

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, September 24th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Masters of our own Vineyards
Proper 20
Matthew 20:1-16

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD!

From the rising of the sun to its setting, praise the name of the LORD.

We will bless God's holy name now and evermore.

The glory of the Lord is high above the heavens,
but God raises up the poor and needy on the earth.

So we will sing God's praise.

Let us worship God.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God our Creator,

You sustain your creation

as the source of life for every precious thing.

You have given us more than we could ever earn or deserve,
and so we offer you our love and loyalty,
for without you, we would not be.

Receive our worship this day, O God.

Speak to us in the sounds and silence of this hour,
and amaze us

with your promise of new life revealed in Jesus Christ,
and your power at work in us and among us through the Spirit.

Amen.

Opening Hymn #290: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" (V 1,2,4)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
 in light inaccessible hid from our eyes;
 most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
 almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting and silent as light,
 nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
 thy justice like mountains high soaring above
 thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
 thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
 all laud we would render: oh help us to see
 'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Generous God,
 You have enriched us with life worth living,
 but we confess we often squander your good gifts.
 We have wasted our time and energy,
 but held tightly to things we think we need.
 Forgive our foolish priorities
 and those times we overlooked the needs of others.
 Inspire us to live more generously,
 trusting your goodness to sustain us always.**

Assurance of Pardon

Friends in Christ, while it is true that we have squandered God's good gifts,
 it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God's love in Jesus Christ.
 Trust the mercy of God, and be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another.

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: “Your Grace is All I Need” Choir

Responsive Reading

Psalm 145:1-8

1 I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.

**2 Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.**

3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.

**4 One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.**

5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

**6 They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.**

7 They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

**8 The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

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

Matthew 20:1-16

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ ⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹² saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Sermon

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard has some very interesting things contained within its lessons. We need to remember that when we look at a parable Jesus is trying to teach us something about the kingdom of heaven. We also need to remember that for the past few weeks we have been learning all about how we are supposed to be living our lives as true followers of Jesus Christ and not just living like fans.

When we begin to break down this parable one of the first things that leaps out to us is the fact that the master of the vineyard goes out five times that day to hire people to work in the vineyard. He begins early in the morning, and then he returns at the 3rd hour, the 6th hour, the 9th hour and finally just before the end of the day at the 11th hour.

To understand why he goes out so often we need to understand a little more about the laborer economy of the time. During Jesus’s day there were day laborers that would gather together near the marketplace and seek out whatever job they could get to provide for their families. What is interesting is that these were people from all walks of life and with all different skillsets. Many would have been free laborers, but there would also have been slaves from

other masters in the market, people whose master did not have enough work for them that day, so they had been sent out to try to earn some more money for the master.

The group would also have people who were desperate for work, maybe those who were living on the streets and struggling to put any food on the table for their family. It would include those who were struggling to pay the taxes of the Roman empire and were taking on extra, under-the-table work, in an attempt to keep their homes. It would include women who had lost their husbands and children who had lost their parents, looking for any scraps that they could get to survive in a world that had no form of social welfare. It would even include many people who had physical or mental challenges that would be considered unemployable elsewhere. Finally, there would be a mix of recently released prisoners and prostitutes. This was a group of people who were considered expendable by society at the time.

They were the lowest rung of the social ladder in ancient societies. They commonly suffered from health issues related to malnutrition, disease and even starvation. If they could not find work for the day they would often turn to begging on the street near a Temple or close to the market, hoping for a small piece of bread or coin to sustain them for another day.

The world in Jesus's day was a cruel world with no real social safety net for the people of the time. In his day it would not be uncommon to see a dead body laying alongside the road, people who died of starvation or disease often just sat where they died, much like the roadkill we see on the highway today. It was common to see whole families living on the street, with little food, clothing or shelter.

So, when Jesus shared this parable many of the people gathered around him would have had a very clear picture of the type of people that this master was hiring to help in harvesting his grapes. This would have been happening in mid to late September, the Hebrew month of Tishrei, and the master knew he only had a few short weeks to get his harvest collected before the rainy season arrived and washed away the crop. Time was of the essence to him, because once the rain came, the harvest ended.

The people gathered had all seen the masters walk the market and hire day laborers, in fact some of them might have experienced being day laborers firsthand in their lives. Many of them might have struggled to pay taxes, or needed extra income to pay back a loss, to put food on the table or to clothe and shelter their families. Life in Jesus's day was a struggle for many and they lived day to day trying to simply survive.

Remember that I said parables are meant to teach us about God's kingdom. Just like the master had a lot of work for these laborers to do, God has plenty of work for us to do. Just like the master was working against a time when the end of the harvest would come, God is working against a timeline where the end of the harvest will come.

Our mission as servant of the Lord is to bring his message of salvation and redemption to the world. A message of rescue, redemption, and restoration to all of creation, to all that was adversely affected by mans fall from grace when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the

Knowledge of Good and Evil. A message that is meant to be brought to a world that has been corrupted by sin, that is in chaos and disintegration and death.

This is why we go out and share the Gospel with others, we are called to make disciples of the world. Disciples who will go out and live a life that reflect the life of Jesus Christ, a life that was made possible for us because Jesus Christ died upon the cross for each of us. Disciples who have acknowledged their sins and repented, disciples who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit and water, disciples who go forth and do God's work here on earth. Disciples who understand it is a call from God to go out and help others in this world by showing others the same love, grace, and mercy that Jesus Christ has shown them.

Which is why each of us is called to a different form of ministry. It is true God calls some people to be ministers of his Word, but he calls far more people to serve his kingdom and to help his people in other ways. God calls people to be Doctors, nurses, teachers, carpenters, bakers, bankers, secretaries, garbage collectors, bus drivers, farmers. God calls people to raise and care for livestock, he calls people to care for our world, he calls people to help provide food, clothing, and shelter for those who are in need. God calls lawyers, counsellors, police officers and firemen. God calls people from all professions and walks of life to do his work in this world as the time of the harvest approaches, in the same way the master hired all kinds of people at the Market Square to join in the harvest of grapes.

God's Great Commission is for each of us to take part in the rescue, redemption, and restoration of people with God in this world. Jesus told his disciples that he came so that they might have an abundant life, and part of that abundant life is the work of helping others, helping those in need physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially. God has called each of us to work in our field and to bring his teaching to all who we met as we do so to the glory of His name.

Like the master in the parable, we are to go to everyone and anyone. God wants us to bring his message to all who will listen so that they can be rescued, redeemed, and restored in relationship with him. God wants to bring all of creation back to him. He did not abandon his people after the fall or after the flood and he is not going to ever abandon his goal of redeeming His people. So, God has plenty of work for his people, just like the master had plenty of work for the people he hired that day.

Next, we see that everyone who comes to work in the vineyard is graciously rewarded for their labors.

Notice though that it does cause a little bit of a problem. Those people who worked the full day though it was unfair that those who had not worked nearly as long received the same payment for their labors. They felt like they should receive a little more, after all they had worked longer, probably picked more grapes, dealt with more heat, were more tired, dirty, and hungry.

I am guessing we can all relate to this group, after all if you work harder, you deserve more. I am confident that we all have a story of how this has happened to us at least once in our lives, a

time when we gave it our all and were compensated for our labors in the same manner as someone who put in little to no effort.

This is one of the reasons you often see hard workers leave good places, because their idea of fair compensation is not shared with the person who is paying them. I have had many friends leave the teaching profession because they poured their heart and soul into teaching, working night and weekends to prepare lesson plans, mark projects and create fun activities for their students, and they get paid the exact same as the teacher who simply stands in front of the class and reads from the textbook. It's not fair, and I am sure many of you would agree, this is one of the downfalls of the union based PayScale system, people get paid a flat rate based on a pay schedule and not what they are worth. And because they are not getting paid for their hard work and efforts, they either leave, or reduce their efforts to match those of the majority.

However, that is not what the master is doing, he does not have a union PayScale that he is following, instead he is actually doing something very different. He is graciously rewarding all of his workers in the same manner.

The master's reasoning is simple. Everyone who came that day to work in the vineyard has the same need for a day's wages to care for themselves and their families. The unemployed needs a day's wages to live, the widow needs a day's wages to live, the ex-prisoner needs a day's wages to live, the lame, the prostitute, the child, they all needed a day's wages to live. Every person that worked in the vineyard that day needed that day's wage to make it just one more day, they needed that day's wages to reduce the pain, the heartache, and the struggle of their lives.

The master was not paying them a day's wages, he was giving them another day of living. He knew that he could not take care of these people forever, but he could give them some work, some money and some dignity and provision for at least a few days a year. He was doing all he could do to make their lives just a little better.

We see this in the Old Testament story of Ruth and Boaz. Every day Ruth would go out and glean the fields looking for enough grain to make food for her mother-in-law Naomi and herself. When she was fortunate enough to find more than they needed for the day, she could store it up, sell it or sell the food that she had made so that they would have a little money stored up to survive when the harvesting season of the grain had ended.

The Bible tells us that one day the landowner Boaz sees Ruth out in the fields working as hard as she can, and he decided to help her in his own way. He told his workers to leave behind a little extra grain, so that Ruth could pick it up for herself and Naomi. Boaz did that out of a heart filled with grace and compassion.

This is the same heart that the master of the vineyard has as he goes out and hires the workers, it is the same heart that makes him want to reward them all with days wages so that their lives can be a little easier. It is the same compassion and grace that God has for us each and every

day as he rewards us with his grace, his forgiveness, his salvation and the peace and presence of His Holy Spirit.

We have been graced to have worked in a far easier vineyard than many of the Christians who have worked before us, or even Christians who are working in other parts of the world today. The church father Polycarp was tied to a post and burned alive for his faith at the age of eighty-six, and he might have believed that he deserved a much greater reward than us, after all the work he did was much more difficult than the work we do. Or how about Peter who was crucified, or any of the other disciples who suffered death at the hands of persecutors, do they deserve a better reward than today's Christian whose worst form of persecution is some social shunning and perhaps the loss of a relationship with a family member, a friend, or a colleague.

How about the people of Noah's day who were expected to be faithful for 950 years. How does the Apostle Paul's life of 80 years compare to Noah's 950, sure Paul had it rough, they tried to boil him in hot oil and tossed him in prison, but 950 years is a long time. What about Moses? He had to put up with a grumbling Israelites for 40 years as they walked alongside him. Then there is the prophet Isaiah who was told from the very beginning of his 50-year ministry that the people would not listen to him or the messages that God had given him to deliver, does he deserve a bigger reward?

Spiritually we all started the same, fallen human beings enslaved by our sinful nature. However, through the grace of Jesus we can all be the same. We can all be rescued and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. From the human point of view grace is totally unfair, why do some people seem to get more grace than others, why do some people get more chances to come to God than others? However, from God's point of view it is totally fair, you and I did not die for the salvation of others, God did. So, it is God who gets to decide who receives his grace, whether you live 950 years as a faithful follower of God like Noah or just an hour as you hang as a thief upon the cross, you still receive the same everlasting reward.

This is where most people end the teachings of this parable. The message of grace, mercy, and love. It makes us all feel good after all to think of the grace and mercy and love we have received from God. It gives us peace to think that one of our loved ones could in their very last breath upon this earth seek God and receive grace.

Sure, we might complain and grumble when we think someone is getting ahead of us or seems to be getting a better reward on this earth. But eventually we begin to realize all of the grace that we have received from God in our lives, and we begin to work harder at helping others find the grace of God in their own lives.

Remember at the beginning I said that parables were meant to teach us about the kingdom of heaven, and that they are meant to teach us about living our lives as we are true followers of Jesus. So far, we have looked at the parable as if we were one of the workers, what if we look at the parable as if we are the master of the vineyard? Is there a lesson for Christians there?

If we put ourselves in the shoes of the master, the parable definitely becomes a little more challenging.

What if walking with the Lord means we are to get involved in the lives of all those people that the master finds at the market?

What if God wants us to be concerned about the physically and mentally challenged, the unemployed, the widows, the orphans, the convict, with all those who have lost their way in life for a wide variety of reasons and do not live a lifestyle that we do not approve?

What if God is telling us as his faithful followers to seek out the lost and find ways in which we can help them in their lives, if only for a single day? What if he is telling us to find ways to give them a day of dignity and grace? To find ways to teach them new skills so that they can begin to live a different life than they have lived up to that point.

What if this parable is more than just spiritual, but also includes that physical and financial aspect? What if we are meant to do more than just go out and share the Gospel? What if we are actually meant to go out and help people out of poverty and hardship?

What if this parable is about helping those in need who are pushed out by our society, the convict, the addict, the prostitute, the single mother or the struggling family, the physically and mentally challenged?

What if we are paid more and simply willing to share what little we have with people who have less than us?

It is easy for us to share the grace of God, as long as it doesn't hit our bank accounts. It is easy to share the grace of God when it does not require us to give up our time, our resources, and our energy. God's grace does not cost us anything, so we can share that easily and freely. However, when we look at this parable from a practical and applicable point of view, when we see what it is meant to teach us, it becomes a lot more challenging, we are meant to live a Christ-like life. We walk like he did in this world, reaching out to and helping the lost, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and financially.

Churches struggle to even get people to help spiritually. We struggle to get people to volunteer to teach the Bible to children and youth, to lead Bible studies for adults, to volunteer to greet or to read, to pray, yet alone to go out on the street and take part in evangelism, even when it is simple like taking part in the Christmas parade float, which is just a few months away.

Churches struggle financially because everyone thinks everyone else is giving, they forget that all we have, the money we make, the food on our table, the roof over our head, the car we drive, the job we have, the family we were born into is a gift from God.

If churches struggle with these things, how are they to go out and work like the master in the parable? How are they to go forth and help people earn a day of life? How are they to help the unemployed, the physically and mentally challenged, the recently released convict, the struggling family or single parent, the youth living on the street, the addict or the person who is living a wrong lifestyle and just need a little grace, love, and mercy to escape to a new life?

Sure, we come together in times of crisis with movements, donations, and fundraisers, but when it comes to the practical, to the everyday, we prefer that this parable sticks to the spiritual realm, after all that costs us nothing.

What would it do to our monthly budget if we decided to help others by providing some counselling, some food, or even some shelter? What would it do to our schedules if we gave up a little of our free time, or hobby time to help someone find work, to help them rehabilitate, to help them better themselves and find a new way of living?

What the master does in this parable is simply amazing. He reaches out to everyone who has a need in the market, every person he can and at the end of the day rewards them in such a way that they can make it through one more day.

We have to acknowledge that every person who had gathered at the market was there wanting to find work. They were not just random people, they were people who knew their own life situation and were seeking a way through it, they stood there waiting for someone to help them, some of them until the 11th hour. All they were looking for, was someone to come along and give them a chance, they were seeking help, they were willing to work, they had waited in the heat of the market and day, just looking for a chance, just looking for a little grace.

By God's grace the master came back time and time again. Maybe he hired his first few and then got thinking about the rest and he decided to go help a few more. Maybe as the day went on, he thought maybe I could help just one more person, if I change what I eat, what I wear, maybe I can give just one more person a little more dignity and another day of life.

This is what God wants of us, a heart that truly understands the grace, the mercy, and the love that God has shown us in this life. A heart that realizes how we are blessed and seeks to share some of that blessing with others. One that realizes it is never too early or too late to be doing our best to help people in this world live and better life, one that realizes it is never too early or late to help rescue, redeem and restore people into relationship with God.

I read of another church where there was a young mother and her children who showed up suddenly. Many people were upset when she arrived because she and the children were not dressed in what they considered churchly clothing. The children's clothes were wrinkled, dirty and ill-fitting, and most times looked as if they had slept in it the night before. The mothers' clothing was what they considered a little too liberal for the church, too tight and short of material.

They church members were concerned about whether it was appropriate or not for this woman and her children to be at the church. Afterall what would visitors think if they saw them.

When the minister was approached, he gave the church members a few suggestions.

Why don't they gather some money and give it to the mother so she can buy some clothing for church?

Or they could go out themselves and get clothing and gift it to the mother and children.

Or they could get a gift card and secretly give it to the mother, enabling her to get the things she needed for herself and the children.

Suddenly the conversation shifted to why should we take our hard-earned money and just give it away? The mother could go to the salvation army or goodwill or some other charity and get her needs fulfilled. Afterall she was likely getting government support with that many children. When it became personal, they did not want to get involved, they wanted someone else to take care of it for them, usually the Pastor.

Yet if they had taken just a few minutes to get to know the young woman, they would have learned that her husband had just left her, he had disappeared and did not pay any child support. The money she received as government support barely paid the bills. All of their clothing came from charity and that is why it didn't fit well and was tattered and worn. The cost of childcare made it difficult for her to find any way to earn a little more because if she left the children alone for more than a few hours, Child services would declare her an unfit mother and take her children away.

The minister tried to find ways to help them, a few church members did help financially, and with clothing and childcare, however the dirty looks and the cold shoulder that the rest of the church gave them caused them to leave eventually.

The reality is that, it is very difficult to live out our faith as we walk with Christ in this world. It is difficult because it involves not just spiritual sacrifice, but also, physical, emotional, social, and financial sacrifice. It is difficult because it means that we get involved with all of humanity, the wealthy, and the worker, the poor and the needy, and the lost and forgotten. It is a difficult walk because God wants us to care for everyone around us regardless of their position in this world, whether they are at fault for their own circumstances like an addict, or the victim of some unforeseen circumstance.

This parable is so easily accepted when it deals with grace, it is now a lot easier for us to say that Noah's walk of 950 years and the thief on the cross both deserve the same reward, after all that costs me nothing. I receive the same reward as both of them and I can be grateful for that.

But when I begin to see the practical worldly applications of this parable it is harder to accept.

Do I really need to think about others around me who are getting paid less than they should for the work that they do?

Do I really need to be concerned that the CEO's are raking in profits while the worker struggles for food on their tables?

Do I really need to worry about the family down the street that is having trouble physically, socially, or financially?

Do I really need to worry about the homeless addict that sleeps on the park bench I walk past with the dog every week?

That is asking a lot more of me than just sharing the Gospel with them.

Yet that is what we see in God's kingdom. A master of the vineyard doing all he can to help others to the point that he gave everyone the same reward because they all needed some help to make it through another day in this harsh world.

This is hard to accept, but we know it is true, logically we want what we have earned to be ours, why should we share our hard-earned money, our hard-earned things, our valuable time, yet when we are true followers of Christ, we know that this is part of what we are called to do as we walk like Christ in this world.

Let us pray. Today I am sharing a prayer of Polycarp.

May Your Grace Move Our Love

O sweet Savior Christ,
in your undeserved love for us
you were prepared to suffer the painful death of the cross:
let me not be cold or even lukewarm in my love for you.

Lord help me to face the truth about myself.
Help me to hear my words as others hear them,
to see my face as others see me;
Let me be honest enough to recognize my impatience and conceit;

Let me recognize my anger and selfishness;
Give me sufficient humility to accept my own weakness for what they are.
Give me the grace – at least in your presence – to say. 'I was wrong – forgive me.'

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
increase in us faith and truth and gentleness
and grant us part and lot among the saints.

Source: Polycarp

Hymn: “My Worth Is Not in What I Own”

My worth is not in what I own, not in strength of flesh and bone
 But in the costly wounds of love at the cross
 My worth is not in skill or name, in win or lose or pride or shame
 But in the blood of Christ that flowed in the cross.

CHORUS: I rejoice in my redeemer, greatest treasure, wellspring of my soul
 I will trust in Him, no other, my soul is satisfied in Him alone

As summer flowers we fade and die, fame, youth and beauty hurry by.
 But life eternal calls to us at the cross
 I will not boast in wealth or might, or human wisdom's fleeting light.
 But I will boast in knowing Christ at the cross.

CHORUS

Two wonders here that I confess, my worth and my unworthiness.
 My value fixed my ransom paid at the cross

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 # 313: "Oh Worship the King" (V 1,4,5)

Oh worship the King, all glorious above;
 oh gratefully sing God's power and God's love,
 our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
 pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
 It breathes in the air; it shines in the light;
 thy mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,
 our Maker, De fender, Redeemer and Friend.

O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
 while angels delight to hymn thee above,
 thy ransomed creation, in glory ablaze,
 in true adoration shall sing to thy praise.

Pastoral Prayer

God in whom we live and move and have our being,
 each week our prayers join with those of Christians around the world
 to seek your healing grace for those in need
 and to pray for justice and mercy in your fragile creation.

We thank you for the ways in which your Spirit can surprise us,
 bringing healing and hope in situations which cause us to despair.
 Encourage us when we feel overwhelmed.

We remember before you today people living with illness and suffering,
 for those struggling with disability or waiting for treatment,
 and for those who know grief or fear or loneliness

We remember before you people caught up in economic uncertainty,
 those worried for the future, or struggling to make ends meet

We remember before you today your whole creation in its increasing vulnerability.
 Teach us how to care for the rips and tears in the fabric of the world you love
 so that all your creatures may live together in health and wholeness.

As we leave here today, Lord, we pray for your Holy Spirit to be with us
 and guide us to walk in Your light and in obedience to Your scripture
 so that we may be the salt and light of this world.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our saviour
 Who live and reign with You and the Holy Spirit

As the one true living God
Now and forevermore. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the blessing of God,
the giver of every good and perfect gift;
and of Christ, who summons us to service;
and of the Holy Spirit, who inspires generosity and love,
be with us all.