

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, February 18th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Be Quick
First Sunday of Lent
1 Peter 3:18-22

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

We live in the shelter of the Most High,
We abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

Let us worship God who is our refuge and our strength,
For God is the One in whom we trust.

The Lord will deliver us from the perils that threaten us.
Under God's wings, we will find refuge and not be afraid.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of our living and our loving,
we rejoice in your grace and mercy which has called creation into being,
and makes all life complete.

We praise you for Jesus Christ
who reveals your loving purposes for all people;
in his face we glimpse your love;
in his life we see the pattern for our lives.

We bless you for the Holy Spirit
who guides us and strengthens us,
drawing us into the embrace of your tender love.

And so we praise you, O God,
our eternal, creating father who loves us with motherly care,
united with Christ, our savior,
and your Holy Spirit, the breath of life,
Three in One, now and always.

Amen.

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]

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Almighty and most merciful God,
 we confess that we have sinned against you
 in things we have done,
 and things we have neglected to do.
 We have held back from giving
 to protect what we have.
 We have not trusted in your goodness
 and relied on the world's empty promises instead.
 Forgive what we have done and direct who we shall become.
 Help us to serve you
 by serving your world with generous spirits.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear and believe the good news! Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.
 The old life is gone. The new life has come.
 Know that you are forgiven, and so, in Christ, forgive one another.

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: "When My Lips Can Frame No Sound" Choir**Responsive Reading****Psalm 25:1-10**

¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

² **O my God, in you I trust;
 let me not be put to shame;
 let not my enemies exult over me.**

³ Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
 they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴ **Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
 teach me your paths.**

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,
 for you are the God of my salvation;
 for you I wait all the day long.

⁶ **Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love,
 for they have been from of old.**

⁷ Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
 according to your steadfast love remember me,
 for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!

⁸ **Good and upright is the LORD;
 therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,
 and teaches the humble his way.

¹⁰ **All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
 for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

Opening Hymn #400: "Spirit of the Living God"

Spirit of the Living God,
 Fall afresh on me,

Spirit of the Living God,
 Fall afresh on me.
 Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
 Spirit of the Living God,
 Fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God,
 move among us all;
 Make us one in heart and mind,
 Make us one in love.
 Humble, caring, selfless, sharing.
 Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love.

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

1 Peter 3:18-22

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Sermon

There are many films that Christians watch during the season of Easter. One of the most popular is Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of Christ' even though it can be graphic it does stay true to what the Scripture describes in the easter story.

However, because of the story and its graphic nature some of the obscure, yet important, details of the movie get lost to the average viewer.

Near the end of the film, when Jesus Christ is placed upon the cross, the camera pans in for a close up shot. We see a large metal spike positioned in the middle of the hand of Jesus Christ. Then a mallet comes into focus, and a rough hand swings the mallet and drives it into through the hand of Jesus and into the wooden cross underneath.

Yet, even with all of this graphic attention to detail there is something that the viewer is not ever shown. You never see the face of the one who is driving those nails through the hands of the Lord. You never get to see their eyes and try to figure out if they are enjoying what they are doing or repulsed by the thought of their actions. You simply see the mallet, hammer against the head of the nail until it passes through the flesh of Jesus.

What is interesting is that it was actually Mel Gibson who took on the role of the man who nailed Christ to the cross. The director himself taking on such an interesting role in the film should cause us to ask a couple questions as to why he chose to never show the face of the one wielding the mallet? Why did he choose to focus on the act of the Jesus being nailed to the cross and not the men behind the action?

Mel Gibson chose not to show the face of the one who nailed Christ to the cross because that face was his, or it could have been ours, or any humans who walks this earth in sin. He was making a very powerful point in a very critical scene that many people did not notice. It was not the Romans who nailed Jesus to that cross, it was not the Jews who nailed Jesus to that Cross. It was sin, and sin alone, that placed our Lord and Saviour upon the cross at Calvary.

Colossians 2:13-14

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Our salvation was bought upon the cross, the debt of our sin, paid by the blood of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary. Peter is trying to help us better understand this blessing, the victory that was achieved upon the cross through his death and resurrection upon the cross.

1 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

Peter tells it plainly, Jesus died because of the sins of mankind. He died for the righteous and the unrighteous.

Jesus died once for all sin. All sin for all of mankind, both believers and unbelievers. Every human being is sinful in the eyes of God, we are all guilty and we all owe a debt for our prideful and sinful nature. The reality is that even when we are faithful believers and followers of God we are still driven at times by our sinful nature. This is what sin is, a driving factor in our lives that draws us away from God and the truth of his word into the false teachings and beliefs of the world around us.

Just think how often we sin each and every day as believers and know that each sin is a transgression of God's law, and when a law is broken there is a debt that must be paid. On the day of judgement that is described in the book of Revelation, the day that every human being will stand before God in judgement at the White Throne, the judgement and penalty of our sin will be delivered by the Lord. What is the penalty of sin?

Romans 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Bible teaches us that the penalty of Sin is death! To be a fair, just and righteous God, God must judge all sin equally, and that means that all of sin, from the little white lie to mass murder and genocide receives the penalty of death. Sin means eternal separation from God and all of the blessing he shares with us in our lives. Why?

Because God is a perfect and Holy God and only those who are perfect and Holy can be in his presence. This is why sinful human nature dooms so many to death and eternal separation from God in the lake of fire on the Day of Judgement.

In the Old Testament the Jews use to have to make sin offerings; cows, goats, sheep, pigeons were all used as offering to God. Sacrificed and burned and their blood poured on the altar to pay the debt of death for the sins of the people. Josephus, a prominent Jewish historian estimates that there were close to 256,000 sacrifices made just during the Feast of Passover at the temple in Jerusalem.

And here we see Jesus replacing the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament with his own sacrifice. Jesus Christ is a complete fulfillment of all of the sin offerings that were required in the Old Testament. It is because of this single event, this one sacrifice, that more than half a billion animals no longer needed to be sacrificed in the temples.

It is because of this single sacrifice that we can stand before God guilty of all of the sin in our life, and have that debt erased by the blood of Jesus Christ. If we have placed our faith and trust in him, the guilt and debt we owe is removed in the eyes of God. Through Christ we stand before God in righteousness.

That one death, that single sacrifice paid the sin debt of all of mankind, past, present, and future.

1 Peter 3:18-22

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Jesus Christ was sacrificed upon the cross at Calvary and he died in the flesh. He died, and was buried in a tomb, with a heavy stone laid in front of the tomb and guards placed at the stone to prevent any tomfoolery by the disciples.

He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. When his earthy flesh died, his spiritual being took over immediately, the word that was used years and years ago to describe this was quickened, to be made alive by God in the spirit.

Right after his sacrifice Jesus is made alive in the spirit and he could no longer be tempted by sin or undergo trials and sufferings. His spirit was transferred into its perfect eternal state.

This is the fate of all true believers when they die, they are quickened and made alive in Christ by God. When a true believer dies, we are made complete by God immediately – quicker than the eye can blink – quickened into our eternal spiritual being that can stand before God in holiness and righteousness because we have been washed clean by the blood of the lamb.

A believer's spirit will be in that perfect form for all eternity and will never again be subject to trials or temptations of the corrupted and polluted sinful world we live in today. Even on the day of Judgement they can stand confidently at the White Throne because they know that they stand in God's presence being washed clean by the blood of Christ.

As a side note this is what is meant when we proclaim the Apostle's Creed and say:

**'was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.'**

If you read the earliest translations of this it does not say living and dead, which gives us the impression of people who are alive and people who have died. It says the quick and the dead, meaning people who have been spiritually reborn in Christ and people who are spiritually dead.

When Jesus died, he:

1 Peter 3:19-20

¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was

being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

‘proclaimed to the spirits in prison.’ In the three days that passed between his death and his resurrection Jesus proclaimed his victory, proclaimed the promise of God’s salvation that had been fulfilled by his sacrifice to the spirits in prison.

Who are these spirits to whom he proclaimed this good news?

The Scripture tells us that there were the disobedient ones who were living on earth while Noah was preparing the Ark. The ones who had been so disobedient that God had decided to kill all of mankind with the exception of Noah and his family, all who died in the great flood.

Christ went before all those who had disobeyed God and found themselves in Sheol, the Jewish understanding of Hell, and proclaimed to them that God’s salvation had been completed upon that cross. He proclaimed that he was the Saviour, the Messiah of the world and the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation for his people. He proclaimed to them that Noah’s faith and the faith of all true believers was fulfilled, and that Noah and his family were truly saved.

1 Peter 3:21-22

²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

The apostle Peter says that it is baptism that now saves us. Not the act of baptism that is worldly, being sprinkled or dunked in some tepid water does not bring salvation. Peter is clear that it is not the cleansing of the flesh that saves. It is not the ceremony, or the minister that saves. If it were that simple everyone in the world could be saved. It is actually something much more difficult that is required to be saved.

It is the cleansing of the conscience that saves. It is a true faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the resurrected Lord that saves God’s people. The Scripture says that **‘an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’**

How does the resurrection of Jesus cleanse our conscience? Well, if God raised Jesus from the dead, it means that Jesus is who he claimed to be, the Messiah, the fulfillment of the covenantal promises made by God for the salvation of his people. Therefore, Jesus is able to save us from our sin, he is able to pay the debt we all owe because of our sinful nature and to free our consciences from the guilt and shame of that sin. He is able to give us a clear and pure conscience.

The final verse is the one that points us back to the apostle creed.

1 Peter 3:22

²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven even now, awaiting the day of Judgment. When he will be the one to judge the quick and the dead. If you are living your life according to his teachings and have placed your faith and trust in him, you are quick and have nothing to fear on that day. For the quick the day of judgment is a joyful occasion because Jesus has prepared a place in God's kingdom for all of His people.

John 14:1-6

14 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

This is what Christians need to remember not only in the season of Lent but every day of our lives. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is the one and only way to the Father. Jesus is the only one who will judge the quick and the dead on the Day of Judgement and Jesus was the one who sacrificed himself upon the cross of Calvary so that all who come to him in faith and obedience could be washed clean by the blood of the lamb.

Let us pray,

O Christ, Son of God,
 for our sake you fasted forty days and allowed yourself to be tempted.
 Protect us so that we may not be led astray by any temptation.
 Since man does not live by bread alone,
 nourish our souls with the heavenly food of your Word;
 through your mercy, O our God,
 you are blessed,
 and live and govern all things,
 now and forever.
Amen.

Hymn #513: "O, How He Loves You and Me"

Oh, how He loves you and me,
 Oh, how He loves you and me.

He gave His life, what more could He give;
 Oh, how He loves you, Oh, how He loves me,
 Oh, how He loves you and me.

Jesus to Calv'ry did go,
 His love for mankind to show.
 What He did there brought hope from despair.
 Oh, how He loves you, Oh, how He loves me,
 Oh how He loves you and me.

Oh, how He loves you and me,
 Oh, how He loves you and me.
 He gave His life, what more could He give;
 Oh, how He loves you, Oh, how He loves me,
 Oh, how He loves you and me.

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 #670: "Amazing Grace" (V 1,2,6)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
 that saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found,
 was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
 and grace my fears relieved;

how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

When we've been there a thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise than
when we'd first begun.

Pastoral Prayer

Maker of heaven and earth,
you are our help; we lift our eyes to you.
As we walk this Lenten journey,
you watch over our coming and our going
both now and forevermore.
You are our shade and our protection;
you keep us from all harm.
We ask that you strengthen and guide us
as we do your work in your world.
Convict us of our disobedience,
and enable us to obey your call in our lives.
Open our ears to the cry of the poor.
Teach us to seek and to do justice,
to stay in the path of understanding,
to pursue righteousness and love
in the strong name of your Son, our Savior. **Amen.**

Benediction

Grace and peace to you
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,
who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age,
according to the will of our God and Father,
to whom be glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**