

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, June 23rd, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

God Saves People
Proper 7
Psalm 9:17-20

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

In your wisdom, O God, you call us here to worship you.

We gather, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be fully alive with your life abundant,
ready to listen and respond with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

We listen, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be always watchful for your Word of wisdom,
sometimes startling and unexpected,
sometimes still and quiet,
but always dwelling among us.

We watch and wait for the Word of God.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

We give thanks to you, God our Father,
for mercy that reaches out,
for patience that waits our returning,
for your love that is ever ready
to welcome sinners.

We praise you that in Jesus Christ
you came to us with forgiveness,
and that, by your Holy Spirit,
you move us to repent
and receive your love.

Though we are sinners,
you are faithful and worthy of all praise.

O gracious and holy God,
give us diligence to seek you,

wisdom to perceive you,
 and patience to wait for you.
 Grant us, O God,
 a mind to meditate on you,
 eyes to behold you,
 ears to listen for your Word,
 a heart to love you,
 and a life to proclaim you,
 through the power of the Spirit
 of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

((((CHILDRENS CERTIFICATES))))

Children's Hymn: "O Be Careful Little Eyes"

Call to Confession

The proof of God's amazing love is this:
 While we were sinners, Christ died for us.
 Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness,
 so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
 Trusting in God's faithfulness and compassion,
 let us confess our sin before God and one another

Prayer of Confession

**Holy and merciful God,
 in your presence we confess
 our sinfulness, our shortcomings,
 and our offenses against you.
 You alone know how often we have sinned
 in wandering from your ways,
 in wasting your gifts,
 in forgetting your love.
 Have mercy on us, O Lord,
 for we are ashamed and sorry
 for all we have done to displease you.
 Forgive our sins,
 and help us to live in your light
 and walk in your ways,
 for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Our God pardons our sins and forgives our disobedience.
 Our God does not stay angry forever.

Instead, our God delights to show mercy.
 Our God again has compassion on us.
 Our God tramples our sins underfoot
 and hurls our iniquities into the depths of the sea.
 Give thanks to our God, for our God is good!

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: "Here I Am to Worship"

Responsive Reading

Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Anthem (Music Ministry): "Walkin' to the Jordan"

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Psalm 9:17-20

**¹⁷ The wicked shall return to Sheol,
 all the nations that forget God.**

**¹⁸ For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
 and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.**

**¹⁹ Arise, O LORD! Let not man prevail;
 let the nations be judged before you!**

**²⁰ Put them in fear, O LORD!
 Let the nations know that they are but men! *Selah***

Sermon

'If God is such a loving God, why does he allow all of this evil and all of this violence to exist in the world today?'

How many of us have found ourselves asking this question or being asked this question by others in the last few years? Perhaps it was delivered a little differently, 'What is the world coming to?' but the meaning is the same.

Everyday both Christians and non-Christians look at the world around us and try to figure out what is happening in our schools, our governments, or communities and our churches. We are trying to figure out why it seems that everything is falling apart in the world around us as chaos, violence and immorality become more and more prevalent in our lives.

The truth is that even as we witness the influence of Satan in the world around us, we need to acknowledge that it is not God that is allowing evil, chaos and violence to permeate our society.

We look at society and we blame the government, the police, the school system, or any system or organization we can think of that might be involved. However, do you recall how last week we talked about how we blame our personal sin on anyone and anything but ourselves?

We have to acknowledge the same truth when it comes to the world around us and the immorality and that evil exists. We are at least partially accountable for the way the world and society are crumbling around us.

When we choose to stay silent as the enemies of God remove our right to pray in public or to share our faith with others. When we choose to stay silent when people actively seek to push Christianity out of our schools, our governments, our communities and in some cases even our churches. When we stay silent, we are allowing evil to take place in these places. When we choose to suppress the truth of the Scripture for our own personal peace, we are allowing evil to take place in our lives.

When we fail to stand up for the truth of God's Word in the world around us, when we fail to stand firm in our faith, we are the ones that are allowing Satan to deceive the people in our lives, in our communities and in the world. When we fail to stand firm in the truth of God's Word and we fail to proclaim it lovingly to the world around us, we should not be surprised when Satan and his minions move into that space.

Psalm 9:17-20

**¹⁷ The wicked shall return to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.**

The wicked, the evil, the immoral, all who have turned against God will be returned to Sheol, hell. Anyone and everyone who forsakes, forgets, or rejects that Jesus Christ is Lord, the Bible clearly says will be turned to hell.

So why are we surprised when we see echoes of hell in this world. Look at the world around us and see how God has been removed from our society, as Christians we have allowed atheists and other religions to remove God and his Scriptures, his commandments, from our society, our schools, our communities and our churches. We have allowed God to be kicked out, and what happens when you remove light from a room, darkness moves in.

The Bible even warns us that this will happen. In the book of Revelation, we see this warning given to the Church of Ephesus.

Revelation 2:4-5

**⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.
⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.**

The first love, the commandment to love God first with all of your heart, soul, body and mind. Jesus needs to be first, before all other things. The Church Fathers of the Reformation, dubbed it Sola Scriptura, the truth that the Scripture needs to be at the center of the church, its sermons, its teachings, its fellowship and its evangelism.

However, in the modern church we see the Scripture being laid to the wayside. In fact, just this week I learned of a church in which was in a joint mission with the United Church of Canada,

and even though the two churches agreed to work together for a few more years it was overturned by the United Church of Canada, because the church's worship services were too structured, we focused too much on Scripture, and I focused too much on salvation. This is why our world is being filled with darkness because the light and truth of God's word is constantly being shuffled out of spaces, our government, our classrooms, our communities and yes, even our churches.

Churches that were once bastions of light in this world are now standing almost empty and people who were once filling their lives with the light of God's Word are now stumbling around in the dark, because there is no one left to light the way for them. Wolves in sheep's clothing preside over congregations full of goats, Satan does not need to radically alter God's Word to trick people, he just needs to alter it slightly, jest enough to lead people astray, and he has done that very well in the modern ecumenical, unconditionally loving, social justice driven church.

It should come to no surprise to you that many of those who call themselves Christians, whether they are everyday people or musicians, artists, actors, or politicians, are not in fact Christian, because the church they attend has failed to stand firm in God's word, instead it has made accommodations to align itself with the direction the culture is moving in. It should come as no surprise that many who claim to be Christian regularly participate in and encourage behaviour that goes against the teachings of the Scripture. People who are seeking to benefit from the world and fit into its expectations of them. People who seek the approval of everyone except God.

When Jesus spoke the seven woes to the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 this is what he was speaking of, people who professed faith in God, but did not live it out in their lives.

Take a moment and grab the Bible in the pew in front of you and follow along with me as I read Matthew 23:

Matthew 23

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, ³so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. ⁸But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. ¹¹The greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹²Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

¹³“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. ¹⁵Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a

single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ ¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ ¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹ And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. ²² And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. ³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? ³⁴ Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, ³⁵ so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶ Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Lament over Jerusalem

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”

Jesus dealt with wolves, hypocrites and vipers. The faith has always been under attack by the deceiver. The church has always had people within its ranks who are wolves in sheep’s clothing, people who claim to be saints, yet in truth are servants of the devil. The problem is that in the

modern world we have become more and more accepting of these false teachers and their teachings.

Worse yet, we have even become like them in some ways, we are the ones spreading gossip, backstabbing one another, looking down our noses at fellow Christians. We are the ones judging people because of some sin they have committed. We are the ones feeling we have the right to condemn, even though we are guilty of sin and deserving of condemnation. We are behaving in many ways the same as the Pharisees and Scribes did two thousand years ago.

Jesus told us in John 13:34-35

John 13:34-35

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Love one another. Even our enemies, Love one another, do not condemn one another. Our words are one of the most powerful weapons we possess. When we speak with anger we can do serious damage to one another, so even when we speak to one another about sin, we need to do so lovingly.

When we speak harshly, we can drive people away from God and directly into the hands of a false teacher and a false church. When we speak harshly, we can make it so someone will never give Christianity a chance, in fact this is the main reason so many people reject Christianity, they look at the harsh behavior and language of past generations and when someone tries to teach them of the love of Christ, they reject it immediately.

As Christians we need to remember that if God is capable of forgiving our sins, we should be able to forgive the sins of others and show them the same love that God showed us.

We need to speak to others with the knowledge that our God is so loving he can forgive even the worst of sinners, as long as they come to him and seek repentance, and that is the message of the Gospel that we need to share in the world.

We need to reject the ways of this world, which are focused on revenge, grudges, and hating people who have hurt us, or hurt others in the present or past and instead show them the love of Christ. We need to speak the truth of God's Word into the dark places that it has been pushed out of, not so that we can return the light fully into those places, but so that those who are lost in that darkness can see that light as a beacon to move towards, like a lighthouse guiding them to safety in a storm.

We will never bring the world back to where it once was, the book of Revelation teaches us that the troubles and tribulations will only continue to get worse in this world until the day of Christ's return.

That is what the world is coming too, and if we do not start to stand up for Christ in this darkness, we are not fulfilling the Great Commission that our Lord and Savior gave each and every one of us.

We need to be out in the dark, shining our light for all to see. Offering the love and forgiveness of God for those lost in the darkness, caught up in the chaos and drowning in the sea of sin. Not condemning them but offering them a path to Salvation. We need to be showing them how God can take away their sin, remove the burden and free them from the shackles.

We need to show them God frees you from sin. God frees you from the guilt and shame that Satan uses to bind you. God removes the veil that clouds your vision and allows you to see the truth of his Word, God forgives you so that you can begin to forgive yourself and others.

God saves people. We light the way to God as we walk as the Salt and light of his word in this broken world.

Let us pray,

Watch Over All Your People

Gracious God and Father,
 watch over all your people,
 those who struggle with doubts,
 those who struggle with the labors of life,
 those who sometimes struggle as they seek you.
 Calm our hearts with your Word,
 and with your dear Son's promise,
 "I will give you rest."
 Pour out your abundant blessings on us,
 give us the assurance of your love in Jesus Christ.
 Give us confidence as we face the challenges ahead.
 Give us health of body and spirit,
 and blessings in all things;
 through your Son who gave himself for us
 so that we could be his,
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Source: Paul C. Stratman, April 27, 2024, from an online request.

Hymn: "Purify My Heart"

Invitation to Offering**Offering****Offertory Prayer**
(Congregant Prepared)**Closing Hymn: "Hosanna"****Pastoral Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
 Help us to really know you,
 to bless, worship, and praise you
 for all your works
 and for all that shines forth from them:
 your almighty power, wisdom, kindness,
 justice, mercy, and truth.
 Help us to direct all our living—
 what we think, say, and do—
 so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us
 but always honored and praised.

Your kingdom come.
 Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way
 that more and more we submit to you.
 Keep your church strong, and add to it.
 Destroy the devil's work;
 destroy every force that revolts against you
 and every conspiracy against your Word.
 Do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect
 that in it you are all in all.

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
 Help us and all people
 to reject our own wills
 and to obey your will without any back talk.
 Your will alone is good.
 Help us one and all to carry out the work we are called to,
 as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.
Do take care of all our physical needs
so that we come to know
that you are the only source of everything good,
and that neither our work and worry
nor your gifts
can do us any good without your blessing.
And so help us to give up our trust in creatures
and to put trust in you alone.

Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Because of Christ's blood,
do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are,
any of the sins we do
or the evil that constantly clings to us.
Forgive us, just as we are fully determined,
as evidence of your grace in us,
to forgive our neighbors.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.
And our sworn enemies—
the devil, the world, and our own flesh—
never stop attacking us.
And so, Lord,
uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat
in this spiritual struggle,
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.

For yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever.
We have made all these requests of you
because, as our all-powerful King,
you not only want to,
but are able to give us all that is good;
and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.

It is even more sure that you listen to our prayer,
than that we really desire what we pray for. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the grace of Christ, which daily renews us,
and the love of God, which enables us to love all,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which unites us in one body,
make us eager to obey the will of God until we meet again,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.