

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, November 26th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Sheep Things
Reign of Christ the King
Matthew 25:31-46

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
**Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!**
**For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.**

In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
**O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!**
**For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty and everlasting God,
you have willed to restore all things
in your well-beloved Son, our Lord and King.
Grant that the people of earth,
now divided and enslaved by sin,
may be freed and brought together
under the gentle and loving rule of Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #411: "Stand Up and Bless the Lord" (V 1,4,5)

Stand up and bless the Lord;
 God's people now rejoice;
 stand up and bless the Lord your God
 with heart and soul and voice.

God is our strength and song;
 now is salvation ours.
 God's love in Christ we now proclaim
 with all our ransomed powers.

Stand up and bless the Lord;
 the Lord your God adore;
 stand up and bless God's glorious name
 henceforth forevermore.

Call to Confession

God's Word assures us:
 If we say that we have no sin,
 we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
 If we confess our sins,
 he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins
 and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 In humility and faith let us confess our sin to God.

Prayer of Confession

**We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess our lack of trust.
 While we sing of your lordship over all creation,
 we have too often acted as though you are powerless
 in the face of today's events.
 Help us to live with confidence in your presence today
 and in hope for life with you forever. Amen**

Assurance of Pardon

Do not weep!
 See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.
 With his blood he has purchased people for God
 from every tribe and language and people and nation.
 He has made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
 and they will reign on the earth.

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: “Great is the Lord”

Responsive Reading

Ezekiel 34:20-24

²⁰ “Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.

²¹ **Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, ²² I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep.**

²³ And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

²⁴ **And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.**

Children’s Hymn: “Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam” (V 1,2,3)

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,
 To shine for him each day,
 In every way try to please him,
 At home, at school, at play.

Refrain:

A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
 Jesus wants me for a sunbeam;
 A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
 I’ll be a sunbeam for him.

Jesus wants me to be loving
 And kind to all I see,
 Showing how pleasant and happy
 His little one may be.

I will ask Jesus to help me
 To keep my heart from sin;
 Ever reflecting his goodness,
 And always shine for him.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Sermon

This morning we are continuing to study the words of Jesus that began with the parable of the ten virgins, three times, in three different parables, Jesus is giving the same message, one that speaks of the importance of true faith and that it is that faith alone that grants his mercy and eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

The teachings that Jesus is laying out here for those listening and for us today are hard for many to accept. They are just as counter cultural today as they were in the days that he walked the earth.

If we were to go out on the street today and ask people how they get into heaven, we would get a mixed bag of answers, not just from the worshippers and practitioners of false religions and the non-believers but from many who profess Christianity as their faith. According to a

Barna survey among Christians 63% believe it does not matter what religion you follow as they all teach close to the same thing. 55% believe that it is more important that you are a good person, if you are kindhearted and your good deeds outweigh your bad, that you will be in heaven.

1 in 3 self-proclaiming Christians believe that just saying a sinner's prayer or answering an alter call will get them into heaven, no change in lifestyle needed. We are living in a time when the 'anything goes or its all acceptable as no one is hurt' mindset has infiltrated not just the lifestyle of the secular world but also the faith, values, and morals of those who call themselves Christians. It is clear that by abandoning the moral standards and traditions of Christianity and replacing them with more inclusive and open teachings in the church that we are losing the foundational teachings of the Scripture and the faith.

The Bible clearly teaches things that do not match up with the answers that are being given in this survey.

In Romans chapter three verse ten we are told, '**None is righteous, no, not one**' in verse twenty-three that, '**all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**'

In Psalm 130:3

Psalm 130:3

**If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?**

No one gets into heaven based on their good behavior or good works. The problem is that when we consider our morals and behavior, we do so by doing it in comparison to the worst examples of people we can imagine, and by that standard we are good. However, we are not measured against the worst examples of morals and values on earth, instead we are measured against the perfect example of Jesus Christ, a standard that no one can attain.

No one can stand before the white throne on the day of judgment and be received into heaven on the merit of their own behavior and deeds of their life, we are all destined for hell, unless some provision, some payment is made for the blood debt we owe for our sinful life.

That is very bad news for a lot of people in this world. There are no exceptions to the rule, no different rulesets or standards for people who attend church regularly. We all will have our lives measured against the perfect life of Jesus Christ, and as the Scripture says, '**we will all fall short of the glory of God.**'

However, there is also some good news, even though you can never measure up, you can still be accepted into the kingdom of heaven. Not through anything we can do, but because of what Jesus Christ did on our behalf. Through Faith alone, his merit and his holiness are imputed upon us, simply put, his blood that was shed upon the cross of Calvary pays the debt of blood

we owe for the sins in our own lives. His perfect life and perfect obedience to God are transferred to us and all of our sin and the debt owed is transferred to Jesus. This is why Jesus had to die upon the cross, not for anything he did, but for each and every one of us.

Martin Luther called this a ‘wonderful exchange’.

“That is the mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners: wherein by a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ’s and the righteousness of Christ not Christ’s but ours.”

John Calvin taught in his institutes:

“Hence it follows . . . that eternal life, of which he himself is the heir, is ours, and that the kingdom of heaven, into which he has entered, can no more be taken from us than from him; on the other hand, that we cannot be condemned for our sins, from the guilt of which he absolves us, seeing he has been pleased that these should be imputed to himself as if they were his own. This is the wondrous exchange made by his boundless goodness.”

Even the apostle Paul was not shy to state this clearly in the scriptures:

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Our only claim to the righteousness of Christ is not through our own works, we do nothing to merit His holiness. There is nothing we can do to earn our way into heaven.

The promise that Paul wrote to the churches of Rome sums it up nicely,

Romans 3:21-25

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

This is the essence of the Gospel. Place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, repent and turn away from your sinful life, so that your sins will be forgiven, and you will be assured eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

During the reformation this was summed up with three of the 5 Solas; Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Christus.

Sola Gratia, Grace Alone: We are saved by grace alone, it is a gift from God, and we can get it through no work or merit of our own.

Sola Fide, Faith Alone: We are saved solely through faith, not a result of anything we have or have not done in our lives.

Sola Christus, Christ Alone; We are saved solely by the works of Jesus Christ, because of his holy life, his death upon the cross and the payment of his blood for our debt, and his victorious resurrection into eternal glory.

These are the foundational doctrines of salvation. And we should all be aware of them as we consider the Scripture which we are examining this morning, because while these are the foundations, Jesus had much more to teach in the Scripture that we need to be aware of if we are to be a true disciple of his in this world.

In today's Scripture Jesus clearly divides those gathered into two groups.

Matthew 25:33-34

³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Matthew 25:41

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels

The sheep on his right, a people blessed for eternity to live in the kingdom of God and to enjoy eternal joy in his presence, and the goats on his left, a people destined to spend eternity away from God and all of the joys and blessings that come from him.

And what is it that determines which group a person is placed within?

Matthew 25:35-36

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Matthew 25:42-43

⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

What clearly defines which group a person ends up in is something that they have done or not done. This would seem to go counter to the teachings of the entire reformation. However, as we have seen there are ample Scriptures that say that we are saved by faith alone, so how can we be divided on the things that we have or have not done?

Like in each of the parable that we have spoken about these past few weeks Jesus is speaking about true faith, and how true faith will be evidenced by the way we live our lives, in the parable of the ten virgins it was by having oil in our lamps, being people who were always anticipating and preparing for the coming of the Lord. In the parable of the talents, it was by investing the gifts of God into his kingdom. And here in the Scripture Jesus is speaking yet again of the evidence of faith in our lives.

The sheep do not get into heaven because of what they did. They did not earn their place in heaven, by feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers into their lives, donating clothing, helping the sick or visiting the lonely. They got into heaven because they are sheep, people who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus, and because of their faith, the debt of their sins has been forgiven and through the Holy Spirit they have been reborn. It is because they are reborn that the way they live their life begins to change and they feed the hungry, refresh the thirsty, clothe the needy, care for the stranger, remember the ill or the prisoner. The sheep do these things because it is a reflection of who they are, it is a reflection of Christ in their lives.

By contrast the goats ignore the needs of the hungry, thirsty and in need; they close their eyes to the needs of those who are without a home or ill or in prison. Ignoring the needs of our fellow man is also a reflection of the inner being, the goat. Someone who does not reflect Christ in their life, but only their own selfishness.

It is true that you do not get into heaven based upon what you do or do not do, but those things reveal the truth about who you are. The things you choose to do or choose not to do reflect the truth of your faith or lack of faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

James, the brother of Jesus, put it this way:

James 2:17-18

¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

If you have a genuine faith, a living faith, it will produce work in your life, you will begin to care for others as if they were your neighbor. This is how our faith is demonstrated; it is how our faith is revealed to the world. Sheep will do sheepy things and goats will do goaty things. Jesus is making the same point that James clarifies in his writings, faith produces deeds. If there are no deeds in a person's life, it does not mean that they have a lazy faith, or an underachieving

faith, or an intellectual faith, it means they have a dead faith, which means that it is not a saving faith.

The things we do in this world are evidence of our faith. Yes, it is absolutely faith alone that saves us, but it is the evidence of that faith in our lives that Jesus is speaking about in today's Scriptures.

For some people this can be unsettling. The thought that the way we live, even just as evidence of our faith, may be new to some, and may offend those who are outspoken proponents of the truth that we are saved by faith alone. However, the relationship between faith and deeds cannot be denied if you read the Scriptures. What we do reveals the truth of who we are.

Jesus himself teaches this in other places in the Scripture.

Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

The fruit of our life is evidence of our faith. Yes, it is possible for people to fake it, to try to appear as if they are good fruit on the surface, to pretend to be faithful. However, that does not work with God.

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

God sees the truth of a person's heart, he knows not just the deeds and actions that we do, but the reason that we do them. When we stand before God on the day of judgement the evidence of faith in your life is not optional, they are not just suggestions or good ideas. These are genuine reflections of faith; these are how others in this world see evidence of Jesus's Christ in our lives.

If you are walking through life ignoring those in need, if you are focused only on yourself, then you have a good reason to be worried about your eternal fate. Ignoring our neighbor is not something that sheep do, it is something that goats do.

Why is the way we live so important? Because it represents the transformation that is occurring in us as we walk with Christ in this world. It is evidence of our re-birth, of our new life. It shows

that we are changing from a person who is self-focused and self-centered, only concerned about what we want, how we feel, seeking our own pleasure and putting our needs and desires front and center; to a person who is more like Jesus Christ, someone who out of love was willing to give up His own life for others who did nothing to warrant such a wonderful sacrifice.

The apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 3:3-8

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

When Jesus speaks of the sheep and goats, he is talking about the changes that occur in the lives of those who live in relationship with him, and through that relationship are experiencing changes in their life, becoming more like the one they follow and the ones who may only know him by name. When you live in relationship with God you understand that God does not ignore our needs, he does not abandon us to pursue his own goals. When Jesus walked on this planet he ate with the poor and the outcast, he healed the sick and cared for the lost. He brought the message of salvation to them all, and he called for them all to repent of their selfish sinful nature and become a disciple of his.

When you become a true follower of Christ that change in behavior is inevitable, it is not instantaneous, but it does take place. You begin to be spiritually transformed by the conviction of the Holy Spirit and are united with Christ for all of eternity, his blood covering the debt of your sin, while his righteousness covers you.

1 Corinthians 6:15 & 17

¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

When we become God's, we are linked to him for all of eternity, we are part of him and he is part of us, a bond that can never be broken. So, when we reach out and serve others, we are serving Christ. When we feed someone, give them a drink, clothe them, or comfort them, we are serving Christ.

Have you ever wanted to repay God for all the blessings he has given you in this life? Have you ever wanted to give back to him in some way? There are opportunities to do that all around you every day! As you serve others in this world you are serving Christ.

I can tell you with absolute certainty that in Perth there are people in need on this very day. There are people in need of comfort, there are people in need of companionship, there are people who just need someone to talk with, or someone who will listen. There are people who have financial needs, people who are struggling to pay for rent, gas, food, clothing, and medical needs. There are people who are ill or incapacitated, people in nursing homes, and in the hospital. And each of us has the opportunity to serve Christ by serving them, each of us has the choice of living like one of God's sheep or like a goat.

The goats will walk through this life focused on their own selfish needs, however the sheep will seek out ways to express their sheep-ness. No one is out there wearing a sign that says, 'I am lonely' or 'I am new to town and need a friend'. No one has a sign that says, 'I am wrestling with being a single parent' or 'my bills are piling up', instead they are probably all walking around with smiles on their faces, covering up the internal struggles that they are experiencing. The only way you are going to discover the needs of others is by getting to know them, by talking to them. Inviting them to coffee or lunch, to a Bible study or fellowship event, or even to a service.

Yes, it is much easier to walk around in this world focused on ourselves, to not get involved in the lives of others. People can be a pain and we already have enough problems of our own to deal with. That is what a goat believes, they are the ones that believe no one has ever helped them, so they do not need to help anyone else.

The sheep know that God has given them everything, even if it is just that single talent, life, and they want to invest it back into the kingdom of heaven. So, they look around at the people of this world and serve God by reaching out to others around them. But getting to know others and sharing in their times of joy and suffering, by taking the blessings they have and sharing them with others.

The sheep are less concerned about their privacy, their peace of mind, their comfort, and their resources, they know that all of these things come from God. So instead, they seek to be more like Christ, giving of their time, their concern, their money, their abilities, their intellect and even their emotions to others. The sheep seek to give up their selfishness and serve God with the selflessness of Jesus Christ as they serve their neighbor in this world.

Be sheep.

Let us pray,

Praise to you, O Lord,
for you have nourished us from youth
and you give food to all living things.
Fill our hearts with joy and gladness
and provide for all our needs,
that we may abound in every good work;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To him, with you and the Holy Spirit
 be glory, honor, might, majesty and dominion,
 forever and ever.
 Amen.

Source: Apostolic Constitutions

Hymn #650: "He Leadeth Me" (V 1,2,3)

He leadeth me: oh blessed thought!
 oh words with heavenly comfort fraught!
 Whate'er I do, where'er I be
 still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Refrain:

He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
 By his own hand he leadeth me!
 A faithful follower I would be,
 for 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,
 Sometimes where Eden's flowers bloom,
 by waters still, o'er troubled sea,
 still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me! (Refrain)

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
 nor ever murmur nor repine,
 content, what ever lot I see,
 since 'tis my God that leadeth me! (Refrain)

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 #651: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer"**

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
 pilgrim through this barren land;
 I am weak, but thou art mighty;
 hold me with thy powerful hand:
 bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
 feed me now and evermore,
 feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
 whence the healing stream doth flow;
 let the fire and cloudy pillar
 lead me all my journey through:
 strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
 be thou still my strength and shield;
 be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
 bid my anxious fears subside;
 death of death, and hell's destruction,
 land me safe on Canaan's side:
 songs of praises, songs of praises,
 I will ever give to thee,
 I will ever give to thee.

Pastoral Prayer

Loving and faithful God,
 we bless you for calling us to be a holy people,
 living for you in service to each other for the sake of your world.
 We pray that our congregation will experience
 a rich and free sharing of the gifts you have generously given us.
 Knowing that we are called to be saints,
 we humbly ask that you will work powerfully through us
 to accomplish your purposes in the world.
 We pray for the courage, the patience, and the generosity of spirit
 that comes from imitating the love you have shown us in Christ.
 We long for your Spirit's power to make us more Christlike
 in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Help us to think of others and their needs even now as we pray for
creation, in its groaning . . .
the world, in its suffering . . .
our nation and city, in their need of healing . . .
We pray in the name of Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Benediction

Grace to you and peace
from him who is and who was and who is to come,
and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,
and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,
the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,
and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father,
to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. **Amen.**