

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, May 19th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Day of Pentecost
John 16: 1-7

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

The love of God has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us;
we dwell in him and he in us.

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him,
and speak of all his marvelous works.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God whom we long to know,
burning fire within our souls,
grant to us the tongues like fire,
the sound of rushing wind, your descending Holy Spirit,
that in knowing your Word we might know your presence,
that in following your ways we might live in your light.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **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

Almighty God,
 you poured your Spirit upon gathered disciples
 creating bold tongues, open ears,
 and a new community of faith.
 We confess that we hold back the force of your Spirit among us.
 We do not listen for your word of grace,
 speak the good news of your love,
 or live as a people made one in Christ.
 Have mercy on us, O God.
 Transform our timid lives by the power of your Spirit,
 and fill us with a flaming desire to be your faithful people,
 doing your will for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Assurance of Pardon

In Christ you were marked with the Holy Spirit,
 a seal of our redemption in Christ.
 By the power of the Holy Spirit
 we become dead in sin and alive anew in Christ.
 May you be filled with the Holy Spirit
 so that you may have hope of new life,
 may grow in your knowledge of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 and may experience the incomparable power of God
 that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

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: "Purify My Heart"

Purify my heart, let me be as gold and precious silver
 Purify my heart, let me be as gold, pure gold

Chorus

Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire is to be holy set apart for you Lord
 I choose to be holy, set apart for you my master, ready to do your will.

Purify my heart, cleanse me from within, and make me holy
 Purify my heart, cleanse me from my sin, deep within. (Chorus)

Responsive Reading**Psalm 104:24-35**

²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom have you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵ **Here is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.**

²⁶ **There go the ships,
and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.**

²⁷ These all look to you,
to give them their food in due season.

²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

²⁹ **When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.**

³⁰ **When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.**

³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works,

³² who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke!

³³ **I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.**

³⁴ **May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.**

³⁵ **Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more!**

**Bless the LORD, O my soul!
Praise the LORD!**

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 104:24–35.

Anthem (Music Ministry): “How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place”

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

John 16: 1-7

"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Sermon

We are returning to the book of John and the conversation that Jesus is having with his disciples while they walk to the garden. As they are walking Jesus is explaining to the disciples the importance of abiding in him once he is no longer with them. He knows that he will not leave the garden alongside his disciples, and he knows how much their lives will change in the next 24 hours.

So, as they walk, he repeats over and over abide in me, and he reveals to them the truth of his Word and the world that they will be working in after his death and resurrection. He also takes this opportunity to explain to them that a helper will be sent to them as he teaches them about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells his disciples quite clearly as he walks with them that suffering is coming for all who are his true followers in this world. Even though he was knowingly going to his own death upon the cross his focus was on his people and ensuring that they had the teaching and tools necessary to stand firm in their faith after he was gone.

If you recall in John 15: 18-21 he said

John 15:18-21

¹⁸"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

And now he says to them.

John 16: 1-4

“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

Jesus does not hesitate in his final hours to explain the truths of this world and its focus on its own desires. He does this because of his love for his people. He wants his people to know that the walk of faith will not be an easy walk, it will be filled with times of trial, tribulation, and temptation, and not a walk of health, wealth, and prosperity like so many false teachers promise.

Remember in Matthew 7 Jesus said this.

Matthew 7: 13-14

¹³“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

The reality is that walking alongside Jesus in this world means walking alone at many points in life. We will be the stranger in a strange land, the outsider, and the outcast, because the moral and ethical values we carry in our hearts come from the Word of God and not from the secular world. We are going to face trials, troubles, and temptations consistently in our lives as we walk with the Lord, and the only way to overcome these things is to be focused on God and trusting and obeying in his Word in our lives.

Jesus’s warning to the disciples, and to us, as he walks along to the garden to not let our focus waver, to stay focused on Him regardless of the life situations that we find ourselves struggling through.

Jesus wants us focused on his Word, abiding in him so that we do not stumble and question our faith when the world comes at us. This is not the only place that Jesus delivered the message of staying focused on Him.

In Matthew 14 we have the story of Jesus walking on water.

Matthew 14: 22-33

²²Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw

him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

²⁸ And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Did you notice what happens in this Scripture? Peter actually walked on the water. It does not say that he stepped off the boat and sank like a rock. Instead, it says that it was when he looked down, realized that he was walking on the water, and the fear set in, that he sank.

Jesus wants us focused on him, because he knows that if we lose focus on him the fears of the things of this world may cause us to stumble, or worse yet sink, into the ways of this world and abandon the ways of God.

John 16: 1

"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

Today the trials, tribulations, and temptations we face are not from the Jewish synagogues or when we are walking on water. Instead, they come from worldly people and worldly ideals. Radicals from many other faiths and atheists have found a foothold on the internet where they can promote the hatred of the Christian faith, encouraging the persecution of Christians around the globe.

In many Islamic countries Christianity is outlawed, with the penalties for being Christians going from simple beatings and the redistribution of belongings to death. This is also becoming more commonplace in other countries where their own religion counters Christianity and in nations that have embraced Marxism and communism.

The persecution of Christian is prevalent around the world, yet it rarely makes local news yet alone news at the national level.

Open Doors a Christian organization attempts to keep record of the persecution of Christians around the globe, and by their best estimates, which they admit are very likely underreported, in 2023.

There was an average of 13 Christians Killed per day because of their faith alone.

4,125 Christians were detained or imprisoned without a trial.

3,906 Christians were abducted.

More than 3,200 Christians were raped, sexually harassed, or forced to marry non-Christians.

42,849 Christians were physically and mentally abused.

And nearly 300,000 Christians were forced to flee from their homes and go into hiding or flee their home country because of their faith.

On top of that more than 14,000 Christians schools, hospitals and churches were targeted and either damaged, destroyed or forced to close down last year alone.

Before you think this is all an overseas problem, here are some statistics from the United States.

In the year 2018, there were just under 40 incidences of crime reported against churches. Last year, there were more than 430 documented incidences of crime against churches, that is almost 40 a month. And again, this is likely under reported.

Last year American churches reported being vandalized more than 315 times, arson 75 times, gun related incidences 10 times, 20 bomb threats and 54 other incidences of crime, some churches experiencing each multiple times.

The truth is that we have had a wonderfully sheltered life as Christian in North America, but that time is likely coming to an end and the number of non-Christians is on the rise and the desire to outlaw and end Christianity is promoted by those who do not know God.

This is why Jesus told his disciples and tells us to stand firm in our faith through it all.

John 16: 4-6

⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

Jesus reminds us all that he is obeying the Father faithfully in all things, and that is the same call that we are being given when he tells us to abide in him. Jesus is the one way to salvation and eternal life, and the only way to be part of the kingdom of heaven is to stand firm in God’s word even when the world persecutes us for doing so.

Our faith is the only thing of importance in this world. Everything that is worldly does not follow us after death, only our standing with God matters after this world.

Jesus once told the disciples.

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."

Jesus is the only answer to everything in this world. Jesus will always lead us to doing the right thing at the right time in our lives, even if we have no understanding of what is happening. Even here on the very night that Jesus will go to the cross the disciples have no understanding of the event that is about to take place and the importance of it for all of humanity, instead they are focused on themselves and their desire to have their Master stay with them and continue to teach them.

This is why their hearts are filled with sorrow. They do not want to be left alone in the world, instead they want their Master to always walk alongside them guiding them through the trials, tribulations, and temptations that the world throws at them.

Which is why Jesus says.

John 16: 7

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

The disciples had no idea what Jesus was actually saying to them at this time. How is it good for us if the Master leaves us? We lose our teacher, our mentor, our miracle worker. That does not sound good for us at all.

The truth is that often Christians do not understand what is good for us, and what God is doing in our lives. We just need to stand firm in our faith and know that whatever situation we find ourselves in, that we are there to serve God's purpose in his kingdom and in our lives. God always knows what is best for our eternal being and even when things do not seem to be going our way in the here and now, we need to hold onto the truth that God is always focused on what is best for us in all of eternity, which far outweighs the here and now.

However, God does not leave us to struggle in every situation alone. He sends a Helper, a Comforter, who will guide us in trials, tribulations, and temptations.

This is actually the fourth time that Jesus has told the disciples of the coming of the Holy Spirit and they are still grasping to understand what he is speaking of to them.

John 14: 15-18

¹⁵ **“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.**

¹⁸ **“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you**

John 14: 25-26

²⁵ **“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**

And later in John 15

John 15: 26-27

²⁶ **“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.**

²⁷ **And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.**

Jesus made clear that all who loved him and obeyed his commandments would receive the Holy Spirit. This is a fact, every true believer has the Holy Spirit in them, they are spiritually reborn, and it is the Holy Spirit’s work in them that helps them walk with God in all of the situations we find ourselves stumbling through in this life.

Paul summed it up nicely in Colossians.

Colossians 1: 27

²⁷ **To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

Christ in us is our hope and glory. Christ walks with us through everything we experience in this world. Through all of the good times and even the worst of the troubling times, he is alongside us, helping us to stand firm in our faith.

This is what it means to abide in Christ. That the Holy Spirit is present and active in our lives at all times and in all places. It is through being reborn in the Holy Spirit that God’s people begin to exhibit the Fruits of the Spirit in their own lives and share those fruits into the lives of others, spreading the Gospel and bringing others to Christ.

It is through abiding in Christ that we find our own Salvation and are given the opportunity to share the truth of that blessing with others as we walk as the Salt and Light of God's word among the lost of this world.

Let us Pray,

Lord God Almighty,
 shaper and ruler of all creatures,
 we pray for your great mercy,
 that you guide us towards you,
 for we cannot find our way.
 And guide us to your will,
 to the need of our soul,
 for we cannot do it ourselves.
 And make our mind steadfast in your will
 and aware of our soul's need.
 Strengthen us against the temptations of the devil,
 and remove from us all lust and every unrighteousness,
 and shield us against our foes, seen and unseen.
 Teach us to do your will,
 that we may inwardly love you before all things with a pure mind.
 For you are our maker and our redeemer,
 our help, our comfort,
 our trust, our hope;
 praise and glory be to you now and forever. **Amen.**

Source: Alfred the Great, 9th century

Hymn: "Wonderful, Merciful Saviour"

Wonderful, Merciful Saviour precious redeemer and friend.
 Who would have thought that a Lamb could rescue the souls of men?
 Oh, You rescue the souls of men.

Chorus

You are the one that we praise. You are the one we adore.
 You give the healing and grace our hearts always hunger for.
 Oh, our hearts always hunger for.

Counselor, Comforter, Keeper, Spirit we long to embrace.
 You offer hope when our hearts have hopelessly lost the way.
 Oh, we hopelessly lost the way. (Chorus)

Almighty, infinite Father, faithfully loving your own

Here in our weakness, You find us falling before Your throne,
Oh, we're falling before Your throne. (Chorus)

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn: "Above All"

Above all powers, above all kings, above all nature and all created things.
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man, You were here before the world began

Above all kingdoms, above all thrones, above all wonders the world has ever known.
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth, there's no way to measure what You're worth.

Chorus

Crucified, laid behind the stone, You lived to die rejected and alone.
Like a rose, trampled on the ground, You took the fall and thought of me, above all.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God,
because we are not strong enough
to pray as we should,
you provide Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit
to intercede for us in power.
In this confidence we ask you
to accept our prayers.

Faithful God,
you formed your church from the despised of the earth
and showed them mercy,
that they might proclaim your salvation to all.
Strengthen those whom you choose today,
that they may faithfully endure all trials
by which you conform your church to the cross of Christ.

Judge of the nations,
you created humanity for salvation,
not destruction,
and sent your Son to guide us

into the way of peace.
 Enable people of every race and nation
 to accept each other as sisters and brothers,
 your children, on whom you lavish honor and favor.

Compassionate God,
 your Son gives rest to those weary with heavy burdens.
 Heal the sick in body, mind, and spirit.
 Lift up the depressed.
 Befriend those who grieve.
 Comfort the anxious.
 Awaken those who damage themselves and others
 through the use of any drug.
 Fill all people with your Holy Spirit
 that they may bear each other's burdens
 and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Eternal God,
 your love is stronger than death,
 and your passion more fierce than the grave.
 We rejoice in the lives of those
 whom you have drawn into your eternal embrace.
 Keep us in joyful communion with them
 until we join the saints of every people and nation,
 gathered before your throne in ceaseless praise.

God of glory,
 you see how all creation groans in labor
 as it awaits redemption.
 As we work for and await your new creation,
 we trust that you will answer our prayers with grace,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who live and reigns with You, and the Holy Spirit
 as the One true God,
 now and forever. **Amen.**

Benediction

The God of peace,
 who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,
 make you complete in everything good
 so that you may do God's will,
 working among us that which is pleasing in God's sight,
 through Jesus Christ,
 to whom be the glory forever and ever!