible weed is that its roots actually will intertwine with the roots of the wheat. Meaning if you pull it up or weed it out, you will destroy wheat plants along with it.

What also makes it interesting is that it is not until it is ready to harvest that you can tell the two plants apart because of what they produce. The wheat gets a heavy seed which is harvested, broken down and used as seed for a new field or ground into flour for the nourishment of the people. The bearded darnel is different, it produced a light seed, one that does not weigh it down, one that is actually poisonous to man. If you eat its seed, it causes hallucinations and nausea and can even result in death.

So, while these two plants are growing together it is impossible to tell them apart.



Yet, when they have fully matured. Essentially reached the end of their life that you can tell them apart, when the wheat bends down with the weight of its seed, and the weed stands tall with its light seed, almost proudly.



The disciples and people of the time would have known all of this. In fact, there were laws at the time that made it illegal to plant bearded darnel because people would intentionally sow it among the fields of their competitors sometimes. But the disciples wanted clarity on the parable.

Jesus makes it simple for them. The man who sowed the seed is the Son of Man, Jesus himself. The field is the world we live in. The good seed are the people of the kingdom, Christians. The weeds, bearded darnel, are the people of the evil one sown by the devil. The harvest is the end of the age and the harvesters are the angels. He then explains that at the end of the age, that those who are not Christian will be separated and thrown into fire. When Jesus explains the deeper meaning of this parable and made it very clear that it was about final judgement.

He also in this parable and in that two that follow attempts to explain to his followers some of the ways in which Satan will damage the believer for his own pleasure. He introduces false believers, false doctrine, false Christians. He is a master counterfeiter infiltrating the world and deceiving the church in his attempt to destroy Christianity. So, the devils' plants his fake, his counterfeit, almost identical looking weed into Christianity because he is unable to uproot true believers.

We are told that Jesus planted people in the world. We know this is true. Christians are here because of God and serve His purpose, just as the farmer planted his wheat with the purpose of a bountiful harvest, we are planted by God with the purpose of producing fruit.

We see this echoed in another bit of Scripture where the idea of Christians as wheat is used in
John 12:23-25

John 12:23–25 ESV

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

We are the wheat; we are meant to produce a fruitful harvest. To glorify God and to enjoy his presence in eternal life. We are meant to serve God, not to satisfy ourselves. We are called to praise and worship, to fellowship, to study of God's Word, to service of others in the world, to giving of ourselves all for the glory of God. The wheat was not planted for its own benefit, it was planted for the benefit of the man who sowed it, and thus we have been planted not for our own benefit but for the glory of God.

This is why does the devil plants the weeds! The devil came along and planted his own people in the world. People who might look like Christians, who might even believe they are Christians, but are in fact not. We know that there are evil people in the world, people driven to do the devils work, but the thought that they could be within a church to many seems crazy. Yet when you think on it a little more it makes sense. After all the devil is all about infiltration and deception. What is the best way to cause chaos? Not an attack from the outside, but instead an attack from the inside.

This is the reality of the world. This is why we need to be aware of false teachers and ensure that we are spending time daily in God's word ourselves and not just trusting others to give it to us. The devil has his agents within the church, and they are intent on leading people away from the path to God. We live in a fallen world; a wicked world where the devil can do his work. We see talk of evil all the time in the news. In fact, this is one of the most often used rebuttals against Christianity by non-Christians.

If God is real, why is there so much evil in the world? Why is evil allowed to live side by side with us if God is good?

This parable does a lot to answer that question.

Remember the man sowed his wheat in his field. And if he had enemies or competitors they would come and sow their own weeds among the wheat to ruin his harvest. They did it because they were angry with him or jealous of what he had. That bearded darnel, that is the same color as wheat, has the same texture as wheat, smells the same as wheat. They intertwine themselves with the wheat's roots, stealing resources, stealing life from the wheat. They are identical until the end when they are fully mature. When they produce nothing but poison.

This is the evil that lives within the world, the weeds that are intertwined among Christians. They steal the resources, they interfere with life, but in the end, they produce poison.

These are the false Christians we have in this world as well. They are people who claim Christ, who claim Christianity. They might carry a Bible, speak from Scripture, do good deeds, serve the church or the community. But for some reason they never get a deeper relationship with Jesus. They are the weeds that were planted by the devil. They look, smell, act, grow alongside Christians. They may fit in, seem to be Christian in every way. Until the time of harvest.

They are the ones that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 7:21-23

Matthew 7:21–23 ESV

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On

**that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'
23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'**

The reality of this world is the same as the field. The wheat and the weeds, the real Christians and the people of the devil are allowed to live side by side. Until the harvest, until the day of judgement.

Verse 30 from the Scripture says:

30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

This world is a place where good and evil, real, and counterfeit, fruit and poison will grow together. One struggling to produce fruit, the other producing its poison until the end of the age, until harvest when they will be separated and dealt with accordingly.

Why does God allow evil to exist alongside good in the world? I would hope that some of you know the answer to this already. God allows evil in this world because we all once were evil. Each and everyone of us was a sinner unrepentant to God. God allow evil because he loves people and is unwilling to just rip them out and through them away. God allows evil to exist, knowing that one day, some of those that are evil will realize who they are and begin to trust in Christ and become justified and begin the process of sanctification.

We have Christians in the world who are trapped by the agents of the devil around them. We have people who are surrounded by the weeds and are struggling to survive. We have groups of Weeds who have convinced themselves they are Christian even though they do not believe in all of the Scriptures or live their life accordingly.

What are we to do about this? What are Christians supposed to do in this world? What are supposed to do about all this suffering in the world, all this evil in this world? How can we separate the good from the evil?

The owner's servants suggest we get out there and rip them out, remove them before they grow to big, separate them from the crop. Pluck them from the ground and put them in bags so that they cannot steal the resources from the wheat as it grows. Is this what the owner wants? Does the owner want the field free of weeds? Yes of course he does. He wants the same thing that the servants want a bountiful harvest of wheat free from weeds.

The owner however knows something different. While his servants are focused on the weeds; pull them out, remove them, root out the evil, destroy the strongholds, fight the

evil of our society, fight the evil in our church, stay focused on the weeds, stay focused on the evil. The owner has something different in mind. The owner cares more about the wheat and the fruit it bears than about the weeds in his field.

This parable is a great lesson for all of us living in this world right now, where we have so much focus on worldly matters that we in fact may be behaving very similarly to the owner's servants. Are we focused on getting rid of the weeds in the world?

It is easy for us to lose focus, to become like the servant and focused on the weeds around us and not remain focused on the wheat and the fruit we produce. We become so focused on destroying the weeds in the world, that we become reckless, our only focus is on that weed that we know is evil and we want to do everything possible to get rid of it. We become so focused that we do not realize the damage we are doing to all the things around it. We may in fact be harming wheat in our attempt to remove a single weed.

Think about this the next time you get it on your heart to chase away an evil in the world. Jesus is not asking us to destroy the evils in this world. He warns us that we do not want to hurt the true believers, the wheat of the world. Even when our first impulse is to jump on board and destroy the evil we see, to root it out, to destroy the system, the false temple, the evil doers, to bring them to justice as we see fit. When we do these things, we are ignoring the wheat. In fact, it is this behavior that has led to many of the problems that we have had within the church in the past, yet we continue to behave in this manner.

There will always be people who focus on the weeds instead of on cultivating the wheat. The problem is weeds and wheat look identical, they are virtually the same until the time of harvest comes. When they bear their harvest, the wheat will bow down with the weight of its fruit, it will bow down to God, humble itself before him, give itself to him. The weeds on the other hand will continue to stand tall and proud of themselves and what they have accomplished for themselves.

You would think it would be easy to discern a real Christian from a false Christian, but it is not an easy thing to do. It is an impossible thing to do because you or I or any person on this planet cannot see into a person's heart. We cannot know how someone else stands with God.

Saul thought he was doing God's will when he was travelling across the land killing the followers of Jesus, the weeds in Judaism! The pope thought he was doing what God called him to do when he arrested and imprisoned Martin Luther for his rebellious ways against the Roman Catholic church. The church has constantly thought it was doing what God has called it to do when it went to work against the unbelievers.

It is easy to convince yourself you are doing God's will when you are focused on the evil, but you cannot see the heart and minds of others. It is impossible for us to discern right and wrong, real and fake, good and evil, we do not always understand other motives and intents.

Jesus is warning us in this parable to be cautious about how we judge and how we act. We are not the ones who should be out there picking the weeds. We should not be looking to exclude, instead we should be looking to include. We are called to seek out our brothers and sisters in this world and doing that means understanding that they may step out of some of the darkest and vilest places in this world.

When we get focused on removing the evil instead of cultivating the good, we may harm the wheat. Jesus had something strong to say about this in Matthew 18:6

Matthew 18:6 ESV

6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Is this a risk you are willing to take when you jump on board that movement that is so focused on evil that it forgets about wheat? It does not mean that we forget about sin, we forget about evil, we forget about discipline. It means that we do not become so focused on evil that we lose focus of the possibility of good.

Is treating someone as evil a way to win them to Christ? Is disrespecting them a positive way to show them Christ like behavior? Is running among the weeds a good way to ensure that you are being fed as a Christian or are they slowly strangling the life from your roots? Is it a good investment of your time to be so focused on the evils of this world that you completely ignore the wheat, you completely ignore your own growth with God? To be so focused on the rooting out of evil, that you have no real way of knowing its true nature. Could you be Saul in your behavior?

Instead, we should be focused on the wheat and reaping the fruit. Invest our time in creating more wheat, in helping those in need, in building up instead of tearing down. When we are focused on ripping out the weeds, we may end up with nothing left but ourselves, and in the end, we will have to tear ourselves out of the ground. Our focus should be on the harvest, on preaching the Gospel, on reaching the lost, on giving people hope, on teaching everyone the glory of God. We should be focused on the good and not the evil. Even within ourselves and those around us. If we focus on the weeds, are we really helping them. If we remove every weed from a person's life does that make them holy, does that make them a saint?

No, it does not. A saint is simply a sinner who has been saved by God's gift of grace.

This focus on evil, this focus on rooting out sin is fruitless. No country, no city, no tribe, no club, no church, no person has ever completely removed sin from their lives. Not one!

The lack of sin is not what gets a person admitted into heaven. It is the presence of Jesus in their heart, in their life that gets them admitted into heaven. Bringing Jesus into the lives of others should be our focus.

The harvest is inevitable, in verses Matthew 13:40-43

Matthew 13:40–43 ESV

40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

The reality is that not only are we unqualified to be rooting out evil, because we cannot see the true nature of someone heart. It is Jesus' responsibility to be the judge at the end of the age.

Our fate, our destiny lies in the hands of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

He is going to see if we submit to him, if we place our trust in him, if we live the life that the Scripture calls us to live. If we obey the commandments of God. If we cultivate the wheat in our lives and the lives of those around us.

In the end of the age, it is the angels who will separate the wheat from the weeds. We think we can judge. In the age of social media, we are often re-posting judgement before facts are even known, we are jumping on emotional band wagons where we feel good about rooting out the evils in the world. When in fact we are tearing out wheat because we do not bother to wait and see what other facts arise.

Our current crisis with cancel culture is an incredible example of this. We are judging people of a single action or time in their lives. We are joining movements to root out evil without any consideration for the good. We are doing more harm to the wheat than any evil we are rooting out.

I implore you to focus on the wheat and its harvest, on God and His Will and not be led by those weeds that may look like wheat but instead of producing fruit are producing poison.

The judgement of Jesus at the end of the age is based on a person's whole life, not a snapshot. I am grateful for that because I know that each of us has at least one snapshot of our life that would ensure we receive the judgement of eternal damnation. His judgement begins at the moment of conception to the moment your last breath leaves your lips. He is the only one who can justly judge.

The weeds, who may appear to be getting away with everything in this world, will receive their judgement. They may appear to have a better life here on earth, more money, more power, more fame. They might live a life of luxury and hypocrisy, but it is not our place to judge them.

We are called to harvest fruit, not root out poisons. Jesus will do that at the end of the age when they are gathered and burned in the lake of fire.

God is going to gather all the weeds. Even the weeds within the church. He will gather the weeds in every church around the world. In those places where they deny the teachings of the Scripture, they will be gathered together with all of the other weeds and burned.

Jesus told us in many places of the fact that there are false teachers, false believers and those that will not follow him at all. He never hesitates to speak of the fate that they will receive at the end of the age. Every time we are told the same thing they will be judged, and they will burn.

There are people out there who want to believe, or who may actually believe that God would never do a thing like this. That he would never gather all these people together and condemn them to eternal damnation, to eternal suffering in the lake of fire, for them to be eternally separated from God's glory and presence. They want to believe in a God that is only love without justice.

Love without justice is not love. If love has no justice, then neither love nor justice can be served.

If we believe in the Bible, then us trying to figure out who is good and who is evil is a waste of our time. God is going to do that at the end of the age, and he has told us that more than once within the Scripture.

The only person whom we can judge is ourselves. The only person whom we can try to establish if they are a weed or wheat is ourselves.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 13:5

2 Corinthians 13:5 ESV

5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

This does not mean we do not continue to teach about sin, to teach about Biblical discipline, to teach doctrine. We still need to confront sin, to live our lives according to the Bible, but not with the intent to weed out evil, instead with the intent to cultivate the wheat.

We are called to love both the wheat and the weeds, to love both the good and evil, brother and enemies. We are called to bring God’s message to all, to cultivate the wheat even if it is surrounded by weeds. Because if we try to rip out the weeds, we may destroy the wheat.

The only one that we can judge is ourselves, and when we judge ourselves, we should discover that each of us has our own weeds in our lives. Three great men who did this, discovered things about themselves:

Augustine said - Lord, save me from that wicked man, myself.

John Knox confessed—In youth, in mid-age, and now, after many battles, I find nothing in me but corruption.

John Wesley acknowledged - I am fallen short of the glory of God; my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable, and consequently my whole life, seeing an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

Our focus should therefore be not on the weeds of the world but instead on the fruits of our own lives. We are all saints in progress. People who are moving from sinful ways into sanctification, being separated from evil becoming holy at the end of times when it is the angels who will come among us and do the weeding. Removing those who produce poison to be burned and leaving those who produce fruit to enjoy the harvest.

Jesus overcame the evils in his world by doing good, not by fighting against them. He did not rally against the Pharisees or Sadducees. Instead, he looked after the people that they harmed.

Paul teaches in Romans 12: 17-21

Romans 12:17–21 ESV

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 To the contrary, “if

your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is the answer. This is what we should be doing in the world today. We need to focus on the harvest, we need to water the land with his Word, we need to water both the weeds and the wheat with God’s living Word and let God do his work in the lives of those who hear his word. We need to be the Salt and Light of this community while we await the harvest at the end of the age.

Let us Pray,

We thank you, merciful God, and Father,

that you have brought us to know you and your Son by your Spirit and Word and have caused your Word to be proclaimed to us.

Grant that we, having received Christ Jesus the Lord, may live in him, rooted, and built up in him, strengthened in the faith, as we were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

But since we, through ignorance, thankfulness, and discontent, do not obey you as we should, we implore you, O Lord, remember your great mercy and have compassion on us.

Teach us truly to know our sins, sincerely to repent, and to amend our life.

Keep us, we implore you, from all hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, and frustrate all evil and subtle designs against your Word and your church.

O Lord do not withdraw from us your Word and Spirit, but grant us a strong faith, patience, and steadfastness in all suffering and adversity.

Help and sustain your church, and deliver your people from opposition, ridicule, and tyranny.

We pray in particular for our ability to focus on watering the world with your holy word. Strengthen those who are weak and burdened with sorrow.

Grant us your peace through Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**

Hymn: “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; There is Something About that Name”

Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain;

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all Heaven and earth proclaim

Kings and kingdoms will all pass away,

But there's something about that name.

Kings and kingdoms will all pass away,

But there's something about that name.

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: "Great is Thy Faithfulness"**

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
as Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided:
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest;
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. [Refrain]

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow:
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! [Refrain]

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we, your unworthy servants, give you humble thanks
for all your goodness and loving-kindness

to us and to all whom you have made.
We bless you for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of this life,
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies
that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise,
not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up ourselves to your service,
and by walking before you
in holiness and righteousness all our days,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory throughout all ages. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.