

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, October 8th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Grace of God
Proper 22
Matthew 21:33-46

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

We come as guests invited to a table;
We come to celebrate with friends and neighbors.

Jesus Christ, our Friend, and Saviour, invites us to gather:
We gather with his friends around the world.

Come and worship with hearts full of God's praise and promise.
We worship God in gladness, for God's faithfulness endures forever.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, our guide and guardian,
you have led us apart from the busy world into the quiet of your house.
Grant us grace to worship you in spirit and in truth,
to the comfort of our souls
and the upbuilding of every good purpose and holy desire.
Enable us to do more perfectly the work to which you have called us,
that we may not fear the coming of night,
when we shall surrender into your hands
the tasks which you have committed to us.
So may we worship you not with our lips only at this hour,
but in word and deed all the days of our lives,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #338: "Let All Things Now Living"

Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
To God our Creator triumphantly raise,
Who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,

by guiding us to the end of our days.
 God's banners are o'er us,
 Pure light goes before us,
 A pillar of fire shining forth in the night,
 'Til shadows have vanished and darkness is banished,
 as forward we travel from light into light.

By law God enforces: the stars in their courses,
 And sun in its orbit, obediently shine;
 The hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
 The depths of the ocean proclaim God divine,
 We, too, should be voicing our love and rejoicing,
 With glad adoration a song let us raise,
 'Til all things now living unite in thanksgiving
 To God in the highest, hosanna and praise.

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 and believe this good news! Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.
 The old life has gone, new life has begun.
 Know that you are forgiven.
 Have the courage to forgive one another, and be at peace – with God, with your
 neighbor and with yourself.

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: "Come and Thank Him" Choir**Responsive Reading****Psalm 23**

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.
 He leads me beside still waters.**

3 He restores my soul.
 He leads me in paths of righteousness
 for his name's sake.

**4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I will fear no evil,
 for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff,
 they comfort me.**

5 You prepare a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
 you anoint my head with oil;
 my cup overflows.

**6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
 all the days of my life,
 and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
 forever.**

Children's Hymn #804: "For All Your Goodness God"

For all your goodness, God,
 we give you thanks.

Thanks for the food we eat,
 and for the friends we meet;

for each new day we greet,
we give you thanks.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 21:33-46

³³ "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴ When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?'

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

Sermon

The parable of the tenants is perhaps one of the clearest examples of God's grace for his people and his wrath for those who live lives in disobedience to his Scriptures. To put this parable in context it is following the parable of the vineyard which we looked at two weeks ago, one that called all of God's people to be at work in this world doing his bidding.

It follows last week's sermon where the religious leaders of the time questioned Jesus's authority, and Jesus' response to them which showed that they were in fact trying to take law onto themselves and to reject the law of God. He emphasized this with the parable of the two sons, one who willingly says he will go into the vineyard to work and does not, representing false believers, and one who says that they will not go, but then changes their mind and goes to work in the vineyard, representing the faithful.

And now he tells those same gathered religious leaders, which represent all of the different denominations of Jewish religion of the day, the parable of the tenants. His warning and woes are not being held back anymore as he tries to drive home the seriousness of his Word.

When Jesus begins this parable, he does so by making it clear to the gathered religious leaders that he is speaking of the nation of Israel, as he does so often, he refers to well-known Scripture from the Old Testament. The vineyard that we have seen appear so often in our recent parables is a clear reference to the nation of Israel, to God's people.

Isaiah 5:7

**For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, an outcry!**

Jesus is once again going to chastise the religious leaders for their behavior. He is making it clear to all gathered that the vineyard he is speaking about are the people of God, the nation of Israel, and if the nation of Israel is the vineyard that would make God the master and those religious leaders the tenants, the ones who had been given authority and accountability over the people of God, as we learned about last week.

Matthew 21:33

³³ "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country.

It is clear from the very beginning of this parable that the master cared deeply for the vineyard. He had invested a lot of money into the land, he had paid to have a fence built around the land, a fence that would protect the vineyard and the workers from wild beasts and thieves which were threats to the wellbeing of the vineyard.

He had paid to have a watchtower built, where guards could stand and look out beyond the fence, enhancing the security of the vineyard, but it could also act as a place where the workers could gather and find fellowship as they took refuge from the heat of the sun when it shone down on them in the mid-day.

He had also built a winepress, ensuring that the vineyard had everything it needed to produce wine with the harvest of grapes that the workers brought in from the vineyard. The master had provided everything that the tenants could have possibly needed to manage the vineyard, his love for the vineyard and his desire to make things as simple as possible for his tenants is clear.

The master did all of this and then handed his land over to the tenants, entrusting them to look after his vineyard, to care for it as he would.

As harvest season approached the master sent some of his servants to collect payment for the rental of the vineyard from the tenants. It was typically a portion of the harvest that would be sent to the master, very similar to the tithing that we do in the church. The tenants would look at their harvest and give a portion of the harvest they had been given that year to the master as a thank you for the usage of the land.

This is something that God has done quite often throughout the Scriptures. The prophets of the Old Testament had been sent to the nation of Israel and its leaders, multiple times to remind them of their covenant with God, to remind them of the vineyard and the spiritual fruit they are meant to tend and to harvest.

Yet in this parable the tenants of the vineyard do not happily receive the servants and handover a portion of the harvest. Instead, they chose to keep everything for themselves and beat, kill, and stone the servants of the master.

Matthew 21:35-36

³⁵ And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them.

Yet the master never gives up on his tenants and his vineyard, he sends servant after servant to the tenants, each one to remind them of the covenant the contract that they had with the master as they oversaw his vineyard.

Remember that the master could have sent soldiers, he could have sent someone to forcibly take the vineyard back from the tenants, yet he never does. He just keeps sending his servants in hopes that the tenants would honor the contract, honor the covenant that they had with the master.

This is what happened throughout the Old Testament to so many of the prophets that God had sent to the nation of Israel. They were usually ignored, their words from God

falling upon ears that were closed to the reminder of the covenant, a people that had decided to be the law unto themselves, and leaders who did not want to give up the power and prestige that they had. Many of the prophets were martyred, Isaiah had been sawed in two by Manasseh, Jeremiah was stoned, Amos had been tortured by Amaziah.

God's patience with man kind could not be displayed any clearer, he sent prophet after prophet to his people. God showed his love for mankind every time he sent a prophet to remind them of the covenant, even when his people had turned against him, even when they rebelled and refused to do the work they had been called to do, he sent a prophet to offer them grace and bring them back into covenantal relationship. Even when they kill the prophet, he sent another.

Every prophet that came to Israel brought a message of hope and healing. They did not bring wrath and judgement, instead they brought a warning, they were sent so that people could avoid God's wrath and judgement. Yet they were often ignored by the people and the religious leaders, or as we learned in some cases they were killed, because the people did not like the message they brought.

How often do we see this in our world. The patience and grace of God is so clear. We are constantly given the message of God's love and God's grace for any who will repent and come to him. Being faithful to Christ is a relatively easy thing to do, we just need to give up our own selfishness, our own sinful nature and desire for power, pleasure, and wealth. Yet like the Israelites of the Old Testament, the messengers of God are ignored because people do not want to hear the message, they desire the things of this world more so they seek out a message that tells them that they can have it all.

Finally, after sending his servants and seeing no reconciliation with the tenants the master has an idea.

Matthew 21:37-39

³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Be honest, we all know that no one in their right mind would send their own son into this situation. These tenants have killed, maimed, and beat more than one or two servants at this point. We would have called the cops long ago and gotten some form of legal process started.

However, in the parable Jesus is making it very clear that the master is full of patience, grace, love and forgiveness and the tenants are the opposite, they are filled with wickedness, and a desire for wealth and power.

When the son of the master appears, the tenants do not look at him and respect his position of authority, instead they see an opportunity to seize him, kill him, and solidify their control over the vineyard increasing their power and wealth. In Jesus's day the law stated that if a piece of land had no owner, one simply need to stake a claim on the land, and it would be theirs. The tenants know that if they kill the son of the master, his only heir, that they could claim the vineyard for themselves when the landowner died. In that instant they decided to kill the master's son.

The master had sent his son to the tenants fully aware that the tenants could do this. The master knew that they might chose to kill his one and only heir, his son, yet he still sent him. The master sent his son in hopes of bringing the tenants back into the covenant that they had with the master. In hopes that their relationship would be restored.

Jesus is describing what will happen in just a few days when the leaders of Israel will use false testimony and false allegations to seize him, torture him and eventually crucify him upon the cross. Jesus had come to remind people of their covenantal relationship with God, he had come to remind them of the work they were called to do, he had come to remind them of the spiritual fruit they were to be at work harvesting. Yet, like the tenants, the spiritual leaders are more concerned about their own personal wealth, power and prestige, their worldly status, than the covenantal relationship they have with God.

God loves his people so much that he sent his one and only son to a world that rejects him, not just 2000 years ago, but still today. God was willing to knowingly send his son to his death in hopes of bring us back into relationship with him. This is the meaning of John 3:16.

John 3:14-18

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.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

We are those tenants, we are the ones who in our sinful nature have beat, killed, and stoned the messengers that have brought the Word of God into our lives. When we do not like what they say, we blame them. We are the one who refused to honestly look at our sin and recognize our own desires for our personal pleasure. Wealth and happiness overwhelm our desire to be faithful to God.

Yet God does not give up on us, he keeps sending messengers, he keeps sending the message even when we reject it, he keeps reaching out through his grace, so much so that he was willing to send his son to die for anyone who comes to faith.

John 3:14-15 teaches us that we need to look to Jesus to be saved, the same way that God's people needed to look to the serpent in the wilderness that Moses raised upon the cross to be healed and live after they had been bitten by fiery serpents because of their sin. We need to see our sinful nature and turn our eyes to Jesus to be saved, that is the belief that it speaks of in John 3:16.

John 3:18 also clearly states that whoever believes in Jesus receives eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, that belief is the belief that was established in John 3:14-15, a belief that recognizes our sinful nature, repents from sin, and turns to God. At the same time, it very clearly states that anyone who does not believe in that way is condemned, because they do not believe.

Matthew 21:40-42

⁴⁰When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."

⁴²Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

**'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?'**

This is the point that Jesus will make in the next section of his parable. He puts forth the question of what will happen when the master himself comes to the vineyard and their response of the gathered is that the master will surely put the tenants to death.

This is the only rational response to the situation, the tenants have not only broken the covenant that they had with the master, but they have killed his servant and his son. Their death is the only possible outcome. It does not matter to those gathered how the master takes back the vineyard, whether it is by military or legal means, but to everyone present, there is no doubt as to the guilt of the tenants.

What is interesting is that once again, like in the parable of the two sons, the religious leaders are so caught up in the story that they do not realize that Jesus is speaking about them. They do not realize that they have been the ones who have constantly rejected the messengers of God, all the prophets of the Old Testament. They do not realize that they are those tenants who in just a few days, will kill the son of the master,

because they are blinded by their own sinful ways and their desire to maintain their power, and prestige in the world.

Jesus reminds them once again quotes the Old Testament.

Psalm 118:22-23

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian Faith. He is that foundational part of the faith upon which everything else rests, the same way that the cornerstone of a building was the foundational point on which the entire building stood. It was not until a suitable cornerstone was found that any building could be built. If the cornerstone was faulty or had been placed incorrectly eventually the whole structure would deteriorate or even fall apart as that cornerstone shifted.

Jesus is once again making it clear that belief in him is critical to faith. Yet, the church leaders will reject that cornerstone and replace it with one of their own. They have had the chance to examine him, they have spoken with him, they have seen all the proof not only in Scripture but through his miracles that he is indeed the Messiah, yet they will still reject him. They may claim to know the Scriptures, and they might be able to quote the Scriptures, yet they do not seem to understand and live their lives according to the Scriptures or they could not deny Jesus Christ. It clearly shows that even though they claim faith they are in fact ruled by their own self-serving ways.

Matthew 21:43-45

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

Once again Jesus speaks plainly to the gathered religious leaders. He states that they have rejected God's Words, rejected their covenant with God, rejected their responsibility in the vineyard and because of this their authority in the Kingdom of God will be taken away. Because they have rejected the cornerstone, the son of God, they will have it taken away and it will be given to a people who will keep the covenant as they work in the vineyard of the Lord, working for him in harvesting the fruit.

Those who fall upon the cornerstone, are sinners who find themselves broken in sin and repent and seek to build their lives upon the cornerstone. They are the people who

build their lives around the teachings of the Word of God. The truly faithful and because of the solid foundation that their faith is built upon will be able to withstand anything that comes against it, that is why they can always find peace and hope in this world.

Those who do not fall upon the cornerstone instead will find that the cornerstone will fall upon them. Sinners who refuse to repent and refuse to build their lives upon Jesus Christ will be crushed, smashed into something unrecognizable.

This sets the gathered religious leaders on their heels; they finally understand that Jesus is speaking about them directly. Notice their response, it is not one of deep contemplation, they do not take the time to think about what he said and see if it is true in their own lives. They do not consider their own sinful nature and begin to see the truth in what Jesus has said to him.

Instead, they reject it, and they respond emotionally, it is a little too close to the truth and for that reason they lash out at the truth. They get angry and they begin to make plans to arrest and kill Jesus, doing exactly what he said they would do in the parable that he had just shared with them.

Like so many people in this world who love their sin, love their power, love their possessions, and love their position, the gathered religious officials hardened their hearts and convinced themselves of their own righteousness. It is not just religious leaders that do this, people who claim Christianity all over the world do this, they justify their own sins so that they can continue to enjoy their life, refusing to accept the truth that sin is sin, whether it is what we would consider a minor sin or a major sin. In the eyes of God all sin is the same and when we deny our own sin, we are denying Jesus's authority in our lives.

When we deny the truth of the Scripture, when we refuse to acknowledge our own sin, we are no different than the religious leaders, we are putting our own selfish sins above God in our lives.

And in truth we are all like this at times, we all have sins that we know deep down in our hearts are sinful, but when we are made aware of it through the Scriptures we lash out, the same way that the religious leaders did. We deny the truth because to acknowledge it would mean that we needed to change. We justify our sin on our own minds, ignoring the truth of the Scripture that is before us, in the same way the religious leaders denied the truth of Scripture and the fact that it was indeed the Messiah who was standing in their presence.

Which only goes to emphasize the truth of how amazing God's grace actually is in our lives. God sacrificed his Son so that all who might believe in him could find salvation, could have their covenantal relationship with God restored.

God's love for us is so strong, that he calls us back into the covenantal relationship with him regardless of our sinful nature. John Newton the man who wrote "Amazing Grace" knew this. He had a challenging life and when he finally came to true faith in God as his Lord and Saviour he penned 'Amazing Grace'. He described God's grace wonderfully when he said, **'I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be. But still, I am not what I use to be. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.'**

The Parable of the Tenants teaches us that God's love for his people is so strong that he never gives up hope in restoring his relationship with them, they are never too far gone. God is willing to send servant after servant and even his son, so that he can give every person an opportunity to restore their relationship with God and begin their work in the vineyards.

It teaches us that we need to live in relationship with God and have Jesus as the cornerstone of our lives. Because when we are living in relationship with God, we are building our lives upon that cornerstone of Jesus Christ. When we have faith, our lives have a solid foundation that can withstand any of the chaos, trials, and tribulations that this world throughs against us because we are firmly grounded in the Word of God.

It also bears a dire warning that a time will come when those who have rejected the cornerstone will find it falling upon them in judgement instead of being their foundation.

Let us pray,

Give Us Confidence in Your Mercy, and Teach Us to Be Merciful

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 you are merciful
 and through Christ you promised us
 that you will neither judge nor condemn us,
 but graciously forgive us all our sins
 and abundantly provide for all our needs of body and soul.
 By your Holy Spirit
 establish in our hearts a confident faith in your mercy
 and teach us also to be merciful to our neighbor,
 that we may not judge or condemn others,
 but willingly forgive all people,
 and judging only ourselves,
 lead blessed lives in your fear;
 through your dear Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich

Hymn #434: “For the Beauty of the Earth”

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.

For each perfect gift of thine,
to the earth so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.

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 #803: “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come”

Come, ye thankful people, come,
 raise the song of harvest home;
 all is safely gathered in,
 ere the winter storms begin;
 God, our Maker, doth provide
 for our wants to be supplied.
 Come, to God's own temple, come:
 raise the song of harvest home.

All the world is God's own field,
 fruit unto God's praise to yield;
 wheat and weeds together sown,
 unto joy or sorrow grown;
 first the blade and then the ear,
 then the full corn shall appear.
 Lord of harvest, grant that we
 wholesome grain and pure may be.

Even so, Lord, quickly come
 to thy final harvest home:
 gather thou thy people in,
 free from sorrow, free from sin;
 there, forever purified,
 in thy presence to abide.
 Come, with all thine angels, come:
 raise the glorious harvest home.

Pastoral Prayer

O Lord and Father of the household of faith,
 we thank you for the gift of faith
 worked within us by your Holy Spirit.
 We thank you for having called us to yourself,
 for consecrating us to your service,
 for having set us apart to the sacred ministry of prayer.

O Lord and Father of the household of faith,
 we pray for the church
 in all her breadth and variety,

gathered out of every nation, family, people, and tongue,
to be a kingdom of priests serving you.

We pray for the church in all the world,
for churches in North America, Europe, and the Middle East,
for churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America,
for young churches and old churches,
small churches and large churches,
weak churches and strong churches.
Grant to the church true lowliness
and genuine humility where there is pride, unity where there is division.
Grant to her truth where there is error and wisdom where there is folly,
that you might fulfill your purposes for her.

O Lord and Father of the household of faith,
we pray for those stewards to whom you have
entrusted the affairs of your house,
for pastors, elders, deacons, lay leaders, volunteers, and committees.
Give them the spirit of willing service and true humility.
Give them a sense of spiritual devotion.
Give them delight in those whom they serve.
Grant that they may lead your people in the way of Christ,
that thereby we might all enter the land of our heritage.

O Lord and Father of the household of faith,
we pray for all peoples of all nations.
We pray that in every land there might be peace and true justice
(especially in [country] and other places of conflict).
Grant that in our own communities
those who are troubled,
those who suffer,
those who are discouraged
might find support in time of need
especially from your church.
Particularly we remember before you
the work done for the troubled, the suffering, and the discouraged
by the deacons in our congregations
and denominational and Christian agencies.

O Lord and Father of the household of faith,
we pray for our nation and
those who lead the nation:
the president/prime minister and advisors,
the congress/parliament and the courts,

the diplomatic corps as they negotiate for peace and justice.
We pray for the leaders of all nations,
that they might know that you have called them
to serve their people in your fear and
for your glory and the good of the peoples.

O Lord and Father of the household of faith,
we pray for those who have special needs.
To all who suffer any sickness or weakness,
give health and strength.
To all who are disturbed or troubled, give rest and understanding.
To all who are lonely and alienated, give fellowship and love.
To all who grieve and sorrow [especially name(s)],
give comfort and assurance.
To all who are aged and frail, give homes of comfort and safety,
and others to help them, and a willingness to accept help.
All these requests we present to you,

O Father of mercy, in the name of Jesus Christ,
who even now is seated at your right hand to intercede for us
and who will come at the last trumpet to gather us into
his holy city, the Jerusalem that is above,
and toward which we journey even now. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the love of God surround you,
the wisdom of Christ guide you,
and the power of the Holy Spirit encourage you
as you joyfully proclaim:
Our world belongs to God!