

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 17th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Obey
Fifth Sunday in Lent
Hebrews 5:7-10

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

God says to us: I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers flow in the desert.
The LORD does great things for us, and we rejoice.

God says to us: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
The LORD does great things for us, and we rejoice.

God says to us: I am about to do a new thing.
**The LORD does great things for us,
and so we worship God with songs of joy and prayers of thanksgiving.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all life,
we come to you today with grateful hearts,
cheered by the return of spring,
days lengthening, the sun's warmth growing stronger.
We praise you for your creation and its reliable rhythms.
We praise you, too,
for Christ and his ministry that we seek to continue;
we seek the light of the hope he offers.
Break into these days of turmoil and uncertainty
with the mercy and grace we meet in Jesus.
By the power of your Spirit, lighten our hearts in this time of worship,
and help us brighten the lives we touch this week in Jesus' name.
And so we praise you, O God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all life,
and offer you all glory and honour,
this day and every day, now and evermore.
In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,
We pray. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "If You are Happy and You Know It"

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

There are many times we think we love you well, O God.
But upon hearing your call to love you with all our heart,
and all our mind, and all our strength,
we confess that our love for you is a diluted love,
made insipid and flat by lesser loyalties and a divided heart.
Our love seems pure only for brief moments;
soon our affections are drawn away.
How easily our devotion dies.
Forgive us;
in deep mercy spare us,
despite our lost first love for you;
in grace rekindle our love for you
in seeing anew Jesus' love for us.
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news:
This saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross,
that we might be dead to sin, and alive to all that is good.
I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Music Ministry: "God is the Strength of my Heart" Choir

Responsive Reading**Psalm 119:9–16**

⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.

¹⁰ **With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!**

¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.

¹² **Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes!**

¹³ With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.

¹⁴ **In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.**

¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.

¹⁶ **I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.**

Opening Hymn: “Come Now is the Time to Worship”

CHORUS

Come now is the time to worship, come now is the time to give your heart
Come just as you are to worship, come just as you are before your God

Verse 1

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now

CHORUS

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture**Hebrews 5:7-10**

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Sermon

During the First World War the Premier of Australia, being part of the Commonwealth, sent a message to Great Britain. He asked, 'What do you want us to do?'. To which they reply was, 'Build us ships; we need more ships.' However, the Australians did not build ships. Instead, the nation did what they thought was best, they began to till the fields, sow seeds, and reap a great harvest of food to send to the motherland. The grain was gathered, put into large sacks, and brought down to the docks where it would be loaded on ships and sent to help the war effort. But the ships never came, the mice did though. The mice got into the sacks and fed on the grain, they got into the houses, around the ports and into the cities and brought with them disease and illness. And throughout all of this Great Britain kept asking for ships.

All that Australia had to do was obey the request that Great Britain had made and make them ships. But in their own wisdom, they decided to ignore the directives of the homeland and instead chose to produce food instead of making ships.

Obedying the directions of others seems to be a rare skill in this world. Kids do not like to obey their parents. Employees do not like to obey their bosses. People do not want to listen to medical advice, especially if it means giving up a vice. Husbands and wives do not want to obey their vows.

Being told to obey, goes against the very roots of the culture we live in today where everyone is told to live their life according to their own will and desire, even if that means disobeying your parents, your family, your friends or even your spouse, after all it is your life, not theirs.

However, the Scripture does call for us to obey God. To obey the Scriptures in all aspects of our lives, even when society and culture disagree. We are called to revere God in our lives.

Jesus did this. He once told the Pharisees.

Matthew 15:8

⁸ " 'This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
⁹ in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ”

Even though the Pharisees and Scribes seemed to be obeying God on the outside, they were doing everything for themselves in their hearts. That is one of the most confusing aspects of Christianity, two people can be doing the exact same thing- but one will be saved and the other will be lost – just like Cain and Abel. To God the motive behind the action is more important than the actual action itself, God cares why you do the things you do.

God cares why you come to church. It is not enough to simply show up because it is a weekend tradition, or your parents use to make you come and you just carry on the practice. God cares that you come to church to worship and praise, with your heart focused on him. He wants us to come into his presence, to worship him with a sense of humility and reverence.

That is how Jesus approached his Father in heaven. That is the word used in the Scripture today, **‘he was heard because of his reverence.’** Jesus approached God with reverent submission.

That is also how we are called to receive the kingdom of heaven.

Hebrews 12:28

²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

This is how Moses approached God on Mount Sinai, with fear and reverence. Every prophet in the Old Testament came into God’s presence filled with respect and awe. One of the major problems in this world is that we have a great love for Jesus but no reverence for him. We need to remember that God is in charge of our eternity, and not just some loving parent that only wants us to enjoy our lives the way that we want in this world. We need to be honest with ourselves about who we are, sinners, and who God is, Holy.

Jesus showed us a life of reverent submission throughout the Gospels. He offered up prayers and petitions to God with loud cries and tears in the Garden of Gethsemane to the only one who could save him from the death he knew was coming. The word ‘petition’ is closer in meaning to the offering of an olive branch or the waving of a white flag. It meant absolute submission and surrender to the one to whom it was offered. Even though Jesus was equal to God, he approached the Father as if he were someone that he was in desperate need of in his life. Jesus was showing us an example of how we are to come to God, how to keep the devil at bay, how to stay strong in this world, and how to continue to do what God has called us to do in this world, by coming to God in absolute surrender.

Jesus, God himself, prayed with loud cries and tears, he was not too proud to go to God and ask for his help, he was not afraid to go and beg for God’s help. Even in his words upon the cross:

Matthew 27:46

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus called out to God and asked for his presence in his life. Jesus did this to show us that it is only God that can help us in the trials and tribulations we have in life.

Jesus showed us absolute obedience in his life. Jesus knew that he would be persecuted, he would be tortured, he would be ridiculed, and he would be crucified upon the cross. He knew that he would be sold for thirty pieces of silver by Judas and yet he still accepted him into discipleship, he knew that his hands and feet would be pierced, and he would hang upon the cross for the sins of the world, and he still did it all. Jesus experienced life as a human being, one that ended in suffering and humiliation, to teach us all what obedience to God is really about.

Isn't it ironic that we often have to learn obedience by suffering? God tells us to not abuse our bodies, to not become drunk on wine. However, as human beings we pursue the feeling we get when drunk, and then end up with a hangover, headache, upset stomach and maybe a few embarrassing stories in our lives.

We should have learned to obey God's Word in the first place. The truth is that we learn about what it means to obey God best but the suffering that we go through when we suffer for disobeying God's Word. God's word tells us that we will suffer, we will suffer if we live our lives according to his teachings. We will suffer if we obey God, the same way that Jesus suffered in his obedience.

Paul said we should find happiness in our suffering.

Romans 5:3-5

³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We can find happiness because Jesus came to do his Father's will. He never disputed his course in this world. He never debated with God, he never negotiated with God about his sin. He never tried to tell God he was wrong or needed to rethink his Scripture. He obeyed the Word of God to the very end, even though it cost him his life. And it was by doing that, by obeying God in all that was about to happen to him, that he completed his task in this world, he died upon the cross of Calvary to pay the debt of sin for all who come to him and trust and obey. That is what he meant when he said that 'it was finished' upon the cross.

Jesus obeyed God and became the one and only way to Salvation for all of mankind.

Jesus called himself the Living Water and the Bread of Life. He is the only thing that we need for our Salvation.

John 14:6-7

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Yet, our Salvation goes further than just doing the good things that God calls for us to do, like loving our enemies and looking after the widows and the orphans.

Again, we need to look at the type of obedience that Jesus displayed for us in his life. He did not just do what God called for him to do, he did it with an attitude that was filled with humility. He recognized in his humility that He could use his power to save himself, but He could only save all of mankind through obedience to the Father. He could only be resurrected through his obedience to God. He showed us what faith and obedience look like in this world.

Jesus obeyed God, by offering up prayers and petitions to the Father, and trusting in Him to deliver Him from death. He showed us through his faith and obedience that God is the only source of Salvation, and God was pleased with him.

Humility and submission go against all of the ways of this world. The whole idea of going to God in humility and prayer is almost unheard of in today's world – instead the world is focused on drawing attention to themselves, and they take pride in who they are and the way that they flaunt God's Word in their lives.

As Christians we come to praise and worship God every week and we have a Call to Confession, in which we are meant to confess our sins to God. How many of us do this in a truly submissive spirit?

Many Church goers come to church each Sunday not with humility and reverence but with a sense of entitlement. God owes us something because of our relationship with him. They come to worship and act like God is infringing on their lives and their time, especially if the service goes on a little too long, God gets his hour and not a minute more. We do not look at prayer as a privilege, instead we consider it a duty. Instead of approaching God with an attitude of, 'I do not deserve to be here in the presence of a Holy God' we come and say, 'Hey God, I am here now bless my life!'

When we are called to trust and obey in Christ it begins with an understanding that we are sinful mortal beings. We are not all-knowing, all-powerful beings. Even though the world tells us differently we are not in fact master of our own destinies. We are in fact weak and sinful being, people who deserve the wrath of God because of our disobedience. God knows the truth of who we are in this world better than we do ourselves.

Jesus willingly obeyed the Father in all aspects of his life. He was fully God and had all of the power and knowledge of God. Yet he gave up all of his power and knowledge and lived a life of obedience to God. That is what God wants us to do, to give up our concept of knowledge, our concept of prestige, our concept of power and influence, our concept of what we do and what we deserve. We have to give up the idea that we can somehow save ourselves and instead accept the truth that we can only be saved by living a life of trust and obedience to the Scripture.

The whole Gospel message is underwritten by the fact that Jesus Christ earned our Salvation through his obedience and death, and all we have to do is believe in him and faithfully obey as we live our lives in the manner he taught us through his own life.

This is the problem in the world. People instead want to believe that they are the ones in charge, they are the only ones who matter, they are the ones who get to decide who gets into heaven and how they get there. They are not willing to submit to God. Instead, they work and work at worldly ways and worldly ideals, not recognizing that Salvation is simple, trust and obey in the Lord, humility, and faith. All we need to do is obey the call of our Lord. To do as he tells us to do, and we are invited into his kingdom for all eternity.

Sir Leonard Wood once visited the King of France, and the King was so pleased with him that he was invited for dinner the next day. Sir Leonard went to the palace and the King, meeting him in one of the halls, said, "Why, Sir Leonard, I did not expect to see you? How is it that you are here?" "Did not your majesty invite me to dine with you?" said the astonished guest. "Yes," replied the King, "but you did not answer my invitation."

Then it was that Sir Leonard Wood uttered one of the choicest sentences of his life. He replied, "A king's invitation is never to be answered, but to be obeyed."

In humility Jesus Christ answered God's call to Save the World. His obedience caused suffering in his life. Yet he never hesitated to stand firm in the truth. As a result, he completed the task that God had given him, he died for mankind and was resurrected from the dead.

There is only one way into heaven, to live the same way that Jesus did, to obey. To repent and believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and to walk in this world as the Salt and Light of God's Word, bringing the Glory of his name into the lives of all whom you meet. Simply obey.

Let us pray,

Give Us Comfort that We Will Never See Death

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 your dear Son, our Redeemer Christ Jesus said,
 'Whoever remains in my word will never see death.'

Pour out your Holy Spirit into our hearts
 that your Son's Word may come to us
 and that we may hear it, hold it,
 and commit ourselves to it with our whole heart,
 and in the midst of death find comfort
 that we will never see eternal death,
 for the sake of your Son,
 our Redeemer Christ Jesus.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Lent 5

Hymn: "Psalm 23"

VERSE 1

The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want, He makes me lie in pastures green
 He leads me by the still, still waters, His goodness restores my soul

CHORUS

And I will trust in You alone, And I will trust in you alone
 For Your endless mercy follows me, Your goodness will lead me home.

VERSE 2

He guides my ways in righteousness, And He anoints my head with oil,
 And my cup, it overflows with joy, I feast on his pure delights.

CHORUS

VERSE 3

And though I walk the darkest path, I will not fear the evil one.
 For You are with me and Your rod and staff are the comfort I need to know.

CHORUS

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #376: "Lord, the Light of Your Love is Shining"

Lord, the light of
 Your love is shining

In the midst of
 the darkness, shining;
 Jesus, Light of the World
 shine upon us,
 Set us free by the truth
 You now bring us,
 Shine in me. Shine on me.

CHORUS

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
 Fill this land with the Father's glory;
 Blaze Spirit, blaze,
 Set our hearts on fire.
 Flow, river, flow,
 Flood the nations
 with grace and mercy;
 Send forth Your word,
 Lord, and let there be light.*

Lord, I come to
 Your awesome presence,
 From the shadows
 into Your radiance;
 By the blood I may
 enter Your brightness,
 Search me, try me,
 consume all the darkness.
 Shine in me. Shine on me. (CHORUS)

As we gaze on
 Your kingly brightness
 So our faces display Your likeness,
 Ever changing from glory to glory,
 Mirrored here may
 our lives tell Your story.
 Shine in me. Shine on me. (CHORUS)

Pastoral Prayer

Lord, you know the anguish of our human lives.
 As one who sees the pain of those who suffer,
 bring comfort, peace, and strength.
 As one who has experienced the agony

and tears of losing loved ones,
comfort all who grieve.
As one who wept over the faithlessness of your people,
send your Spirit to correct us in our unfaithfulness.
As one who understands the agony of those who have been deserted,
stand alongside those who feel alone and abandoned today.
As one who was once forsaken by all others,
give hope and assurance to those who feel rejection.
As one who knows the ravages of violence,
bring peace and healing to those who are tortured by enemies.
You, our Lord, have offered up prayers with loud cries and tears;
hear us when we do the same.
We approach your throne of grace with boldness.
May we receive mercy and grace in our time of need.

God of all times and places,
as we leave this place of worship,
help us to know that there is no place we might go
that will separate us from you.
With this sure knowledge,
give us Spirit-inspired courage and imagination
to discern faithful ways of responding
to every person we will meet this week
and to every situation we will encounter.
May our Lenten vows of faithfulness
lead us to joyful obedience all week long. **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.**