

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, November 12th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Door was Shut
Proper 27
Matthew 25:1-13

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
We will lift up joyous song and sing our praises.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it rejoice.
Let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord,

For God will come to judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.
Let us join with all creation to praise the Lord! Let us worship God.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of creation and compassion,
You hear the cries of your people.
You know our fear and despair.
In your great love, you assure us that you walk with us in Christ Jesus.
In this time of worship,
we long to see your new heaven and new earth break through,
making your justice known and life fruitful for all your children.
We praise you for the hope you offer us in Christ Jesus.
We trust that you are at work in your church and in creation
so all that is broken will be made new.
Through our prayers and our praise,
strengthen our trust in your promised future, O God.
In Jesus's wonderful and all-powerful name, we pray.
Amen.

Opening Hymn #410: "Joyful, Joyful We Adore You"

Joyful, joyful, we adore You,
God of glory, Lord of love;

Hearts unfold like flow'rs before You,
 Op'ning to the sun above.
 Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
 Drive the dark of doubt away;
 Giver of immortal gladness,
 Fill us with the light of day!

All Your works with joy surround You,
 Earth and heav'n reflect Your rays,
 Stars and angels sing around You,
 Center of unbroken praise;
 Field and forest, vale and mountain,
 Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
 Chanting bird and flowing fountain
 Praising You eternally!

Always giving and forgiving,
 Ever blessing, ever blest,
 Well-spring of the joy of living,
 Ocean-depth of happy rest!
 Loving Father, Christ our Brother,
 Let Your light upon us shine;
 Teach us how to love each other,
 Lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals, join the mighty chorus,
 Which the morning stars began;
 God's own love is reigning o'er us,
 Joining people hand in hand.
 Ever singing, march we onward,
 Victors in the midst of strife;
 Joyful music leads us sunward
 In the triumph song of life.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
you pardon all who truly repent and turn to you.
We humbly confess our sins and ask your mercy.
We have not loved you with a pure heart,
nor have we loved our neighbor as ourselves.

We have not done justice, loved kindness,
 or walked humbly with you, our God.
 Have mercy on us, O God, in your loving-kindness.
 In your great compassion,
 cleanse us from our sin.
 Create in us a clean heart, O God,
 and renew a right spirit within us.
 Do not cast us from your presence,
 or take your Holy Spirit from us.
 Restore to us the joy of your salvation
 and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit
 through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!
 Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
 whose sin is covered.
 Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
 and in whose spirit there is no deceit
 Know that in Jesus,
 God embraces you, forgives you,
 and strengthens you to live a renewed life.
Thanks be to God.

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: "One Candle, One Flame" Choir

Responsive Reading

Amos 5:18-24

¹⁸ Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!
 Why would you have the day of the LORD?
 It is darkness, and not light,
¹⁹ as if a man fled from a lion,
 and a bear met him,
 or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall,

and a serpent bit him.

²⁰ Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹ **"I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.**

²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,
I will not look upon them.

²³ **Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.**

²⁴ **But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**

Children's Hymn #373: "Jesus Loves Me"

Jesus loves me, this I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong;
they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain:

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me he who died
heaven's gate to open wide.
He will wash away my sin,
let his little child come in. [Refrain]

Jesus loves me, this I know,
as he loved so long ago,
taking children on his knee,
saying, "Let them come to me." [Refrain]

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 25:1-13

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹² But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Sermon

Do you have any regrets?

Maybe you have a regret about a decision you have made, something you have done, or something you should have done, maybe you regret letting someone into your life, or you regret losing someone from your life. Maybe you have a regret about your choice or your performance at work or at school.

I am sure that each and every one of us has at least one regret that we have in our lives. We all have regrets because in this world we are constantly forced to make choices about the way we live, the people we surround ourselves with, what we do with our time, and so many other things. Some of these choices are simple and we make them without a thought, others are much more complex, and we mull over them, seek out advice from others, and eventually we make a choice.

We often find ourselves looking back on our lives and wondering what would have happened if we had made a different choice. Sometimes we regret the choice we made because we believe that the other choice would have resulted in a better life situation.

The truth is that every choice we make, big or small, has an impact on our life. As we get older the impact of the choices that we made becomes clearer, and as we reflect, we may find ourselves regretting the time we lost doing something that we invested a lot of time in, with little return on that investment. We recognize that pastime, hobby, relationship, or job that we thought was so important when we were 20 wasted a lot of our time, and we wish we would have made a better investment of our time.

Regret is that it is the realization that we missed an opportunity or wasted time in our lives. Some of the things we regret can be minor, like missing a game, a movie, a show, or a night out with our friends. Others can be much more serious, like a career change, an educational opportunity, the love of our life, or in the case of our faith, eternal life itself.

This is what the parable of the ten virgins teaches us about, regret, regret for making the wrong choices in our lives. The parable teaches about the importance of our spiritual wellbeing and the regret that we will face if we do not take our spiritual preparation seriously in this world.

Last week we learned that God is love, and that he wants every single person on this planet and throughout all time to return into relationship with him. God offers his grace to every single person; they all have an opportunity to repent and declare Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Every person in this room, every person in this community, in this country and in this entire world is right now making choices about how they spend their time, how they think about sin and repentance, about selfishness and selflessness. And the truth is that every person that has ever lived will eventually stand before God on the day of Judgement and understand the importance of every single choice that they have made, on that day not a single person will be surprised if they end up in heaven or they end up in hell.

In the final verses of Matthew 24, Jesus had been speaking of that day, the end of times. He explained to those who were listening that as the end of time approached there would be false prophets, suffering, chaos, anarchy, and apathy. He explained that the whole world would be suffering when he returned, and he would reward those who repented and were faithful and he would punish those who were not. He then told all gathered that he did not know when this would occur, it would be on an unknown day and an unknown hour. In the parable of the wicked servant, he said it this way, 'since the servant does not know when the master will return, he will enjoy his life, doing the things he wants to do, instead of doing what he is called to do for his master.'

The final verses of Matthew 24 say.

Matthew 24:48-51

⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is the dire warning that precedes the parable of the ten virgins, and it serves to amplify the message of warning that is being conveyed in this parable. The church is often referred to as the bride of Christ, not the building but the people, which means that the story being portrayed in this parable is intended for the people of God, those who claim to be part of his church while they live here on earth.

We also need a better understanding of how wedding customs differed in the days of Jesus from the customs of today. Our concept of marriage is man and woman meet, fall in love, get engaged, get married and live happily ever after.

However, in the days of Jesus it was a little different. The parents of the bride and groom arranged the marriage, sometimes without the bride and groom every meeting one another. Once the decision was made, they were brought together and betrothed, married, they said their vows to one another in the presence of the family and God. At that time, they were promised to one another and that was a legal bond, a covenant, made in front of man and God that could not be broken.

After the betrothal, the groom would return to the home of his parents and begin to build a home for the bride and himself, while the bride stayed in the home of her parents and prepared all of her things to move into the family of her husband. It was normal for this process to take a year or longer and the couple did not usually see one another during this time.

Finally, once the groom was ready, he would return to the home of his bride's parents and bring her into the home that he had prepared for her. What is important for us to know is the groom never knew when this was going to happen. The groom was not the one who decided that the home he had built was prepared properly for his bride. It was actually the father of the groom who made that decision. When the groom felt the home was ready, he would inform his father, who would come and inspect the home, after he had finished his own work for the day, and if he found it acceptable, he would give his son permission to go and get his bride.

Because this often occurred after the father's workday it would often be evening or sometimes even late at night, but the groom in his joy could not wait until morning to go to his bride, so he would immediately set out to the home of his bride's parents to bring her to her new home. Because this happened in a time before streetlights, the friends of the bride, the bridesmaids, or virgins as they are called in this parable, had the responsibility of lighting the way to the bride's house for the groom and then lighting the way to the new home for everyone to follow and join in the weeklong feast and celebration that would take place in the new home.

In this parable Jesus is painting a clear picture of the end of times. A tale of how his return will be at an unknown time and it is the responsibility of the church to light the way for the people who are lost in the dark to their new home in heaven.

Matthew 2:1-5

25 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

Jesus is the groom, and the bride and virgins are the people who attend Church and call themselves Christians here on earth. The virgins are you and I, people who are sent out to light the way through the dark into the new home for everyone invited to the feast. People who are set apart from the ways of the world, chaste and pure, set apart from worldly temptation and sin. Jesus is not making this parable difficult to understand, he is speaking quite clearly.

Notice that in the parable the virgins all seem the same in the first verse. They all have the same task, to light the way to the feast for the groom, bride, and guests. They all knew this was their task and they were all prepared in the same way, they all had a lamp with which to light the way through the dark for others.

However, then we learn that even though at first glance they all seem to be the same on the exterior, they are not all the same. There are five who are wise and five who are foolish. Five who are true believers and five who are make believers. Right now, everyone of us is hoping that we are one of the five wise virgins, and I pray that is true for every person here, and if you feel you are not pray that the holy spirit would bring you into a place of true faith and share the wisdom of God with you.

The parable explained that in truth there are some people who are prepared for the coming of the groom and there are some who are not prepared. Five of the virgins had extra oil to put into their lamps, and five who had not.

Matthew 25:5

⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

They did not know when he would come, so they waited, and eventually they slept every night they were expected to be ready, and every night they slept. They all had the same task, and they all knew that the groom could show up any night at any time, they all knew that their task was to lead people to the feast in the new home regardless of the day or the time that the groom appeared.

The wise were the ones who had that extra oil, because they knew that if the groom came late enough in the evening their lamps could be low on oil and would need to be refilled. The unwise trusted in their own idea that the bridegroom would come while their lamps still had enough oil.

Think about that for a minute. If the virgins lamp runs out of oil it can produce no light, and then the virgin and her lamp serve no purpose. It's like bringing your phone with you but not charging it, once the battery runs out it serves no purpose. When something can no longer do what it is intended to do, it loses the purpose for its existence.

The unwise virgins represent all of the people who claim Christianity in this world who go to church, carry a Bible, attend Bible studies and times of fellowship. People who externally look

and play the part of faithful followers of Christ but have no sign of the light of Christ in their lives.

There is a difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You are living in spiritual darkness if you only know of Jesus. You are like one of these virgins who has no oil for her lamp.

In contrast we have the virgins who have extra oil for their lamps. They are prepared to shine their light out into the darkness regardless of the day or hour so that they can light the way to the new home for everyone who is invited.

Did you know that in the Word of God that oil is often used to allude to the presence of the Holy Spirit? These wise virgins, these faithful followers have been reborn by the Holy Spirit, the wisdom of God is within them.

Jesus has spoken of the importance of spiritual fruit and readiness over and over in the parables that we have studied over the last few weeks. In the parables leading up to the scripture we are looking at today, the parable of the fig tree, the vines, the vineyard, the wedding feast and even the questions on paying taxes to Caesar or the greatest commandment, Jesus has never once hesitated in telling of the importance of true faith.

Ask yourself, is it possible for someone to believe in Jesus, go to church, read the Bible, fellowship; to go through all of the emotional responses that Christians go through when they hear the Word of God and still not be saved?

It is! Many people live lives committed to religion, denomination, church, or Bible studies. They live life as fans of Jesus Christ. They embrace the idea of God socially, politically, emotionally, intellectually, and religiously, but not spiritually, because they have never repented from their own sinful ways, and because of that they have never really been born again.

In worldly terms they may appear to be identical to the faithful, they have all of the external characteristics and indicators, but they lack that oil that keeps the lamp burning in the darkness. They do not understand that the most important aspect of Christianity is knowing what God did for us and loving him with all that we are, loving him so much that we are willing to die to ourselves, denying ourselves and picking up our cross and walking with Christ in this fallen world.

Going through the motions, emotions and religious rituals of Christianity does not mean that someone is born again. Unless you have the Holy Spirit in you, you are a lamp without oil, a cloud without rain or a tree that produces no fruit.

Sure, the make believer might be able to fool the people around them here on earth, family, friend, and others. They might even be fooling themselves, however, it is impossible to fool God. When the day of judgement comes, and they go to light their lamps in the darkness to

light the way, it will be very clear to everyone who are the faithful followers of Christ and who are not. Jesus Christ sees the spiritual condition of our hearts, he knows the heart of the believer, the heart that is prepared for his return, the heart that is expectantly awaiting its call to come home.

A believer is a processor of Christ. Jesus is in every part of their lives.

Make believers are just professors of Christ. They act and claim like Jesus is a part of their life, but he is not in their hearts.

If you can remember back to the parable of the wheat and the tares, they look the same throughout the majority of their lifecycle, but in the end the difference in the fruit that they produce becomes apparent.

It is not enough to just believe in the existence of God. Satan himself believes in the existence of God. Satan knows that God is all powerful and the creator and sustainer of all of creation. This is why belief that God is real, that the church is real, and that the gospel is real is not enough for salvation.

Salvation requires true faith, submitting yourself and your life to God, repenting and turning away from the things of this world which go against the Word of God. You need to possess Jesus in all aspects of your life, the internal and external, heart, soul, body, and mind.

And like we learned in the parable of the wheat and tares we will have believers and make believers in this world right up to the moment of Jesus Christs return. The Lord is not delaying his return forever, he will indeed return. Instead, he is extending his grace and mercy to the people of this world who have not come to faith yet, he is giving them an opportunity to repent and come to him for salvation. Jesus will come exactly when the father has planned for him to come, the very same way that the groom will come for his bride when his father decides it is time for him to go.

The father knows the time, he is the one who determines the groom's return. Jesus will come, it might not be as soon as you hope, or it may be sooner than you think. The virgins sleep, knowing that the groom will come at the time that is appointed by the groom's father. They do not know when that is exactly, so they live their lives, working, playing, eating, and sleeping, awaiting that moment when they hear the call of the groom coming so that they can go out and play their part in the procession to the wedding feast. The wise do this knowing that they are fully prepared to fulfil their call regardless of the day or time. The unwise do so in false confidence.

Matthew 254:6-11

⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and

buy for yourselves.’¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’

Only the father knows the hour, and the groom arrives at an unexpected hour, late in the night. God expects his people to be ready, to serve him when they are called.

The virgins knew that the groom could come at any time, and they were expected to be ready, to go out and meet him with lamps that would light his way to the bride and then light the way to the new home of the bride and groom for the wedding feast.

The moment of truth has come, the test of their preparedness has arrived. The ten virgins are all called, not just the wise or the unwise, all of them were expected to be ready.

Suddenly the foolish virgins realize that they do not have enough oil. Really suddenly they realize the truth that they are not ready to do the very thing they were called to do. It is not sudden, they knew they did not prepare properly, they knew that they did not have enough oil, they just hoped the groom would come when they could fake their way. There is no surprise here, they knew that they needed to be prepared for the coming of the groom, even in the middle of the night, but they did not prepare for their own reasons.

There are religious people who know the truthfully God is not in their hearts, they know that they are missing something that others in the church seem to have. They know something is missing, but they want to live their lives in their own way, they want to keep their false idols, to embrace sin and resist repentance, they did not want to submit to God. There are a million reasons that people will give for denying God, but they all can be summarized, they value their selfishness over the selflessness that God calls for us to have. They refuse to submit to God and serve him in their lives.

The foolish virgins knew that they did not have what they needed so they turned to the wise virgins and tried to borrow some of their oil.

This is an important point of the parable. The wise virgins tell them that they need to go get their own oil. You cannot borrow a relationship with God from someone else, you cannot gain salvation on the day of judgement from someone else, it can only come from a relationship with Jesus. Your mom, dad, sister, brother, boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, or pastor cannot save you on the day of judgment. Your claim to good deeds and moral living cannot save you on the day of judgement.

The unwise virgins had more than enough time to prepare, they had all of the same time and knowledge as the wise virgins, they just chose to place other things in life as being more important. They have no excuse for their failure to be ready, and it will fall on them alone when they stand before Jesus in Judgement. No one will have an excuse. People will not be able to say, I thought I had more time, or I thought I was close enough, or I thought I was good enough.

No one will be able to say how their sin was less serious than someone else's sin. Salvation cannot be earned; it is a gift freely given to people who repent and come to Christ.

Salvation cannot be bought, borrowed, or faked. It can only be granted through the blood of Christ that was shed upon the cross for the debt of our sins. Paul in his writing wished that he could suffer, that he could even suffer eternal damnation in Romans 9:3. He wanted to purchase the eternal salvation of his Jewish brothers and sisters who could not see the truth of who Jesus was.

Romans 9:3-4

³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

Paul wanted to save others through his own sacrifice, but it was not possible. No one can save someone else on our own. We can pray for them, teach them the truth of the Scripture, live lives to show them who God is to us and in our lives, but we cannot make anyone choose God. That is a choice that they will make on their own.

When the time comes, we need to be prepared. We need to be ready for the return of Christ any day and hour. Because once he comes the door will be shut and the opportunity is gone.

I once read a story about Satan meeting with three demons. They were trying to figure out how to get as many people to turn away from God as possible, so that they could claim the souls of those people for themselves.

The first demon spoke up and said, 'I know what will work, I will convince the people of the world that God does not exist!'

Satan thought a moment and then replied, 'That may work on some, but those who open their eyes and look at the wonders of life and the wonder of the world will recognize that the world has a creator, and that creator must be God!'

The second demon took a minute and then said, 'I got it, I will convince people that hell is not real, that God loves and saves everyone!'

Satan thought a moment and smiled a little before he replied, 'That's great and it will work on many people, but there will be some people who realize that there has to some sort of penalty for immoral behavior!'

The third demon thought a moment and snapped his fingers before speaking, 'I have the way, I will convince people that they have more time!'

Satan grinned and laughed before he replied, 'You will reap many people for hell!'

The virgins thought they had more time to prepare, it was not a priority in their lives. People always think that they have more time to give themselves fully to Christ. People say they want to do it when they are older, when they get married, or have kids, or get that job they want, or promotion they are seeking. However, the truth is that your life can be taken from you at any moment and at that time you will either be one of the wise virgins taking part in the feast or one of the unwise locked out in the dark.

Once the door is closed, you are locked out and cannot come in, there is no excuse, work or price that can get that door to open.

Matthew 25:12-13

¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

They might have been friends of the bride, members of the church, but upon the day of judgement they are not prepared they will be locked out of the great wedding feast. They might have been religious, read their Bibles, participated in fellowship, served in the church, and done other things in this world that gave them the appearance of being faithful Christians, but if they lack the Holy Spirit, if they are not reborn, the door will be closed on them.

Jesus says to them you may know me, but I do not know you. You might have pretended to know me while on earth, but you never really got to know me, to live in a relationship with me.

This is a dire warning to the world and to those who make claim to the Christian Faith. We do not know the day or the time that Jesus will return. We just know with absolute confidence that it is coming, either through our own death, or through the events that are described in the book of Revelation. In Matthew chapters 24 & 25 Jesus speaks of this, five separate times, he is speaking very plainly about the importance of true faith because he wants all who can be saved to be saved.

Because once the door is shut, the truth of our relationship with God will be fully known to each of us. We will either be inside the great wedding fest with the Lord, or out in the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Today is the day to prepare, to be ready for the return of the Lord. Make sure that you have oil in your lamp because we do not know when we will be called to light the way for the groom and his bride.

Let us pray,

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. **Amen.**

Hymn: “Holy Ground”

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 #382: “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart” (V 1,4,5)

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
 Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
 Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art;
 And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
 Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear.
 To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh,
 Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
 One holy passion filling all my frame;
 The presence of Thy descended Dove,
 My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.

Pastoral Prayer

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

Benediction

The love of God the Father, the faithful creator,
 the peace of Christ, the wounded healer,
 the joy of the challenging Spirit,
 the hope of the Three in One
 surround and encourage you
 today, tonight, and forever.