

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Monday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Spirit Filled  
New Year's Day  
Ephesians 5:15-21**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

May the light of God's love push back the darkness.

**We come to the light from the four corners of the earth,  
from the north, from the south,  
from the east, and from the west.**

But we are all one in Jesus Christ.

**We come from many nations and many cultures.**

But we are all one in Jesus Christ.

**We come seeking the light that guides us to life.**

But we are all one in Jesus Christ.

**Let us lift up our many voices and praise the God of all people.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Almighty Lord God,  
you gave your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the light of the world:  
We praise and magnify your holy name that in him  
you have revealed the wonder of your saving love to all people.  
With those of old who brought their tribute to his feet,  
confessing him as King of heaven and earth,  
we now present the worship of our grateful hearts,  
asking you to give us grace to give ourselves to you,  
through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn**

**Prayer for illumination**

Lord, our God,  
 in the reading and proclamation of your Word,  
 we pray you will illumine our minds and hearts  
 so that we may hear and understand your Word,  
 know and live according to your Word,  
 and become living letters of your Word,  
 equipped to follow Jesus  
 in every part of our lives,  
 by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
 through Christ, our Lord, the living Word. **Amen.**

**Scripture****Ephesians 5:15-21**

**<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

**Sermon**

A few years ago, there was a survey taken that asked people to describe the perfect world in a sentence.

One person said that, in a perfect world you would feel as good at 60 as you did at 17 and you would be as smart at 60 as you thought you were at 17.

Another said that in a perfect world professional athletes would be complaining about the teachers who were signing multi-million dollars contracts.

Yet another said, in a perfect world potato chips would have calories, but if you ate them with dip, those calories would be neutralized.

Finally, one person answered, in a perfect world, mail would always be early, and the check in the mail would always be for more than you expected.

The world is not perfect, not for anyone. The chances of any of the ways in which someone chooses to describe a perfect world of becoming a reality are zero, however our task as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ is to make it a little better today than it was yesterday.

The Scripture in Ephesians we are looking at today offers the faithful some advice on how to make this world a little bit better. It teaches us that we should be careful of the things in this world that draw us away from God, be thoughtful or wise in this world, and to be thankful for the blessings that God has given us in this life.

In the very first line of the Scripture, we are examining today, we are told.

**Ephesians 5:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

Be careful our time here on earth because our time is actually God's time. This is something many people forget, a faithful follower of God is not just a Christian on Sundays, they are a Christian every day, in all that they do and all that they say.

We are the messengers of the Gospel here on earth and we are all supposed to be living out the Great Commission in our lives. This means that even when we are not at church, we should still be busy doing God's will in this world.

In fact, this is something that we pray for every week in this church. In the Lord's prayer we say, 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'.

We ask God to make his presence and power known on earth. Well, we are the ones who are accountable to carry out that while we live here on earth. This is why James said that true faith is evidenced by works.

When we are true followers, we begin to carry out God's will in our lives because of our love for God. God's presence in our life, through the work of the Holy Spirit begins to change us, and the way we think and act. Things that we use to place in high importance are suddenly less important and the things of God, prayer, praise, worship, and bible study, suddenly become more important in our lives.

We begin to see how many ways the world tries to distract us from spending time with God and how many ways that the evils of this world will try to lead people away from salvation and we begin to recognize that it takes effort to resist these temptations, we begin to make the best use of our time by doing God's will and not following the evil ways of this world. We recognize that we need to be careful in the way that we live.

Next, we are taught to be thoughtful or wise. This is always good advice, whether you are Christian or Non-Christian.

**Ephesians 5:18-21**

**<sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

Be thoughtful, take time to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it. Spend time with God, spend time in his Word, spend time praising and worshipping him, spend time with God and not with the evils of this world.

This goes against the teachings of the world.

The world says focus on yourself, focus on the things you want in this life.

The world teaches people that 'I' is more important than 'you' or 'we' or even 'us.'

The world teaches people that they should live up to the expectations of the world, that you should be more concerned with the opinions of others, than the Word of God. The world says that we should focus on being appreciated by the people of the world.

The world says that we should be jealous and envious of people who have fame and popularity.

The world says that we should be offended by anyone who thinks differently than us, that we should never forget criticism or slight against. Do not forgive, get revenge.

The world teaches people to demand that everyone agrees with them, or call for those who disagree to be cancelled, or muzzled in some way.

The world teaches people to demand recognition, do as little as possible for others and lift yourself up on a pedestal. 'You be You' is one of the world's favorite sayings.

This is not new, sure it might seem like it is, but this attitude of self-focus and self-pleasure in life has existed since the fall of man.

The Greeks had a tradition of holding drinking parties, symposiums, where the whole idea was to sing praises to the pagan gods while getting very drunk and doing and saying whatever you pleased.

The Romans held orgies and gluttony parties, they created gladiatorial games so they could take part in violence and murder. They were a culture that was self-serving and sought out the pleasure of the flesh in every way imaginable.

This is why Christians are told to not go out and get drunk on wine and sing songs. Be wise, do not get caught up in the ways of this world, instead use your time wisely, spend your time sober minded and devoted to serving God's kingdom.

**1 Corinthians 10:31**

**<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

We are called to be spirit-centered not self-centered. Called to be children of God and not children of this world, and that means that we cannot be selfish, we need to be selfless.

**Galatians 6:1-3**

**6 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**

Christians are told to care for one another, to help those who are caught up in the ways of the world, not by punishing them or casting them out, but instead by showing them love and care, even when they do nothing to deserve that love or care.

Christians are called to be thoughtful, to consider a person's life and then help that person to understand how God through the work of the Holy Spirit can change that person's life.

We are told to bear one another's burdens, to share in the work of this world with our brothers and sisters in Christ. To live in a constant reminder that it is the power of the Holy Spirit and the blessings of God that allows us to do the things in this world that we do each and every day.

This is why in Ephesians we are told to be filled with the Holy Spirit instead of wine. Be filled with the Spirit and let it be at work in your own life and in the lives of those around you. Be wise and do not take part in the lies of the secular world. Instead, be a living example of the joy and happiness that can be found in Christ without the sins of this world.

And be thankful.

Be thankful for everything happening in your life, the good, the ok and even the bad, because you have the blessing of life.

Dale Robbins wrote, 'I used to think people complained because they had a lot of problems. But I have come to realize that they have problems because they complain.'

Complaining doesn't change anything or make situations better. It amplifies frustration, spreads discontent and discord, and can invoke an invitation for the devil to cause havoc with our lives.'

Scripture would seem to support this.

**Philippians 4:14-17**

**<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.**

The truth is that the greatest form of evangelism that Christians have in this world is when they are positive and thankful in their lives.

Complaining is contagious and makes everyone around miserable. Looking at social media on any given day and you will see that people will gather and complain about anything that they can, which is why that single thankful and positive person shines like a lighthouse in the darkness.

Live your life differently than the secular world. Be that shining Light, be the Salt that changes the way people see things in this world.

This is a New Year, and when you decide to live a better life with a New Year's resolution, make it one that changes not just your life but the lives of all of those around you in this broken world.

Devote yourself to God this year, be faithful in your praise, worship, and study.

Be careful of the temptations of this world which will seek to draw you away from God.

Be thoughtful and wise about your time and how you use your talents and treasures, seek not only for yourself but for God's kingdom. Look after those in need, not out of a sense of obligation, but out of a desire to share the love of God with others.

Be thankful. Be thankful for every morning and evening you have, every breath you take. Be thankful for all of the blessings you have in this world, family, friends, food, a job, a house, all things that many others will not have this day.

Be thankful for all of the trials and temptations that you go through, because each one helps you develop character and a stronger relationship with God.

Be thankful for your Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born a baby in a manger, was tortured, and crucified for our sins and though his blood bought the debt of our sin so that we could be brought back into relationship with God.

I hope and pray that we will all be careful, be thoughtful and wise, and be thankful as we move through 2024.

Let us pray,

### **Help Us This Day**

Help us this day,  
 O Lord,  
 to serve you devoutly  
 and the world busily.  
 May we do our work wisely,  
 give help secretly,  
 go to our meal with appetite  
 and dine moderately.  
 May we please our friends duly,  
 go to bed merrily  
 and sleep soundly.  
 in the joy  
 of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 Amen.

*Source: Sulpicius Severus (363-425) from several sources.*

### **Hymn**

### **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. [standrewspertthoffering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspertthoffering@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

Gracious God, we give our best,  
lest in gaining the world we lose life itself.  
As a covenant people, we seek to witness to your will and way.  
Help us to know more clearly what you would have us do  
with the wealth entrusted to our care.  
As we contribute to the needs of your people,  
we present ourselves as living sacrifices.  
Through Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

### Closing Hymn

### Pastoral Prayer

O Jesus, light of the world,  
come into the dark places of this earth.  
You bring a light from God that only you can shed.  
Light eternal, your light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness does not overcome it.  
We bring to you the darkness of our world  
in war, starvation, cruelty, and exploitation.  
We bring to you the darkness of our earth,  
damaged and defaced by pollution.  
We bring to you the darkness of our nation,  
beset with conflict of race and class, religion and politics.  
We bring to you the darkness of our relationships,  
people not looking, not speaking, not listening, not forgiving.  
We bring to you the darkness of our own souls,  
hidden closets we have not visited or cleaned out for years.  
O Jesus, light of the world, be a morning star above for us,  
a radiance within, the shining all around that lets us live in love.  
Only then shall we be reflectors of your brightness  
and give glory to God in heaven. **Amen.**

### Benediction

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ  
shine in our hearts, transform our lives,  
and brighten the world.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
rest upon you always. **Amen.**