

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, May 12th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Abide in Me (Part III)
Seventh Sunday of Easter (b24)
Psalm 1

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

This is the day that you have made, Lord.

Help us to rejoice in it and be glad!

Remind us of the privileges we enjoy as your people:

to come to you in these moments,

to confess our sins,

to receive forgiveness and give it,

to pray and sing and listen,

to renew our fainting spirits,

to rest in all your promises.

Open our eyes to see you, Lord.

Open our ears to hear your Word.

Visit us through your Holy Spirit,

and help us to celebrate our faith. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of glory and majesty,

in Christ Jesus

you came to live among us, sharing in our joys and sorrows.

After he suffered and died for our sake,

you raised him and took him up in glory so that he might fulfill all things.

As our ascended Lord,

he gives hope to your people in all places,

in every generation and every situation.

So we claim that hope this day,

for ourselves and for the world you love,
 offering you our praise and worship in the name of Jesus Christ,
 who now lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 the One True Living God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "Peace Like a River"

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Great God,
 we are embarrassed to come before you,
 for we have preferred the ways of this world to your ways,
 for we have rebelled against your wisdom
 and we have gotten into trouble,
 for we have rejected your fatherly guidance
 and have gotten lost altogether.
 To you belongs righteousness, O Lord,
 and to us confusion of face.
 Great God,
 incline your ear to our troubles.
 Hear us when we pour out our sorrows before you.
 Forgive us,
 not on the ground of our own righteousness,
 but on the ground of your great mercy.
 On the ground of your great mercy
 in the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ.
 It is in his name that we pray,
 for he is our Savior and the mediator of the covenant of grace. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

While it is true that we have sinned,
 it is a greater truth that we are forgiven
 through God's love in Jesus Christ.
 For all who humbly seek the mercy of God it is said,
 in Jesus Christ, your sin is forgiven

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.

Hymn #431: “Jesus Where’er Thy People Meet”

Jesus, wher e'er thy people meet,
 there they behold thy mercy seat;
 where'er they seek thee thou art found,
 and every place is hallowed ground.

Here may we prove the power of prayer
 to strengthen faith and sweeten care,
 to teach our faint desires to rise,
 and bring all heaven before our eyes.

Lord, we are few, but thou art near,
 nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear;
 oh rend the heavens, come quickly down
 and make a thousand hearts thine own.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 69:32-35

³² O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God;
 sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*

³³ **to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
 behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.**

³⁴ Ascribe power to God,
 whose majesty is over Israel,
 and whose power is in the skies.

³⁵ **Awesome is God from his sanctuary;
 the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people.
 Blessed be God!**

Anthem (Music Ministry): “They’ll Know We are Christians by Our Love”

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man

**who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.**

**³ He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.**

**⁴ The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

**⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.**

Sermon

The truth of this world is that as much as the world tells you that you have autonomy in your life the truth is that you do not. Regardless of who you are, or how much money, or power or fame you have, there is always someone or something that has some form of authority over you.

There is an old saying that reminds us of this truth, it goes, 'Every soldier has a sergeant, every worker has a foreman, and every husband has a wife!' And while it was said in jest most often, there is some truth to the saying.

In marriage the husband and wife are called to submit to one another. In Ephesians wives are told to submit to their husbands and husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

Husband and wife are duty bound to one another, they hold an authority over one another, they are called to support one another, help one another, and give their complete love to one another. And while doing so they are meant to keep God at the center of the marriage, so that he can bless the marriage.

If you recall last week, Jesus told the disciples to Abide in him, abide in his love, love one another to the point you would willingly die for one another. Serving God and each other in humility and reverence for God.

Christians learn to do this over time, and as we learn to serve God with humility and reverence, and to respect the authority we have over one another, God blesses our lives with peace and joy, the same way he blesses a husband and wife who keep God as the center of their marriage.

However, we all know that the rest of the world does not always share this feeling of being blessed when they have someone exercise authority over them. In a world that is constantly in pursuit of self-actualization and self-esteem, someone having authority over you is unacceptable. Often because with authority comes instructions, demands and an expectation to obey. The world rebels against this, especially where God is concerned. Mankind's sinful and pleasure-seeking nature pushes back against the moral laws of God and his holiness, especially where it would require us giving up our own pleasure and perceived happiness. We push back because in all honesty humans are not humble creatures, and our nature is never going to change on its own.

Don't worry, this is not a new phenomenon that we are dealing with in the modern world, it is one that has existed since Adam and Eve left the garden of Eden. Just look at God's people in the Old Testament, the Israelites wandered the desert for forty years, the reason, they refused to submit to God's authority over them. They wanted to do everything their way, and according to their ideas and their timelines, oh, and they wanted to tell God how to do it, so they could stay blessed by him.

God had given his people the Promised Land as a gift, and he did not want them to bring along their sin and rebellious nature with them when they moved into that land. So, he made them wander the desert, until the rebellious generation had passed away and a new obedient generation took their place.

As it turns out, that was not the last generation of sinful and rebellious people. In fact, our current generation is probably one of the most sinful and rebellious generations against God. It is a generation that refuses to bend the knee to God on any aspect of their lives, so they create new genders, new sexualities, and new identities and idols to strike out against God's authority in this world.

They lash out against God and when they still do not get the things that they want in the way that they want, they somehow come to blame God and his followers for their failure. This is how Satan works, he preys on those who rebel against God and feeds their dissatisfaction with the world, with authority and with themselves, driving a wedge between them and God at every opportunity.

The only way for anyone in this world to find peace and joy is to submit themselves to God's authority, to humbly serve him and his kingdom here on earth. Psalm one teaches anyone who will listen the key to living a life that is filled with the presence and blessings of God.

The world says if you want to find happiness and satisfaction in life that you need to look within yourself, figure out what you want and go after it. The world says you need to be self-

sufficient, do not rely on anyone else, just go and take what you think is yours. The world tries to teach us that if you ever find yourself in a situation where you need others, you are setting yourself up to be let down, because other people will always fail you, the only person you can trust and believe is yourself and your feelings.

In fact, the world teaches many people that if you want to be any good in this life, you need this education, you need to be part of this group, or own these products. Advertising is in our face everywhere we go, telling us what clothes we need to wear, what phone we need to carry and what places we need to eat. The world keeps telling us which group is the most powerful and why they need to be replaced with another group.

The reality is that these are all lies, no matter what you hear, where you eat, what phone you carry or who is in power, you will never have peace and joy in your life, because the world will be busy telling you what you need to chase next. The world just wants to keep you distracted from the truth of God's Word, pursuing things that separate you from him. The world wants you to chase your desires, your sins, living in wickedness and rebelliousness because they know that keeps you from ever finding Salvation.

The reality is that many people in this world buy into the falsehoods of advertising without hesitation. The jump on the bandwagon of whatever is the popular purchase, popular food, or popular movement without hesitation. The world says you are not to rely on anyone for anything or you are 'weak' or 'deficient' in some way. Yet it also tells you that you should be seeking out the approval of others based on what movement you are part of, what electronics you carry or where and what you eat. It makes no sense at all.

Canadians live in one of the richest nations in the world, we have a lifestyle that is envied by many other nations, we are blessed, yet we are also some of the most depressed and dissatisfied people on the planet.

We no longer want to work in our lives, instead we are always seeking a quick fix. People no longer want to raise their children, they drop them at school and expect teachers to take care of everything, we are so preoccupied with our own lives we fail to pay attention to what is happening in the lives of our youth and so the youth act out to get attention. To make it worse, instead of correcting them, or educating them we either go along with them or medicate them so that they do not interfere with our own pursuits in this world.

The more we run from God and pursue the world, the more problems we are going to have in our lives and in our societies. When you live your life in pursuit of the world it will always be in a state of despair and anxiety. It is only when you give your life to Jesus that you will find peace and joy in this world.

So many people in this world are seeking out a quick fix in their lives, looking for hacks and shortcuts to momentary pleasure or happiness, rather than seeking out a long-term solution to what is troubling them in their lives. They have no goals, no ambitions, and no future plans, and that is what the world wants, people who are stuck in a loop of simply existing.

The Bible tells us that these is only one thing we need to keep us moving forward in this world.

Psalm 84:12

**¹² O LORD of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!**

When we place our trust in the Lord, when we abide in him, we being to understand the blessings he has given us, the time, talents, and resources he has given each of us so that we can carry out his will in our lives. Our purpose in this world is to humbly serve the Lord and to bring glory to his name.

Psalm 1:1-3

**Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.**

**³ He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.**

Someone who trusts and obeys the Lord is referred to as a tree, a strong and mighty tree that grows tall and majestic, as it is firmly rooted and fed by the water that flows nearby.

Jesus is our living water, and when we abide in him, when we are rooted in him, he will give us all of the spiritual nutrients we need in this world to stand tall and strong as a Christian and to bear fruit for God's kingdom.

If your life seems to have been overly difficult and you have felt like you have been robbed of all your peace and joy, maybe you have spent too much time in the world and not enough time rooted in God. Honestly, when we find ourselves in a difficult situation, or a time of trouble, we should be turning to God, instead of blaming God like so many people in the world choose to do. It is only when we accept the truth of our rebellion against him, and repent, turning away from the ways of the world that our hearts begin to change, and we begin to reflect him more and more in our lives.

As Christians we need to do things that put our focus on God. Even if we need to force ourselves to do so sometimes. We need to make an effort to read our Bibles, not just a verse here or there as we scroll through social media, but for 10 -to- 15 minutes each day, we need to

start having conversations with God, times when we pray and times when we listen. Yes, God already knows what we are going to say, but in saying it we are drawing closer to God. And as we get closer to God, we begin to find more peace and joy in our lives.

Psalm 1:1 reminds us that **‘Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;’**

Ask yourself, who are you walking with in this world? Is your friend circle filled with people who are rebelling against God? Are all of your hobbies and activities filled with those who try to push God out of their lives?

Remember that we need Godly people in our lives as we reach out to the lost in this world. If we do not have a godly foundation from which to reach out, we run the risk of losing ourselves.

Christians need to remember to pursue God as we go out to help the lost in this world. If we pursue the lost without God, we are just going to end up lost ourselves, very much in the way that the progressive church has become lost. If we want Salvation, we have to be willing to abide in Christ, and listen to the Holy Spirit in our lives, even when it tells us things we do not want to agree with because they go against our own desires.

We know that we cannot have two masters in this world, we are either citizens of the world or of God’s kingdom. We cannot obey both the world and God because they are often at odds with one another. When we begin to follow the ways of the world, we lose sight of the ways of God, and listening to and obeying the world only results in one thing, death.

Our God is a holy and righteous God, which means he is filled with grace and mercy, but he is also just. He has promised us his eternal blessings if we trust and obey his teachings and not the ways of the world. The world mocks God because of his promises, the focus on the here and now and ignore the eternal.

The world rebels against God because it is under the sway of the devil and his minions, and their power will only grow in this world until the day of Judgement comes.

So, God tells his people over and over in the Scriptures, stand firm, stay fast, abide in me, so that you are not caught up with those who rebel against the Lord. Do not walk in the ways of the wicked and depend on the world for advice on how to live. Do not stand with the sinners and do nothing when God’s people and God’s Word is persecuted. Do not sit with those who mock God and say nothing.

If you want to abide in Christ you need to spend time with God and in fellowship with other Christians, building up your spiritual well being and God’s presence in this world.

Hebrews 10:25 tells us:

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

We will find peace and joy in this world when we are with God's people doing God's work in this world.

Will this make people dislike you? YES! Will it make your family and friends turn their backs on you? YES! Will the people of this world mock you and scoff at you and your beliefs? YES! Will you miss out on worldly opportunities? YES! Will you be persecuted and suffer the wrath of man? Absolutely!

Will you lose out on anything of importance? No! Will you gain anything? YES! You will gain the most important and valuable thing in this world; you will be a friend of God. You will find a purpose and focus in humbly serving him, his kingdom, and his people in this world. You will begin to live a life filled with his blessings, and a peace and joy that is beyond measure.

In Matthew 15, Jesus said over and over 'Abide in me'. The worst decision that we can make is to abide in the world, which is the same as purposely ignoring Jesus. All of the blessings that we experience in life come from him, why would we choose to purposely ignore him and yet still try to seek his blessings.

God wants us to live healthy spiritual lives, and to live a healthy spiritual life we need to be in the presence of other Christians, we need to be part of the vine. Healthy spiritual Christians forms bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood with one another, a church, a place where they are lifted up in God's presence, a place where they gather to thank and praise God. A place where they find all of the blessings of Jesus Christ, and it is in a Jesus centered church where people will begin to find peace and joy beyond measure.

It is also in a church where Jesus will exercise his spiritual authority over us, none of us stands alone, we serve one another we obey one another, we submit to one another, all under the authority of God's Word.

Ephesians 5: 15-21

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

It is through God's Word and God's people that God keeps us spiritually healthy. We need other believers to build us up and to keep us in truth as we humbly serve God's kingdom in the lost world. And when we have these things in our lives we will prosper.

Psalm 1, verse 3 says, '**In all that he does, he prospers.**' What an incredible promise from God. God will prosper us; however, we need to remember this is talking about God prospering us spiritually for the sake of our eternal souls. Yes, it is true that God can prosper us financially and materially, but most often when he says we will prosper he is speaking of the spiritual prosperity we will experience as one of his children.

As I spoke about last week, there are many churches in the world that misconstrue God's Word and God's promises to his people. Some churches teach that if you are not materially prosperous, there is something wrong with your faith. These are also the same false prophets and false teachers that tack onto that message, you 'need' to give to them and the kingdom of God so that it can come back to you ten-fold.

God told us that there would be false prophets.

Acts 20:29-31

²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Be alert! Pay attention. Do not fall for the words of a wolf in sheep's clothing that seeks to tickle your ear as they turn you to the ways of the world.

2 Timothy 2:15 says

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Know God's Word, it is our duty to study it ourselves so that we can know what he wants, and we can know those who are Godly, and those who are wolves. So many people go to a church without any knowledge of God's Word and are easily lead astray because they do not know the Word of God themselves. So many churches are led by false teachers and false prophets that are simply seeking out their own worldly desires and not rooted in the Word of God.

So, to keep yourself rooted in the vine and to keep those you love safe from the deception of false teachers we need to study the Scripture and show God that we are indeed his children and bearing his fruit in this world.

When we abide in Christ fully, trusting and obeying in his Word, repenting of our sin, and turning to him in our lives he will give us abundant spiritual blessings, our Salvation and Eternal Life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But what about those who chose not to do this, who do not abide in Christ, who twist his words, who mock his name, who scoff at his laws as they pursue their own worldly desires. What will they receive?

Psalm 1: 4-6

**⁴The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

**⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;**

**⁶for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.**

A self-centered, narcissistic life will not produce fruit, instead it will produce chaff, weeds that will be burned up in the fires of hell. Those who think that they are self-sufficient, those who chose to twist God's word, or pick and choose what to obey will only have themselves to blame on the Day of Judgement when they stand before the Holy and Righteous Lord. And on that day, they will discover that they are nobody at all.

The Scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit will convict us of our sins, and if you are feeling like I am speaking to you directly this morning, you are in the right place, God's house. You are hearing the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. God works through his faithful, through his people and even through his faithful sheepdogs, to help you recognize the sin in your life, but also to support you in overcoming all those things in your life which draw you away from God, so that you can enjoy his spiritual blessings in your own life.

If God is speaking to you today, do something about it, and begin to walk with Jesus as the Salt and Light of God's work in this broken and dark world.

Let us Pray,

Grant Us Courage and Comfort to Continue Steadfastly in Your Testimony

Lord God, heavenly Father,
we give thanks that through your Holy Spirit
you have appointed us to bear witness
of your dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
Just as the world cannot endure such testimony
and persecutes us in every way,
grant us courage and comfort
that we may not be offended because of the cross,

but continue steadfastly in your testimony
 and be found always
 among those who know you and your Son,
 until we obtain eternal salvation;
 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, Sunday after Ascension

Hymn: "Here is Love"

Verse 1

Here is love vast as the ocean, loving kindness as the flood
 When the Prince of life, our ransom, shed for us His precious blood
 Who His love will not remember? Who can cease to sing His praise?
 He will never be forgotten throughout heav'ns eternal days.

Verse 2

On the mount of crucifixion fountains opened deep and wide
 Through the flood gates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide.
 Grace and love like mighty rivers poured incessant from above
 Heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love.

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #642: "O Master Let Me Walk With Thee" (V 1,2,3)

O Master, let me walk with thee
 in lowly paths of service free;
 tell me thy secret; help me bear
 the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move
 by some clear winning word of love;
 teach me the wayward feet to stay,
 and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me thy patience; still with thee
 in closer, dearer company,
 in work that keeps faith sweet and strong,
 in trust that triumphs over wrong.

Pastoral Prayer

Faithful God,
 We give you thanks for your steadfast love
 that provides courage and comfort for your people in every challenging time.
 Continue to surprise us with your grace, O God,
 and breathe your Spirit upon your church once more,
 to draw us together in worship and witness.
 Renew our faith so that we may serve you with courage and creativity,
 offering the hope we know in Christ Jesus
 to this struggling world.

God of peace,
 thank you for sending Jesus into the world,
 to reconcile the world to you through the forgiveness of our sins.
 May the fruits of the reconciliation and peace he offers
 continue to work in places of hatred and hostility.
 O God, do not let us be resigned to injustice or indifference.
 Inspire us to build renewed Christian relationships in these troublesome days

God of fellowship,
 we pray for our church and our community.
 Inspire our congregation with a fresh vision for our ministry.
 Comfort those who mourn the loss of dear ones,
 and support those who are sick,
 and those recovering from setbacks or failure.
 Give strength to people who are worn out or discouraged,
 and calm the anxiety or anger that can keep us apart from others.
 Bless and encourage any who are struggling in their faith,
 and guide those with questions to your truth.

Faithful God,
 By your Spirit, fill us with the faith and courage to do the work
 Jesus commissioned his followers to undertake wherever he leads us.
 In the name of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God,
 who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit as our one true living God,
 now and forever more we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

May God go before you to lead you.

May God go behind you to guard you.

May God go beneath you to support you.

May God go beside you to befriend you.

Do not be afraid.

Let the blessing of God—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—
come upon you today and settle in around you.

Do not be afraid.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Amen.**