

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, December 10th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Faith
Second Sunday of Advent
Hebrews 11:1-3**

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

A voice in the wilderness cries out:

Prepare the way of the Lord!

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill be made low.

The crooked shall be made straight, and rough places, smooth.

A voice in the wilderness cries out:

All people shall see the salvation of God!

Lift up your hearts in expectation!

We will lift up our praise to the One who is coming into the world once more.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of peace and promise,
you are the giver of life, living in us through the power of your Holy Spirit.
You are the voice that calls us from our wandering,
setting us on a new path.
You are the living water that purifies us,
baptizing us for service in the world that so badly needs your love.
Refresh us in this time of worship,
and reignite our desire to serve you each and every day.
Glory, honor, and praise be yours now and always,
Holy One, Holy Three,
One God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. **Amen**

Advent Candle Lighting

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world;
the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."

We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.

[Candle Lighter]

I will lead the blind
by a road they do not know,
by the paths they have not known
I will guide them.
I will turn the darkness before them into light,
the rough places into level ground.
These are the things I will do
and I will not forsake them.
—Isaiah 42:16, NRSV

Come, Lord Jesus, our light, and our salvation.

Let us walk in the light of the Lord

Opening Hymn #136: “The First Nowell” (V 1,2,3)

The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell!
Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far,
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

(Refrain)

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to search for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.

(Refrain)

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

O promised Christ:
 We are a world at war.
 Our peace depends on your coming.
 We are a sinful people.
 Our pardon depends on your coming.
 We are full of good intentions but weak at keeping promises;
 our only hope of doing God's will
 is that you should come and help us do it.
 Lord Christ, Word made flesh,
 our world waits
 for your peace,
 for your pardon,
 and for your grace.
 Even so: come, Lord Jesus. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

Almighty God, by whose providence
 our Savior, Jesus Christ, came among us in great humility,
 will sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin

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: "He Will Come" Choir**Responsive Reading****Psalm 85:8-13**

⁸ Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
 for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
 but let them not turn back to folly.

⁹ Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
 that glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰ Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
 righteousness and peace kiss each other.

**¹¹ Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.**

¹² Yes, the LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.

**¹³ Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way.**

Children’s Hymn #143: “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly,
for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
nowells ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Christ the babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new,
saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you.
Christ the babe was born for you.

Children’s Lesson

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Hebrews 11:1-3

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Sermon

What is faith?

Most of the world defines faith as believing that something you cannot touch, see or feel is real. By this definition we can find faith in a wide variety of things.

Almost every Christian knows that the secular worlds definition of faith is not the Biblical definition of faith.

There are a lot of false Christians that teach that faith is believing that you can be healed of any illness, or that you can believe things into existence. They believe that faith is a power that you wield in this world for your own benefit. They also believe and teach that if you lack any of the things you want it is because you do not have enough faith.

This definition is also false, Jesus told his followers multiple times in the Scriptures that his people would suffer, would be persecuted, and would face trials and tribulations. So, the false Christians definition of faith as a power you wield, is simple a false idol they have created to justify their own selfishness.

The biblical definition of faith starts with Hebrews 1:1

Hebrews 11:1

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

This verse, however, is a wonderful explanation of what faith is and not what it means.

Throughout the Old Testament, God is often referred to as 'the God of truth'. In Hebrew the 'God of Aman'. And that Aman is where we get the word Amen from. Amen itself is a difficult word for us to translate into English, that is why it has become a common usage English word. If we were to translate amen everywhere it appears in the Bible it would encompass many English words, it means to believe, to stand fast, to endure, to be true, to know something is guaranteed to happen. Figuratively it means that we firmly trust and believe without out a doubt in an absolute certainty, it means to be faithful in Gods power and Gods plan. God is the one who always remains the same, even when we wander, we know that we can always rely on God and his faithfulness and truth.

Throughout the New Testament there are many examples of Jesus being given the same titles. In the book of Revelation, Jesus is called, 'the amen, the faithful and true witness.' In 2 Corinthians he is referred to as the 'yes' and the 'amen', Jesus is the one who is eternally true and reliable. The Greek translation of Amen is true and faithful. It became a formal word that was used to confirm or affirm a statement, an oath, a promise, or a covenant contract. Jesus is the God of Amen, the God of faithfulness.

The word 'faith' that we find so often in the New Testament comes from the Greek word 'pistis'. The meaning of this word goes a lot deeper that the worlds definition of

believing in something, and the false Christians definition of a power we can utilize. It is usually defined as living a divinely implanted, acquired, and created principle of inward and complete confidence, assurance and firm persuasion, trust, and absolute reliance and dependance upon God and all that we hear from him in his written word, the Bible. This word 'pistis', faith, means living by and obeying the Bible, the reformation called this the Sola Scripture!

The root of the word 'pistis; is the word 'peitho' which is a verb – an action word. Which means our faith is always moving, never sitting still, it is always moving forward or backward in our lives. Faith, in and of itself is alive, faith puts us to use in God's kingdom, this is why James taught that faith without works is dead.

The present tense of 'pistis' is 'believe' which is why we see that word believe appear so often in the teachings of Jesus Christ throughout the Gospels. Believing means having a process of faith, it means placing our trust in the Lord, and it needs to be continually exercised in our lives.

Hebrews 11:6 teaches us.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

If you do not believe and trust in God, it is impossible to please God. Those people who hold to the worldly definition of faith or the false Christians idea of faith are going to be in for a real surprise on the day of judgement, when they discover that part of faith means living according to the Word of God.

Christians who live their lives according to biblical faith tend to be people who are more trustworthy, reliable, and committed to fulfilling their tasks and responsibilities, because their lives are driven by their faith and by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They have a desire to live a life that brings honor and glory to God regardless of their worldly positions.

Christian Faith is accompanied by Christian Love. Jesus Christ is the author and perfecter of the Faith that we have. Jesus taught us that we are to live our lives trusting in him and obeying him, and part of that means loving God first with all of our hearts, mind, body, and soul and loving our neighbors as ourselves. It means we place our faith and trust in God alone. Sola Fide, in the reformation.

Learning to place our trust in God is not instantaneous, it is a process that come as a result of the process of our relationship with God.

Romans 10:17 teaches.

Romans 10:17**¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**

Our faith in Christ, our trust in Christ comes as a result of our relationship with Christ, through our hearing and studying of his Word faithfully in this life.

Faith and trust are core components of Christianity, you cannot be a Christian without these two things. God gave Every Christian all of the faith that they need. It is God who gives all who believe the ability to place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Sola Gratia in the reformation.

Christians need to learn to live their lives with Faith and trust each day, and that means by studying God's Word as often as we can, so that the armour of God becomes a natural part of our life.

1 Thessalonians tells us that.

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11**⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**

We need to place our faith and trust in Jesus, and he will place his righteousness in us. It is through him that we receive our salvation, through him we are justified in the eyes of God and through him that we begin the long process of sanctification, of removing sin from our lives. Through Christ alone, Solus Christus we are saved from our human nature and become the Children of God.

Romans 3:21-22**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.**

Faith is not something we do; it is something that we receive. It is that Gracious gift from God. Sola Gratia. And it is that Gift that saves us.

Ephesians 2:8-10**⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

To trust and believe in Jesus Christ is the only response possible to the gracious gift that God has given us continuously and actively. The proof that our faith exists is seen in the daily producing of good works that come along with our salvation, the bearing of good fruit from the good tree, or the sheep doing sheepy things.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit exists as a single being and their infinite love for one another defies our human comprehension and understanding. They love and trust in one another completely and will do whatever is asked of them by the others. As the Holy Spirit does its work in us, we begin to do the same for our fellow man. We begin to love them completely and care for them as we care for ourselves.

This is what God seeks from his followers, people who love him completely. People who desire to worship him because of their own desire, not because of something he can offer them or because he made them. The foundation of love is trust, and in order to trust their needs to be freedom of choice, God gave us the freedom to choose in this life and an unlimited capacity to love and trust so that we could come into relationship with him as his children.

Jesus is the object of this faith and trust in our lives. Christians place our faith, our trust, and an undivided heart in Jesus. Christians are redeemed and justified according to the faith of Jesus Christ, in Greek, 'pistis Jesou Christou' on their behalf and not by the faith of their own. This is why the Bible tells us that anything we ask for in trusting faith and according to God's plan will be granted to us.

In English when we read of 'the love of God', we need to understand that the words 'in' and 'of' do not appear in the Greek texts, they were put there by translators to help us read the text easily. The grammatical term for these words is 'possessive genitive', and they can be either subjective or objective. In the phrase, 'the love of God' this means we could be speaking about a person's love for God, objective, and the love that God has for that person, subjective, describing the love that belongs to God, God's love.

Galatians 2:15-16

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

True faith is an active trust in the saving acts of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus's faithfulness to God, his willingness to go along with God's plan, his sinless life, and his ultimate sacrifice upon the cross for our sin that saves us. Jesus is the subject, it is Jesus's love that saves

us, not our love of Jesus. The faith of a believer is dependent on their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

I hope you are beginning to understand that having faith is more than just believing in Jesus. It means that we have a state of mind that is secured in the truth that God's plan and God's will is always at work in our lives. The subject of our faith is our choice, and the choices we make become the objects of our faith. When you choose to place other things above God you are making them the objects of your faith, your own false idols.

Faith exists in the lives of every human being in this world, whether they believe it or not there is no such thing as an atheist or agnostic, they just place their faith in something other than a God.

Our God, however, requires us to place our faith and trust in him alone.

Every born-again Christian has Faith because they have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Trusting faith goes beyond just believing in God daily. It is based upon our freedom to choose because faith requires trust and love.

Habakkuk 2:4

⁴ "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith."

Worldly people will live their lives placing their faith and trust in themselves and in the things of this world. Christians live in a state of 'amen' placing their complete faith and trust in the promises of God, they live lives filled with Hope in times of hopelessness because they know that they can trust in God's providence.

Trusting faith is knowing that God's plan is always being lived out, even when we are in situations that are uncomfortable, challenging or trying. The born-again Christian knows that they will be put into situations throughout their entire lives where they will be required to place their trust in God, and that eventually it will become like muscle memory and they will do so without worry or concern. The truth is that the more you place your trust in Christ the easier and easier it gets.

Born again Christians also live in genuine love, not a worldly love that is based upon our benefits in this world, but a Godly love because they live in God. Their love is made complete because it is perfect love that has cast out all fears and all worries. That love comes because we have faith in Jesus Christ as healer and redeemer. We know that regardless of what happens God loves us and therefore we know we can share our love and our time, talents, and treasures with others.

God alone is the maker of miracles; God alone is the worker of transformation. God speaks to his creation through his Word, and we just need to listen and receive his teachings, we are blessed when we begin to have faith and trust in what he says. We can live lives filled with Hope because we understand that God alone is the creator, and we are the creation.

God alone was the one who spoke the world into existence and created order in chaos. The breath of God animates life when he speaks things move in obedience to his Word. God alone has the ability to restore, reconcile, heal and he does so not because of what a person does, but because of what he wills.

Faithful Christians know that they are citizens of Heaven, meaning we are ambassadors of Christ here on earth. We are not little Gods we are his servants, here on earth doing his bidding, serving our master in the vineyard, investing our talent back into the kingdom of heaven while we toil away in this life.

We do not need to make up things about Christ to make people believe in him, we do not need to change the Word of God to help others come to belief in God. Jesus gave us one simple commandment. Go out and share the Word of God truthfully with the world, baptize them in the name of the father, the son and the holy spirit and teach them to be disciples, to obey my commands. Jesus is the cornerstone and we are the laborers in his kingdom. He is the foundation that we place all of our faith and trust in.

We are God's servants doing his will in this world, within the framework that he has designed for us in our lives. We need to trust that everything that happens does so according to his timeline, his plan, and his will. We need to place our faith fully in Him.

That is what life ultimately comes to! A person can place their faith and trust in themselves – the created- and their own way of living in sin or they can place their faith and trust in Jesus – the creator, who shed his blood for the redemption and salvation of his faithful. In the end it can only be one or the other, it cannot be both. Light and dark cannot co-exist in the same place.

Faithful Followers of God have known this since the beginning. They have always placed their complete faith and trust in God and not the world's wisdom.

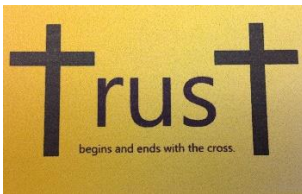
Chapter 11 of Hebrews tells us that; By faith Abraham went out to a place that God called him, without knowing where he was going. By faith Sarah conceived even when she was well past the age of childbearing. By Faith Abraham was tested, offering up Isaac as a sacrifice to God. By Faith Isaac offered up future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob while dying blessed the sons of Joseph. By faith Joseph spoke of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions for his bones. By Faith Moses was hidden by his parents against the edict of the king and by faith Moses refused to be called the son of the pharaoh. By faith Moses left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of

the Pharaoh, and by faith the Israelites kept the Passover, so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea, but the Egyptians when they tried the same things were drowned. By Faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish when the wall of Jericho fell and instead was saved. By faith Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and all the prophets; conquered kingdoms, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Some were tortured, mocked, and flogged, some were imprisoned in chains. Some were stoned to death, other sawn in two, killed with the sword. By faith they went in skins of sheep to the destitute, the afflicted, the mistreated, to those who were considered unworthy.

They all walked in the faith, placing their trust and obedience in God alone. Knowing that they could trust in the promises of God gave them all they needed to be faithful in a time and culture that ridiculed them, persecuted them and at times hated them and killed them.

As faithful Christians today, in a world where the culture ridicules us, persecutes us, seeks to silence us and in some places hates and kills us, we need to never forget one simple truth. The word trust begins and ends at the cross.



Every day of life we are blessed with, every single breath we are given, it should be done so in absolute faith and trust in the one in whom we live and have our being, Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is the one who deserves our undying Faith, not anyone or anything else, because He alone is God.

Let us pray,

Enlighten Our Hearts by Your Word

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 you revealed your Son
 to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus.
 Enlighten our hearts
 also by your Word and by your Holy Spirit,
 that we may become established in the faith,
 hold fast to your Word,

delight to speak it,
 and diligently meditate on it.
 As we follow the example of Christ,
 we must suffer much evil on earth,
 but still give us a sure comfort in your Word,
 until after this life,
 we shall be raised to eternal life;
 through your Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Easter Monday

Hymn #147: “Angels We Have Heard on High” (V 1,2,3)

Angels we have heard on high,
 sweetly singing o'er the plains,
 and the mountains in reply
 echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
 Why your joyous strains prolong?
 What the gladsome tidings be
 which inspire your heavenly song?

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see
 Christ whose birth the angels sing;
 come, adore on bended knee,
 Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

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 #139: "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"**

Hark! the herald angels sing
glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations, rise;
join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'

Refrain:

Hark! the herald angels sing
glory to the newborn King.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail the incarnate deity!
Pleased on earth with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hail the heavenborn Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild, he lays his glory by,

born that we no more may die,
born to raise the lost of earth,
born to give us second birth.

Pastoral Prayer

O King of nations,
your reign spreads through all the lands,
you defend the cause of the poor
and plead for the wretched of the earth.
Fashion us into an obedient people,
that we may spread the good news
of your reign of perfect peace and justice,
until all creation will finally rejoice in your perfect will,
until all bend the knee to the King of kings and Lord of lords,
in whose name we pray, even Jesus Christ, your Son, and our Savior. **Amen.**

Benediction

God the Father, who loved the world
so much that he sent his only Son,
give you grace to prepare for eternal life.
God the Son, who comes to us as Redeemer and Judge,
reveal to you the path from darkness to light.
God the Holy Spirit, by whose working
the virgin Mary conceived the Christ,
help you bear the fruits of holiness. **Amen.**