

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

What you Believe  
Baptism of the Lord  
John 1:14

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Beloved, God chooses us and calls us by name.

**We belong to God. Alleluia!**

Our lives have purpose because we belong to God.

**We are called to be like Christ and follow him.**

We will find joy, peace, and restoration through God's amazing grace.

**Let us worship God who claims us and loves us! Praise be to God!**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Creator of the sun and moon and stars,  
You stir in our midst to reveal your light.  
By the work of your Spirit, you lead us in new directions.  
Your beloved Son has called us to new life  
and by his grace, reconciles the divisions among us.  
Holy One, we praise you for the blessings you give us  
in our baptism into Christ,  
and through your love that surrounds us day by day.  
To you we give all praise, glory, and honor,  
through Jesus Christ,  
who is one with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and always. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!

Let us make our confession to God.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Merciful God,  
in baptism you promise forgiveness and new life,  
but we confess that we prefer our old, familiar ways.  
We cling to destructive habits,  
we harbor grudges,  
and we are reluctant to welcome a stranger or forgive one another.  
Nostalgia for the past prevents us from exploring new possibilities.  
In your loving kindness, forgive us.  
Have mercy upon us and move among us  
so that we might pursue new life in Christ together.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Do not be afraid, for Christ has redeemed you.  
Baptized in the deep waters of death, he has washed away your sins.  
Risen from death, he invites you to be washed in the cleansing tide of God's mercy.  
Your sins are forgiven; be at peace with God, with yourself, and with each other.

### **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: "Speak, O Lord"**

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You  
To receive the food of Your holy Word  
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us  
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness  
That the light of Christ might be seen today  
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith  
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us  
All Your purposes for Your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience  
Holy reverence, true humility  
Test our thoughts and our attitudes  
In the radiance of Your purity  
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see

Your majestic love and authority  
 Words of pow'r that can never fail  
 Let their truth prevail over unbelief.  
 Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds  
 Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us  
 Truths unchanged from the dawn of time  
 That will echo down through eternity  
 And by grace, we'll stand on Your promises  
 And by faith, we'll walk as You Walk with us  
 Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built  
 And the earth is filled with Your glory.

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Isaiah 43:1-7**

But now thus says the LORD,  
 he who created you, O Jacob,  
 he who formed you, O Israel:  
 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
 I have called you by name, you are mine.

**<sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
 and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
 when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
 and the flame shall not consume you.**

**<sup>3</sup> For I am the LORD your God,  
 the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.  
 I give Egypt as your ransom,  
 Cush and Seba in exchange for you.**

**<sup>4</sup> Because you are precious in my eyes,  
 and honored, and I love you,  
 I give men in return for you,  
 peoples in exchange for your life.**

**<sup>5</sup> Fear not, for I am with you;  
 I will bring your offspring from the east,  
 and from the west I will gather you.**

**<sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, Give up,  
 and to the south, Do not withhold;  
 bring my sons from afar  
 and my daughters from the end of the earth,**

**<sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.”**

**Anthem (Music Ministry): “My Hope Is Built On Nothing Else”**

**Prayer for illumination  
(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture**

**John 1:14**

**<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**Sermon**

I have something very important to start with today. A fact of life that is critical for everyone in this world to know.

What you believe about Jesus is the most important thing you can believe in your life.

Jesus once turned to his disciples and asked them

**Matthew 16:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”**

That question is an all-important question, ‘Who do you say the Son of man is?’

There are a couple reasons why it is the most critical question you will face in this lifetime and why it is the most important thing you can believe in your life.

The first is because it is an inescapable belief. Either you will bow your knee now here on earth before Him and declare him Lord, which means salvation for you, or you will bow your knee after death here on earth to him and it will mean condemnation.

**Philippians 2: 8-11**

**<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

It is clear, you either accept God in your lifetime and humble yourself before him, giving up your sinful ways, or you will accept him as God at your judgement because in the end, every knee will bow down to him who is the creator of all things.

The second reason is because it will determine the quality of your life in the here and now and for all of eternity.

What your belief about Jesus Christ is the most important belief you can have in your life.

What you need to know is that Jesus Christ was God and that he was Man.

Theologians call this the hypostatic union of Christ, meaning two natures in a single being. Jesus was both fully man and fully God in a single person.

We learned last week that:

**John 1:1**

**1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

In the first chapter of John verses 1, 14, and 18 are three of the greatest verses to describe Jesus in all of the Bible.

Jesus is the eternal Word; he was there before there was even a beginning. The Word was there before anything else was created, no where does it say that the Word became the Word, which means Jesus is eternal, he has always and will always exist.

Remember that the word that we see as Word comes from Logos, it has the idea of reason and communication. So, we have this idea of God being revealed by the living Word, the Bible is the written Word of God and Jesus is the living Word of God.

He is also the personal God, he was with God, he was face to face with God. God is three in one, the trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They are three different and distinct beings that exist together as the One true living God.

This denies one of the doctrines that is creeping into churches today which is called modalism. Modalism is the idea that there is only personality one God, and he takes on different personas or modes as he needs. TD Jakes, a very popular minister in the US, is a believer in and teacher of Modalism, as is the whole oneness movement in the Pentecostal church.

Modalism is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that we have an eternal Father who is God, an eternal Son who is God and an eternal Holy Spirit who is God. Three in one.

I know that can seem confusing; I know that it can be hard to figure out. The good news is that you do not have to figure it out, you just need to worship God for who he is.

There are a lot of things in this world we do not understand how they work or what they consist of, but we use them, like phones, computers, the internet, microwaves. We do not need to know all of the electronics and science that are involved in these things, we just need to know what they do and how to use them.

Gods is so much further beyond our understanding that worldly things, we only are given a glimpse of who he is in the Scriptures and even that is beyond our human comprehension. Humans are finite, we have limits, God is infinite, he has no limits.

So, if you do not understand the trinity, the three in one, that is perfectly normal. Don't sweat it, just worship God for who he is, the eternal creator of all things and our Lord and Saviour.

The last thing we need to touch on is that Jesus is the divine Word. The Word was God. And that is actually much stronger when we read it in Greek it actually says, God was the Word.

So, what we need to know about Jesus is that he is eternal, he is personal, and he is divine.

This is the Word that was made flesh.

**John 1:14**

**<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

John is saying that God walked among man, John and the other disciples saw his glory in the flesh.

This is John's version of the birth of Jesus Christ:

This is the Christmas Story by John, there is no angelic visits, no manger, no shepherds or wise men. He just simply states that the Word became flesh, in Greek it is the word flesh became. So, he is making it clear that the eternal Word, the personal Word and the divine Word took on humanity.

The word flesh is not just speaking off our physical flesh, our skin, bones, and tissues, it means he took on all the aspects of what it means to be human in this world, full humanity.

He was fully human, he had human emotions, he had human feelings, he had to grow, mature, develop. He had human spirit and human soul, he was everything human, even the parts of our own humanity that we cannot understand, he took it all on.

Christ was just like us in every way other that one thing, his life was without sin, he was born of the virgin Mary and the sinless Son of God. He lived here on this planet for 33 years without

ever sinning, he died a substitutionary death for us upon the cross and was buried and he rose from that grave three days later.

The Word was made flesh, he took on all of humanity, yet he remained fully God. God is immutable, God does not change. So even though Jesus took on Human flesh he remained fully God the entire time.

This means at no time did Jesus ever stop being God. He did not leave heaven after hanging up his being God up on the coat rack, only to pick it up again after he ascended. He was fully God and fully Man the entire time.

### **Philippians 2:5-8**

**<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

Jesus did not use his deity when he was in the form of man. He only used it to fulfill the Father's will. He used it to perform the miracles that were part of the plan of man's salvation, so that they would point to his deity, they would point to him being the Messiah.

God dwelt with man. He pitched his tent among man, the same way he had done in the Old Testament.

I do not know if you have ever read 2 Corinthians, but there is a very interesting piece of Scripture there related to tents.

### **2 Corinthians 5:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup> For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup> He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.**

Our earthly tents. Tents are temporary, they are not permanent. This body that we have right now is temporary, because we are on the journey to our eternal home in heaven which God has built for us.

Jesus too came and lived in this temporary body, he pitched his tent among our tents and lived with us as we walked upon this journey to the eternal kingdom. For 33 years he walked in that body, and after his crucifixion and death, he was resurrected into his new body. In the

resurrection, that body was transformed and became an example of what all Christians can look forward to at the end of the temporary life here upon earth.

God dwelt among us. The disciples gazed upon God in the flesh, they stared at him, they constantly tried to figure out who he was. A man that could make the wind and waves obey him, a man who could heal the sick. The disciples probably sat and stared at him in awe at times.

John says the disciples saw his glory. They saw him raise the dead, they saw him turn the water into wine, they saw him walk on water, they saw him cleanse the lepers, They saw him give sight to the blind.

James, John and Peter witnessed the transfiguration, when the veil of his humanity was pulled back and his deity shone forth. On that mountain the three disciples witnessed his glory. So, John is packing a lot into these few words.

The ESV reads, '**glory as of the only Son from the Father.**' The KJV says, '**the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.**' That word begotten is often mistranslated as made or created. And the truth is that neither version is a good translation of the Greek

The Greek word that is translated would be more like, 'of an only only-begotten'. So, it does not mean that Jesus was made or created, it means he was one of a kind, unique, special. He was the chosen one, from eternity to eternity, and he is the only one who could fulfil the purpose of our salvation, and he is full of God's glory, God's grace and God's truth.

So, John is saying yet again look at God, both fully human and fully God. The word incarnate.

The Westminster shorter catechism refers to the incarnation in question 22

**How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?**

**Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin (Heb. 2:14, 16, 4:15, 7:26; Gal. 4:4; Luke 1:27, 31, 35, 42).**

Two distinct natures, one human and one divine existing in the same being. We do not need to understand it, we do not need to explain it, we just need to know it is the truth of God's Word.

**1 Timothy 3:16**

**<sup>16</sup> Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:**

**He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated by the Spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations,**



**believed on in the world,  
taken up in glory.**

In Jesus Christ the eternal, personal, divine infinite and invisible God, became visible to man.

This is important for us to believe. If we deny the fact that Jesus either fully God or fully human, we fail to understand who God is, only those who want to change God for their own purposes deny either the absolute deity or Christ or the absolute humanity of Christ.

**1 John 4:1-3**

**4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.**

So only Christians, true Christians acknowledge that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Human. Any pseudo-Christian group that teaches otherwise is teaching a false doctrine and if we are to believe what John is saying here, which I would tend to believe, they are the wolves in sheep's clothing and agents of the anti-Christ.

There was a common false teaching in the church of the time known as Gnosticism, which was basically a combination of Greek Philosophy and Christianity. It taught that matter was evil, and spirit was good, we have it today in what is called New Age Mysticism, and there are pseudo-Christians churches that teach this as well. They like to teach that Jesus could not have flesh because flesh was evil, therefore he just had a spiritual form, or they take the opposite view that he was a man and not really God at all. We have these same teachings in the Jehovah Witnesses today, as well as in Islam which teaches that Jesus was just a man, not the Son of God.

These churches that either deny the Divinity of Jesus or the Humanity of Jesus simply have it wrong and are leading people astray.

**Galatians 4:4**

**<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

The Word became flesh, exactly as had been prophesied in the book of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 7:14**

**14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**

Christmas is God with us. His conception was supernatural, yet his fetal growth and development, his birth and life, were all natural. Think about that, in the womb of Maryt was divine God, and he had an umbilical cord, which means God has a belly button.

Jesus had to grow up, and he was like us, except for the fact that he never sinned.

So, if you deny the virgin birth, you also deny Christianity. Without the virgin birth, Jesus becomes a man just like any other man. And if he was a man just like any other man he could not die upon the cross for our sins and our salvation.

Jesus experienced life as we do, he got hungry like we do, he could have created food at any time, the devil even tried to get him to do it, but he did not, instead he quoted Scripture back at the devil. He got tired and thirsty, that is why he was at the well where he met the Samaritan woman and asked her to draw a drink of water for him.

The all-powerful creator of the universe was tired, thirsty and hungry.

Perhaps the most memorable example of his humanity occurs in John Chapter 11 where we will read, 'Jesus wept.' The Divine, The creator of all things, wept over the loss of a friend, even though he knew he would raise him from the dead.

Jesus had a human body so that he could go to the cross and die in our place. His humanity was an immaterial part of who he was. He was fully human, and that meant he was just a normal looking person like you and I. He did not shine, or glow, he did not have a halo that was over top his head as he walked around. He was not supernaturally beautiful. He was a carpenter from Galilee, God who had taken on the full life of a man.

So why did the Word become flesh?

He became flesh to provide an example for how we are to live our lives.

**1 Peter 2:21**

**<sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.**

Jesus suffered in this life and yet through all his suffering, he was filled with kindness and mercy. He was a wonderful example of love and hatred of sin combined. He lived as an example for all of us to follow.

The Word also became flesh to sanctify the value of human life. And that is a message that needs to be proclaimed into the world today. You want to stop all the senseless violence in the world today, you want to end the shooting and terrorism, the robberies and carjackings come to God. We need a revival in the Christian faith, people getting down on their knees and praying. We need to turn back to God's Word and His ways as a society, we need a spiritual

awakening. Jesus sanctified the value of human life because he could have come as anything, an elephant or an eagle, but he became a man.

The culture of the time did not value human life, as I have said before, if a father did not want the child that his wife bore, he would just have it placed outside for the wild dogs. Slavery, prostitution and all other forms of human degradation were rampant.

Christians changed that in the early church, they looked after the widow and the orphan, they cared for the ill and lost.

The value of a human life was so low, and it is on its way to that level again in the world today, where the value of human life is once again being devalued through abortion and the rise of pornography. All because the Christian influence on the world is being pushed off into the corner by our culture, and we are letting them do it. We need a revival of faith here and now.

The Word became flesh so that he could understand us fully.

**Hebrews 4:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

He knows our weaknesses, he knows our pains, he knows our sorrows, he knows what it is like to be tempted, he knows what it is to lose a loved one.

Someone once said that 'Every pain that rends the heart, the man of sorrows has a part.'

The incarnation involved fully taking on all of the attributes of man while not giving up any of his divine attributes.

The Word became flesh in order to die for our sins. This is an indisputable truth of our faith. God became man to die for our sins. He was born so that he could die upon the cross. He became flesh so that he could become our kinsman redeemer, to die in our place.

**1 Timothy 2:5-6**

**For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.**

God came in the flesh so our relationship with God could be restored through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And finally, the word became flesh to display for us the love of God.

**1 John 4:9-10**

**<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

This is the love of God manifested. How do you know God loves you? He came from heaven and took on flesh for you. He left his divinity and took on all the aspects of human life. He was tired, hungry, thirsty, sad, lonely, rejected, every trial and emotion of humanity so that he could understand us. Jesus loves us and knows exactly what we are going through in our lives, so he is the perfect mediator to God when we pray to him, he takes everything we get wrong and makes it right with God when we have him as our Lord and Saviour.

Jesus came in the flesh to reveal to man who God is, to redeem man to God, to reconcile our relationship, and to reign of the throne of David.

He fulfilled the Davidic covenant, that through his line the Messiah would come and sit upon his throne in an everlasting Kingdom. Jesus coming in the flesh fulfilled all of the promises of the Old Testament and his kingdom shall last forever and when he comes again, he will bring peace for all of mankind.

And until that time, we will not have peace in our hearts unless we let him reign there, in our homes unless he is king over it, or in our nations unless he is placed in his position of authority. Until the time he comes in his final Glory, it is our Great Commission to share the Glory of who God is with the world around us and encourage them to accept him as the Lord over their lives and join him in his eternal kingdom by being the Salt and Light of God's Word in this world.

Let us pray,

**Give Us Faith to Overcome Our Weakness**

*Lord God, heavenly Father,  
in your special love and mercy  
you gave us your Son  
who became truly human  
and died on the cross for us.  
Pour your Holy Spirit into our hearts  
that we may put all our trust in him,  
just as the Centurion believed  
that Christ would help his sick servant,  
may we be assured  
of the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life.  
We have your Word:  
"Whoever believes in me will never see death."  
Dear Father in heaven,*

*grant that we may believe with no doubts in our hearts,  
and remain in the faith until our last hour.  
Almighty and eternal God,  
mercifully look on our weaknesses,  
and in all dangers and needs  
defend us with your power against our enemies;  
through Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one true God, now and forever. Amen*

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Epiphany 3.

**Hymn #367: “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” (V 1,3,5)**

Jesus, the very thought of thee  
with sweetness fills my breast,  
but sweeter far thy face to see,  
and in thy presence rest.

O hope of every contrite heart,  
O joy of all the meek,  
to those who fall how kind thou art,  
how good to those who seek!

Jesus, our only joy be thou,  
as thou our prize wilt be;  
Jesus, be thou our glory now  
and through eternity.

**Invitation to Offering**

**Offering**

**Offertory Prayer**

**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Closing Hymn #370: “Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus”**

Hallelujah! sing to Jesus,  
his the sceptre, his the throne;  
Hallelujah! his the triumph,  
his the victory alone.  
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion  
thunder like a mighty flood;

Jesus out of every nation  
 has redeemed us by his blood.  
 Hallelujah! not as orphans  
 are we left in sorrow now;  
 Hallelujah! he is near us,  
 faith believes, nor questions how.  
 Though the cloud from sight received him  
 when the forty days were o'er,  
 shall our hearts forget his promise,  
 "I am with you evermore"?

Hallelujah! King eternal,  
 thee the Lord of lords we own:  
 Hallelujah! born of Mary,  
 earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne.  
 Thou within the veil hast entered,  
 robed in flesh, our great High Priest,  
 thou on earth both priest and victim  
 in the eucharistic feast.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

God of time and eternity:  
 As this new year stretches before us,  
 we thank you for the time you give us  
 and for all those things that are still possible and precious in this gift.  
 We thank you for each new day and its possibilities;  
 for each night, its rest and reflection.  
 We thank you for words of forgiveness and the chance to make a new start,  
 for word of invitation to explore new opportunities.  
 Give us the courage to try something new  
 and the conviction to finish things leftover from last year.  
 Make time spent this year your time, O God.  
 Bless our time with you.

God of moments and memories  
 we remember before you people facing hard times in the months ahead.  
 We pray for those struggling with illness,  
 and for those facing treatment or surgery with uncertain results....  
 We pray for those who are grieving the loss of dear ones  
 and for all who remember what used to be but can no longer be...  
 Make time spent this year your time, O God.  
 Bless our time with you.

God of hopefulness and helpfulness,  
we remember those who are seeking new opportunities this year:  
Those training for new employments and those looking for work;  
Those developing new businesses and seeking the right employees;  
And those who provide services to improve life in our communities  
amid the uncertainties around us...  
Give us wisdom and perseverance in the works we undertake as a congregation  
in the face of all the changes in our community.  
Make time spent this year your time, O God.  
Bless our time with you.

As we work together with the vision of your kingdom before us this year,  
fill us with love and generosity that can change the world because of your blessing.  
We pray we can make a difference in even the most challenging situations  
because we are the people of your beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name  
we pray. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ  
shine in our hearts, transform our lives,  
and brighten the world.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
rest upon you always. **Amen.**