

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, September 3rd, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Fan or Follower?
Proper 17
Matthew 16:21-28**

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

This is the day that you have made, Lord.

Help us to rejoice in it and be glad!

Remind us of the privileges we enjoy as your people:

to come to you in these moments,

to confess our sins,

to receive forgiveness and give it,

to pray and sing and listen,

to renew our fainting spirits,

to rest in all your promises.

Open our eyes to see you, Lord.

Open our ears to hear your Word.

Visit us through your Holy Spirit,

and help us to celebrate our faith. Amen

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of goodness and grace,
we long for your presence,
for the peace your promises bring,
and for the assurances we have received
through the gift of your Son.

May we, your people,
this day and every day,
have open eyes to see
and open ears to hear
your presence among us.

Open us to your Holy Spirit, Lord,
and prepare us for worship.
In the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #372: "Praise Him, Praise Him, Jesus Our Blessed Redeemer"

Praise him, praise him, Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!
Sing, O earth, his wonderful love proclaim!
Hail him, hail him, highest archangels in glory;
strength and honour give to his holy name!
Like a shepherd, Jesus will guard his children;
in his arms he carries them all day long.

Refrain:

Praise him, praise him! Tell of his excellent greatness;
praise him, praise him, ever in joyful song!

Praise him, praise him, Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!
For our sins he suffered and bled and died;
he, our Rock, our hope of eternal salvation,
hail him, hail him! Jesus the Crucified.
Sound his praises! Jesus who bore our sorrows,
love unbounded, wonderful, deep and strong.

Praise him, praise him, Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!
Heavenly portals loud with hosannas ring!
Jesus Saviour, reigneth forever and ever;
crown him, crown him, Prophet and Priest and King!
Christ is coming, over the world victorious;
power and glory unto the Lord belong.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.**

In your mercy forgive what we have been,
 help us amend what we are,
 and direct what we shall be,
 so that we may delight in your will
 and walk in your ways,
 to the glory of your holy name.
 Through Christ, our Lord. 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 105:1-6

1 Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name;
 make known his deeds among the peoples!

**2 Sing to him, sing praises to him;
 tell of all his wondrous works!**

3 Glory in his holy name;
 let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!

**4 Seek the LORD and his strength;
 seek his presence continually!**

5 Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
 his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

**6 O offspring of Abraham, his servant,
 children of Jacob, his chosen ones!**

Children's Hymn #476: "Amigos de Cristo"

Refrain:

Amigos de Cristo; we're friends of the Lord;
Amigos de Cristo; we're friends of the Lord.
For we've been forgiven, and we've been restored,
Amigos de Cristo; we're friends of the Lord.

Friends of the covenant renewed each morn;
baptized and loving it, we've been reborn.
Gift of the dove is ours for evermore.
Amigos de Cristo; we're friends of the Lord. (Refrain)

Born of a family, the young and old,
we'll be on hand to see new life unfold.
We understand the need to be made whole.
Amigos de Cristo; we're friends of the Lord. (Refrain)

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination **(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

Matthew 16:21-28

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Sermon

Last week we looked at the most important question every human will face? The question of who Jesus is to each of us.

Today, we are going to begin to see some of the ways that the correct answer to that question is given to us in the Scripture. I have heard it said 'If you want God to speak to you, you should be reading your Bible. If you want to hear God speak to you audibly, read your Bible out loud.'

The Bible is the Word of God and if we read it, we will discover that there is only one main focus from the first line of Genesis until the last words of Revelation, Jesus, and the salvation he offers.

We find it echoed throughout the Old Testament. In the story of Moses and Gods people in the wilderness, where there are told to look at the serpent on the pole and be saved. In the book of John speaking of his own sacrifice to come Jesus said.

John 3:14-15

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

We see the story of sacrifice and God's salvation in the lives of Abraham and Issac, where God provides the ram to be sacrificed at exactly the correct moment.

In the writings of King David, we find a description of the anguish that Christ would suffer upon the cross, thousands of years before the idea of crucifixion would even be conceived by the Roman empire.

Psalm 22:1

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

Which should sound familiar to you all;

Mark 15:34

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The prophet Isaiah wrote of the suffering servant. The one who would come and take on all of our pain, that would bear all of our suffering, the one who would be punished for all of his people's iniquities. A man who would be pierced for our transgressions. A man that would be led like that ram that came to Abraham on the mountain, a lamb slaughtered for the sins of others.

I pray that these bits of Scripture sound familiar to you, because it shows the importance of God's Word in both the Old Testament and New Testament and the

interwoven truth that is contained within the entire Scripture, Jesus is the king of kings and Lord of lords.

No matter where you look within the Scripture there are components of the story that point to Jesus and the sacrifice, he will make upon the cross for those who correctly answer the question 'Who do you say I am?' the day of Judgement.

This should make it clear to the Christian who reads their Bible that God has always had a plan. The idea of Jesus and his sacrifice for our salvation is intertwined with all Scripture. In the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, one third of the writing focuses on the final week of Jesus's life here on earth. And half of that focuses on the crucifixion alone.

Which brings us to where we are today. Jesus is going to begin to teach his disciples of what is to come. How the focus of his journey here upon the earth was not the miracles, or the teachings, or the baptisms, His time spent upon earth served a single purpose, to fulfil the plan that the Father had had for the salvation of mankind before the beginning of time itself.

Matthew 16:21-22

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."

Notice Peter's response to this. Last week we saw Peter tell Jesus that he was God and here in the very next few lines of Scripture we see Peter tell God that he is wrong. Peter rebukes God.

Peter seems to believe that he can somehow protect Jesus from all that is about to come, that he can somehow stop the pain, the suffering, and the crucifixion. Peter is so focused on all of the bad things that Christ has described that he somehow misses the most important part 'on the third day be raised.'

Do you recall when we spoke of the parable of the wheat and the tares just a few weeks ago. Focus on the wheat and let God be concerned with the tares. Focus on God's Word, God's people and spreading God's message, let God be concerned with the evils of the world. Yet here we see Peter, being a great representative of mankind, after learning all of the truths of who God is, after receiving direct instruction from God himself, falling back to the natural ways of mankind and being focused on the darkness of the world instead of the light of God.

Peter was probably expecting Jesus to commend him for his proclamation, the same way he had been commended for his answer when Jesus asked him 'Who do you say I am?'. However, this time Jesus's response to Peter is very different.

Matthew 16:23

23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Peter was focused on the world and worldly ways, in just a few lines of Scripture Peter had gone from one who had been able to perceive who Jesus was to one who had become worldly focused.

Jesus is not calling Peter Satan, but he is saying that his worldly focus comes from Satan. The idea of preventing Jesus from going to the cross, the idea of preventing his suffering, his humiliation, his bearing of our pains and our inequities, the desire to prevent Jesus from taking on all of his people's transgressions and dying for their sins, comes from the devil himself.

Jesus is telling Peter that his focus on the things of this world falls in line with the philosophies of Satan. Remember this brothers and sisters, because there are a lot of modern false teachings that try to take away the importance of what Jesus did upon the cross and they all come from the same mindset that Peter had this day, one that is focused on worldly things and not upon the cross and the resurrection.

Peter was focused on what he believed was important for himself and the disciples, not on the truth of God's Word and God's plan. This is the danger of false Christianity; it focuses on the things of this world and not on God's plan. Peter knew who God was, and yet here he is giving false witness, not because of deceit but because he had lost focus on Christ when he began to focus on the world. Christians need to stay focused on Jesus, on God, because when they lose that focus, they can easily be led astray by the devil and begin to become focused on the ways of man and not of God.

Which is why he once again explains to the disciples the correct answer to his question of 'Who do you say I am?'

Matthew 16:24

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Jesus is speaking about a faith that is willing to serve, one that understand that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the living God. He wants them to understand what it means to be one of his faithful, his followers.

Many people today claim to be followers of Jesus. It is a phrase that is repeated over and over, but how many of those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ actually understand what it means to be one of his faithful followers?

In the modern world being a follower has lost much of its meaning. Because of social media, being a follower has become the clicking of an icon on a screen so that we can be updated with what is going on in the life of someone else. This type of follower is very different from the kind of follower that Jesus is calling for when he says, 'if anyone would come after me.'

The truth is that the world is filled with people who would be better describes as fans of Christ, people who like some of what he taught, who like the way he healed, who like the way he stood up for justice and the social welfare of people. Jesus has lots of fans who pick and choose the aspects of His life that align with their own and focus on those teachings. Fans who will re-interpret Scripture or take it out of context, or even blatantly ignore those things that he taught or spoke about that do not align with the way that they live their lives.

It is easy to be a fan of Jesus, a fan of Christianity, but being a follower as Jesus is going to define a follower in his own words is a much more challenging task.

Jesus defines a follower in that one line of Scripture presented to us in Matthew 16:24.

In this single statement Jesus tells us everything we will need to know to be a true follower of Christ and to be one that will correctly answer the question of 'Who do you say I am?' Jesus tells us that there are five steps to being a follower and not a fan of God.

The first step is a desire to be a follower of God.

"If anyone would come after me.'

Mankind is rooted in desire; it is the root cause of everything we do in our lives. Desire is what causes us to sin, to overeat, to participate in those things which we know are not good for us physically, emotionally, or spiritually. It is desire that causes us to give up Sunday service, or Bible studies, or fellowship to instead pursue something else we want to do, like go somewhere, play a game, participate in an activity, or even just sleep in.

Desire is also one of the only things that can easily motivate us to change. We often seek out new experiences and new challenges because of a desire. So, ask yourself, do you desire salvation? You see if you are a follower of God, you will desire His salvation

and that means we begin to desire to live our lives just a little differently than everyone else in this world.

Do you desire God because of the guilt or shame that you feel when you know you are doing something that goes against His will? when you do something that you know does not align with the teachings of the Scripture, something that would not please God.

Do you desire God because you feel an emptiness in your life? Do you seek more than a simple worldly existence? Do you want your life to be something more than a rat race? Do you seek the fulfillment of knowing that you are called by God to do something to serve His kingdom here on earth?

Maybe you desire God because of a yearning you feel; you have read the scriptures and you understand what awaits people on the day of judgement. You know the fate of those who do not believe, and you seek to be one of those who receive the reward of eternal life.

There might even be a different reason that you desire to be a follower of Jesus. Every reason that we have for desiring to follow Christ is a gift of God. God has led each and every one of his followers through a life filled with different experiences, different highs and lows, different challenges, successes, and failures, that creates a desire to follow Jesus. God is the one who instills in each of his followers a desire to follow him. God loves each of us so much that he individually seeks us out in our lives, so that we learn to love him like he loves us.

It is this desire for God that is the first step in becoming a follower of Christ. When we desire God, we begin to choose the things of God over the things of this world. The things of this world may at times seem like they fulfill the desires that we have, they may seem to remove the guilt, the shame, the emptiness, or the yearning, but the things of this world only fulfill them temporarily! God is the only way to fulfill these desires permanently. When we begin to choose God first the things of this world become second choices, we begin to choose church over other activities, Bible study over other activities, time in fellowship over other things. When we desire God, we begin to discover that we are fulfilled in praise, in worship and in serving God here on earth and all of our desires are fulfilled.

Which brings us to the second step, Denial, **'let him deny himself.'**

In Greek that word that is translated as deny would actually translate as something closer to disown. So, Jesus is saying that we need to disown ourselves, or separate our selfishness from ourselves.

There is a critical point in this statement that is often abused within some churches. Jesus is not saying that we have to deny ourselves of worldly possessions as some

people chose to interpret this. Jesus is not saying that there are certain pleasures, or words, or music, or movies, even activities or jobs that we cannot do if we want to be a follower of His.

Jesus is saying that we need to deny ourselves. This means we give up something not just for forty days like we do during Lent. Jesus is saying we need to deny the very things that Peter was clinging too, the things of this world which Satan will use to twist his way into your mind.

Jesus is saying to be a follower we need to learn to deny ourselves of our selfishness, to reject this worldly focus on self-importance, self-indulgence, self-will, self-fulfillment, and self-sufficiency. We need to focus on Jesus and give up the ideas of being self-serving, self-focused, self-obsessed and our ways of selfish living.

Simply put we need to recognize that this life is not all about us, but all about God. We need to learn to turn everything we are to God and to place all of our faith and trust in Him. To let God be the master of our lives as we learn to humble ourselves before him. To set aside selfish pride and do all we can do to serve God and bring glory to His name. When Jesus says we are to deny ourselves he is reminding us that we no longer own ourselves when we are a follower of Christ, he paid for our lives with his blood upon the cross. 1 Corinthians says.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Jesus owns the lives of his followers. When we become one of his disciples, he takes over the ownership of our lives, we are giving up the desires we have in life and replacing them with a desire for a relationship with God first. Does this mean that we cannot desire other things, absolutely not, we can still desire a nice house, or boat, or job, or anything else, but the desire for that worldly thing does not outweigh our desire for a relationship with God.

These first two steps are difficult, and many people will struggle with these first two steps their entire lives. That is why we are often told that it is the wide and easy road that leads to destruction and the narrow and difficult path that leads to salvation.

The third step is one of the most challenging of the journey, those who have learned to desire God and to deny self must also be willing to **'take up his cross.'**

Knowing the spiritual meaning of the cross is critical for Christians and their faith. The cross and Jesus's sacrificial death upon the cross is a necessary component of our salvation. Lacking an understanding of the cross is what resulted in Peter being rebuked

by Jesus. If you do not understand Jesus's death upon the cross, you cannot begin to grasp the importance of his sacrifice and the meaning of his resurrection in the lives of the faithful.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the cross has been lost upon most of this world. The cross is seen as the symbol of Christianity alone. Churches all have a cross somewhere in their building, many have a cross either on their building or outside it on the grounds. People have clothing that has a cross on it, or jewelry made with precious metals and gems in the shape of the cross. Many people have a cross tattooed somewhere on their body as a sign of their faith even.

The iconic symbol of the cross is everywhere, but just like the spiritual meaning of the cross is lost upon many, so is the physical meaning of the cross. To those whom Jesus was speaking, the cross was not a symbol to be worn that had a symbolic meaning. To those in Jesus's day the cross meant one of the most painful and degrading deaths possible. The cross was a way of death that was reserved for the worst of society in Roman times. This is the cross that Jesus is asking for those who desire to be his followers to take up on their shoulders.

In modern terms, Jesus is telling those who want to be his disciples that you need to be willing to go to the electric chair, or to stand in front of the firing squad if you want to be a follower.

This is so different from the meaning of taking up the cross that is taught in many churches today. Many modern Christian describes their cross in very worldly terms, their o 'woe is me, the weight I bear is too much. For some it is the cross of a troublesome spouse who annoys them and does not clean up after themselves, for others it is an illness that they or someone in their family is dealing with, for some it might be a challenge or problem at work or school. These are not crosses we bear; this is life, these are the journeys that God send us along so that we learn to come to Him.

The cross that Jesus is speaking of is not difficulties in this life, it is a death march, a willingness to give up our very life to adhere to the teachings of the Scriptures in the same way that we have brothers and sisters doing in countries all over this world every day.

When we take up our cross, we are saying we desire Jesus more than self and we want to begin to live a life of sacrifice to Him. Paul in the book of Romans appeals to us.

Romans 12:1-2

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the

renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We are meant to be living sacrifices. This means we pursue God daily as we deny ourselves the desires of this world. You cannot be a follower of God if you focus on your self all week and carve out a couple hours each weekend where you focus on God. If you do that you are a fan and not a follower.

Taking up our cross and being willing to die for Christ means that at times we might have to give up some of our personal desires. We might have to give up the idea of that perfect house, that goal we set in our career, the vacation we have always dreamed of going on. It may mean that we have to give up possessions, a house, a car, a clothing brand, a hobby.

Picking up the cross means that we are willing to stand up for the Word of God regardless of its cost, even if staying true to God costs us our job, our friends, our family or even our lives.

When we are willing to pick up our cross, we are willing to obey God and deny the ways of this world which might appeal to our sense of self, our self-worth, our self-recognition, our self-pride, or our desire to be recognized in this world. Instead, we are focused on God and his Word, following his commands, and bringing the truth of who God is into a world that often denies Him. It means we are tending to the wheat in the fields as the servants of God by watering them with God's Word rather than worrying about the weeds.

Which brings us to devotion, '**and follow me.**'
Are you willing to walk a mile in another man's shoes?

Jesus is telling us exactly what we need to do to be a disciple in Matthew 16:24. Perhaps the best translation of this verse was done by Kenneth Wuest. He tried to translate the meaning and context of the verse as clearly as possible.

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone is desiring to come after me, let him forget self and lose sight of his own interests, and let him pick up his cross and carry it, and let him be taking the same road with me that I travel.

Jesus is not saying to follow his footsteps, he is saying walk alongside me in fellowship. Walk along the same road as we find our way to salvation. Again, a Biblical example of this appears in the Scriptures, Jesus walks the road to Emmaus with two of his disciples explaining to them all that they need to know in fellowship before they recognize who he is.

Jesus wants to walk alongside his faithful, in fellowship with them, but are we willing to walk alongside Jesus in our lives?

Does Jesus walk with us at work, or at school? Does Jesus walk along side with us when we go out to the park or down to the fair, when we play a game online, or to a party at a friend's house? Is Jesus there with us when we meet colleagues, acquaintances, friends, and family?

How about when we go on a vacation? Does Jesus get to come along, or do we leave him at home, so we can forget our Bibles and about Sunday services and go out for a late brunch instead?

Are there any places we go, things we do, things we watch or play or listen to that we would be embarrassed to have Jesus there alongside us?

Are there places in our life that we go to where we leave Jesus and his cross standing on the corner, telling him we will be right back, we just have a few errands to run or some other excuse? Or do we have devotion, we walk with Jesus in all things and deny ourselves as we carry our cross in this world?

Are you devoted or is Christianity a hobby? Do you set aside your cross when you face a challenge, or do you carry it forward boldly even if it means losing something you want and the condemnation of the world?

Matthew 16:24 is not what is preached in many churches around the world today. In fact, this is a Jesus that I would be willing to say many people who claim Christianity would not be willing to follow. This is not the Jesus that says you be you, love yourself and do what you want to do, this is not the Jesus who says just do what makes you happy and be the best version of yourself. This is instead the Jesus of the Scripture, the one who says be dead to your own selfishness, be devoted to walking with God and the Scriptures, whether you like them or not, to the very point of being willing to go to the cross as he did and die for him.

This is why being a follower of Jesus is described as walking through the narrow gate, the difficult path, the narrow doorway. Because being a follower of Jesus Christ is not a simple thing to do, it is not just inviting him into your heart and then going on living any life you want, its not just being sprinkled with water or dunked in water, it is a radical change in the way we see ourselves and the way we live, it is not instant, it takes time, but it does happen.

Those who are just fans of Jesus Christ do not have the desire, the denial of self, the desire to pick up their cross, they do not take Jesus with them everywhere, instead they

pick and choose when to be with God based upon when it benefits them in their lives. Matthew 7:21-23 tells us what they can expect on the day of judgement.

Matthew 7:21-23

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.’

Jesus followers all go through the steps of desire, denial, taking up the cross and following him. They know that being one of God’s faithful means that they will often be at odds with the worldly, the secular and even the fans of Christ.

James the brother of Jesus wrote.

James 4:4

4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Being a disciple of Christ is indeed a difficult path. This is why it is only possible through God’s grace; it is God alone that gives us the strength we need to continue, God that provides us with the resources, the people, the fellowship that we need to continue on when we want to give up and walk along that wide and easy road. It is easy to be a fan of Jesus, but being a follower is a test of our faith even on the best of days.

Which brings us to the final step, the one that is reserved solely for those who have desired God, those who have denied self, those who have carried their cross and invited Jesus into their lives fully.

Matthew 16:25-28

²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

At the end of the age, when the book of Revelation comes to fruition, and Jesus returns to the earth there will be a reward for those who have been his disciples, his true

followers. Those who have sacrificed of self, those who have denied their selfish desires and ways, those who have stayed devoted to Christ and carried their crosses every day. Those who have a serving faith.

On that day many who have lived their lives by that old limerick 'finders' keepers, losers' weepers' are going to find out that the opposite is quite true for eternity. We live in a society of keepers, people focus of self, falling in front of false idols that benefit them in some selfish manner only turning to Jesus when it fits in our own selfish plans.

The reality is that those who are defined as winners in this world because of their wealth, their power, their fame, or influence are in fact going to be destined to hell and those who were considered losers in this world because of their adherence to the teachings of Scripture will be the recipients of eternal life in God's Kingdom.

There is some irony in the truth that what so many people in this world focus on their entire lives, their job, their car, their home, their fame, power and wealth, their friendships, influence and hobbies, their focus on their own happiness and pleasure in the here and now, is such a small part of what they will lose for all of eternity.

Paul once again in Romans reminds us of the truth.

Romans 14:11-12

11 for it is written,

**"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God."**

12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

We will all stand before God, the faithful, the fans and the unbelievers and give account of our lives before the Lord. We will answer for all we have done. When the book of life is opened, our names will be in the book or they will not, there is no chance to argue, no chance to persuade, no defense that can be given that will have our names added to the book of life. We are all guilty of our sin, our iniquities our transgressions against God and it is only the cross, and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that was shed for us that saves the faithful. Jesus purchased our lives with his own life upon the cross and for that we owe him our own lives as living sacrifices.

Are you a follower of Christ, one of the faithful or are you just a fan?

When you stand in front of the Great White Throne will God know of your faith? God will know if you are a fan or faithful, he will know if you truly proclaim Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Son of the Living God.

God will know if you desired Him, if you denied yourself to follow him. God will know all of the times you picked up your cross, he will see all of the times that Jesus walked with you in your life. God will know when you suffered for your faith, when you were

devoted to your faith, when you demonstrated your faith by the way you lived, and the words you used, by the way you praised, the way you worshiped and the way your faith served during your life.

God will know if you were a fan or a follower.

Let us pray,

Neighborly Love, Service and Helpfulness

Almighty and eternal God,
 we are poor sinners
 and stand under your righteous judgment.
 With all our hearts
 we thank you for taking all our guilt from us
 and laying it on your dear Son Christ Jesus.
 Graciously sustain us in faith
 and govern us by your Holy Spirit,
 that we may live according to your will,
 in neighborly love, service, and helpfulness,
 and not give way to wrath or revenge,
 that we may not incur your wrath
 but always find in you a gracious Father;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 the one true living God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity 22

Hymn #774: "Freely, Freely"

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,
 I've been born again in Jesus' name,
 and in Jesus' name I come to you
 to share his love as he told me to.

He said:

'Freely, freely you have received;
 freely, freely give.
 Go in my name and because you believe,
 others will know that I live.'

All power is given in Jesus' name,
 in earth and heaven in Jesus' name,

and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.

He said:

'Freely, freely you have received;
freely, freely give.

Go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'

Communion

Invitation to the Table

As we prepare to celebrate holy communion, let us remember that Scripture calls us to examine ourselves before God. We are taught that eating and drinking unworthily brings judgment upon ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28-29). Let us therefore ask God for the proper spirit in which to celebrate the sacrament.

Almighty God, before whom can be neither secret thought nor hidden deed,
grant us your Spirit that we may know our hearts, our lives, and our inmost thoughts as you know them.

Grant us your grace that we may repent sincerely of all sin, find peace with you through our Lord Jesus Christ, and grow in assurance of salvation in him.

May the celebration of our Savior's infinite love in his redeeming death bring joy to us and glory to you.

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, we praise you.
Let the heavens be joyful,
and the earth be glad.
We bless you for creating the whole world,
for your promises to your people Israel,
and for Jesus Christ in whom your fullness dwells.
Born of Mary, he shares our life.

Eating with sinners, he welcomes us.
 Guiding his children, he leads us.
 Visiting the sick, he heals us.
 Dying on the cross, he saves us.
 Risen from the dead, he gives new life.
 Living with you, he prays for us

**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.**

With thanksgiving we take this bread and this cup
 and proclaim the death and resurrection of our Lord.
 Receive our sacrifice of praise.
 Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us
 that this meal may be
 a communion in the body and blood of our Lord.
 Make us one with Christ
 and with all who share this feast.
 Unite us in faith,
 encourage us with hope,
 inspire us to love,
 that we may serve as your faithful disciples
 until we feast at your table in glory.
 We praise you, eternal God,
 through Christ your Word made flesh,
 in the holy and life-giving Spirit,
 now and forever.
 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.

Communion

Congregation of Jesus Christ, the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him and trust in him alone for their salvation. All who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who desire to live in obedience to him as Lord, are now invited to come with gladness to the table of the Lord.

Lord, our God, we ask that you send your Holy Spirit so that this bread and cup may be for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we and all your saints be united with Christ and remain faithful in hope and love. Gather your whole church, O Lord, into the glory of your kingdom.

Breaking of the bread

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread,
 and after giving thanks to God,
 he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take, eat.
 This is my body, given for you.
 Do this in remembrance of me.

Taking of the bread

Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins

Distribution of the cup

In the same way he took the cup, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
 shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
 Whenever you drink it,
 do this in remembrance of me.

Drinking of the cup

Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Prayer after Communion

We thank you, O God,
 that through Word and Sacrament
 you have given us your Son,
 who is the true bread from heaven
 and food of eternal life.
 So strengthen us in your service
 that our daily living may show our thanks,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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. 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 #350: "To God Be the Glory"**

To God be the glory
 Great things He has done
 So loved He the world that He gave us His Son
 Who yielded His life an atonement for sin
 And opened the life-gate that all may go in

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord
 Let the earth hear His voice
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord
 Let the people rejoice
 Come to the Father

Through Jesus the Son
 Give Him the glory
 Great things He has done

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood
 To every believer the promise of God
 The vilest offender who truly believes
 That moment from Jesus a pardon receives (Refrain)

Great things He has taught us, great things He has done
 And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son
 But purer, and higher, and greater will be
 Our wonder, our worship, when Jesus we see (Refrain)

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, gracious Father,
 in the presence of your bounty keep us humble,
 in the presence of all people's needs make us compassionate and caring.

Give us faith in our praying and love in our serving,
 knowing that by your power
 all may find a new balance in living and a new victory in adversity.

We pray for all unhappy lives,
 those who are bitter and resentful, feeling life has given them a raw deal,
 those who are sensitive to criticism and quick to take offense,
 those who desire their own way, whatever the inconvenience or cost to others.
 May your judgment and mercy be for their healing.

We pray for those who are lonely,
 who are shy and self-conscious,
 who find it hard to make friends;
 those who are nervous and timid,
 who ever feel themselves strangers in a world they can scarcely understand.
 May your presence inspire confidence and ensure companionship.

We pray for those who live with bitter regrets,
 for loving relationships brought to ruin,
 for opportunities freely given and woefully abused,
 for the bitterness of defeat or betrayal at another's hand,
 or for failure in personal integrity.
 May your grace give new hope to find victory in the very scene of failure.

We pray for all in illness and pain,
weary of the day and fearful of the night.
Grant healing, if it be your will,
and at all times through faith the gift of your indwelling peace.

Bless the company of Christ's folk, the church in every land.
Make her eager in worship,
fearless in proclamation of the gospel, and passionate for caring.
Bless our country. Bless our leaders.
Bless our children and grant us peace within our borders.
Grant us as a nation to be found effective in establishing peace
throughout the world.

Bless us, each one, in the communion of the saints,
and keep us ever mindful of the great cloud of witnesses that,
following in their steps, as they did in the steps of the Master,
we may with them at the last receive the fulfillment promised to your people.
We pray all this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and rules with you and the
Holy Spirit as the triune God, now and forevermore. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the omniscient God give you knowledge,
the omnipotent God give you power,
the omnipresent God give you a presence that blesses—
so that you may share God with the world. **Amen.**