

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
 Sunday, February 2nd, 2025
 Rev. Gerry Gallant

Transformation
 Fourth Sunday After Epiphany
 John 2:1-11

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

O Lord, in you we find refuge;
Let us never be put to shame.

Turn your ear to us, O God, and save us.
For you are our rock and our fortress.

God has been our hope and our trust from our earliest days.
God has been with us since we were born from our mother's womb.

Let us sing out our praise of God's steadfast love.
We will offer God all glory and honor this day and always!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty and everlasting One,
 your power is incomparable, your majesty infinite,
 and your love beyond our imagining.
 You are hidden in mystery, and yet so present.
 In a hectic world, you are peace and rest.
 In a harsh world, you are tenderness and mercy.
 In the cold and dark of winter, you are light and comfort,
 and so we bring you our worship,
 for you are the One who created us,
 the One who redeems us,
 and the One who gives us life,
 our one and only God,
 to whom we offer all love and loyalty, now and always. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn

Call to Confession

We know that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Let us in freedom confess the wrong we have done.

Prayer of Confession

God, whose name is love,
we confess our faults and failings,
knowing you know us through and through.
You tell us love is patient and kind,
and you know when our patience and kindness fell short.
You tell us love is never rude or selfish,
and you see the times we insisted on our own way.
Forgive us the excuses we make to ourselves when our love falters.
Strengthen us by your Spirit so that our love is genuine and reliable.

Assurance of Pardon

God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.
As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is God's love;
as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our sins.
Thanks be to God whose love and forgiveness are steadfast.
May we be steadfast in our forgiveness of one another.

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: "Wonderful, Merciful Saviour"

Wonderful, merciful Savior
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 offered hope when our hearts had
 Hopelessly lost the way,
 Oh we'd 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)

Responsive Reading**Psalms 71:1-6**

71 In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;
 let me never be put to shame!
**² In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
 incline your ear to me, and save me!**

**³ Be to me a rock of refuge,
 to which I may continually come;
 you have given the command to save me,
 for you are my rock and my fortress.**
**⁴ Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
 from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.**

**⁵ For you, O Lord, are my hope,
 my trust, O LORD, from my youth.**
**⁶ Upon you I have leaned from before my birth;
 you are he who took me from my mother's womb.
 My praise is continually of you.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): “Come, Share the Lord”

Prayer for illumination

(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

John 2:1-11

2 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. **3** When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” **4** And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” **5** His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. **8** And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. **9** When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Sermon

When we started into the book of John, I told you it was different. John speaks directly and he has one purpose in his Gospel, to ensure that people understand that Jesus is the one and only true Son of the Living God.

He states that in:

John 20:30-31

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

And this is significant. Over the last few weeks, we have read about the witness of John the Baptist, Andrew and the other disciple, Simon-Peter, Phillip, and Nathanel. We were shown how God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were all present in the baptism of the Lord. We were shown how Jesus foretold the change in character that we will see as Simon

becomes Peter and how Jesus sees into our very hearts in the calling of Nathanael. This all took place before Jesus officially began his public ministry.

Today, we will look at the first miracle, the first sign John would say, the first sign that points with absolute clarity to the deity of Jesus Christ.

As John wrote:

John 2:11

¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

And many consider this sign the very beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ as he walked among us on this earth. These signs all serve a purpose, they manifest the glory of God and point to his deity and majesty, and people have a choice to make, to believe or to not believe, to receive or to reject the Son of God in our lives.

In this first sign we see all his deity, we see his power, we see his love, we see his sympathy, and we see his majesty, all wrapped up in a wonderful telling of this first sign.

John 2:1-2

2 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

This is the setting of the sign. On the third day in the region, just 7 days after the Sanhedrin confronted John the Baptist. This has been an eventful week for Jesus and a rapid start into his earthly ministry.

He has returned to the region he is from and is invited to a wedding at Cana, and he chooses to attend. It is interesting that this first sign takes place at a wedding. The first wedding in the Bible was performed by God himself when he brought Adam and Eve together in the union of marriage.

Marriage is a divine institution, and we need to remember that when we begin to attempt to define what marriage is, marriage was created by God. Marriage is the building block of our society and as we continue to erode away at its importance, we can only expect our culture to follow. If we want our culture to survive, we need to bring our world back to one where people are making a lifelong commitment to one another and not just marrying for tax benefits or temporary emotions. We need the stability of strong marriages and strong families raised with Christian morals and values so that we can make a difference in the world around us as God intends for us to be doing.

So, there is significance in the fact that the first sign Jesus performs takes place at a wedding feast, one he has chosen to attend, and by doing to give his blessing on the institution of marriage and its significance in our lives.

We also need to know that marriage in Jesus's day was a little different than marriage today. A year before their marriage, the couple would enter a period of espousal, kind of like an engagement, except it was a legally binding arrangement. They were legally married, but they did not live together or consummate the marriage until after the ceremony.

The groom was fully responsible for everything in regard to the wedding. The ceremony and feast would be at his house. The bride would not know when the wedding would take place, the groom would just show up and take her to the ceremony. Jewish weddings were typically held on Wednesdays; however, she would get ready every day, just in case the groom surprised her. This is the imagery we have been presented before in the Gospel, we do not know the time or the hour of the Lord's return, so we are called to be ready at all times.

Could you imagine if we still had this practice today? A young couple gets engaged and the groom tells the bride, I will be by someday this summer for our wedding, be ready to go when I get there.

So, the groom and his groomsmen would show up and retrieve the bride, whisk her away to the groom's house and have a ceremony and celebration. A feast that sometimes could last as long as a week. And it was the responsibility, the duty, of the groom's family to ensure that they would not run out of food or wine, for as long as the feast lasted.

So, this wedding that Jesus was invited to was significant. We do not know who they were, but we know that Jesus was invited, and that Mary had some connection to the family, because she is taking part in some of the organization of the wedding.

John 2:3-5

³When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

They ran out of wine, and this was a real crisis. Remember it was the responsibility of the groom's family to have sufficient wine and food for the entirety of the wedding feast.

For us this might not seem like a big deal, you just run off to the store and get more wine. But that was not possible in Jesus's day.

We also need to know that the wine that they drank in Jesus's day was different than the wine we drink today, it was usually very diluted, about 10 cups of water to one cup of wine, and sometimes it was not even fermented, it was just basically watered-down grape juice. So yes, Jesus drank wine, and it is fine for Christians to drink, however the one stipulation that the bible

states is that we should not get drunk, even if we drink, we are to stay clear headed, ready just in case Jesus shows up.

Ephesians 5:17-21

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.

So, it was a weak wine that they were drinking, but running out of it at a wedding feast was a major faux pas, a critical error and unacceptable in the days of Jesus Christ. In some cases, families were actually sued by the bride's families and guests for running out of food or wine. The groom and his family would suffer shame and embarrassment if they fell short, so this could be why Mary brings this to Jesus's attention.

Do you notice though that she does not tell him what to do? How to solve the problem? She knows that Jesus is the Son of God, that he can do great things, so she brings him her problem and leaves it to him to find the best solution.

To which Jesus replies, '**Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.**' Many people take offence at his words. However, our culture should have a better understanding of this than people from the past. The people who take offense at this are intentionally looking for ways to be offended by God's words. We know that text does not convey emotion. There is a big difference in the way that we say things and the way that people interpret them, and it is even more amplified in writing.

The second issue is that in Jesus's day using the term 'woman' was a polite and honorable way to refer to his mother. Even when he hung on the cross, he used the term 'woman' when he told her to look to John as her son.

Instead, what Jesus is doing is telling his mother in a respectful way that he is bound to follow his Father's will and that while he can understand the situation, and he has sympathy for the groom's family, he can only do things that the Father has called for him to do.

Jesus is telling her that 'his hour has not come' he is on a divine timetable. On a path that has been laid out since before the beginning of the world, one in which he will die upon the cross for all of mankind. We will see him say this at least 5 more times in the book of John, showing that Jesus Christ knew from the very beginning what he was called to do in his life.

Which means that God had a purpose for this sign. Because we know that Jesus did in fact help.

Mary listens to his response and immediately turns to the servants and tells them:

‘Do whatever he tells you.’

These are the last recorded words of Mary in the Scriptures. ‘Do whatever he tells you!’

This is some great advice. Do what the Lord tells you to do, do not hesitate, do not contemplate, do not fear, just do whatever Jesus tells you to do.

In this sign we are shown how we are to deal with things in our lives. When we have a problem we bring it to Jesus, and then do what Jesus tells us to do.

There is also a worldly application to what we are seeing happening in this sign. The world’s joys eventually run out. The wine brought to the people at the wedding feasts joy, and it ran out. The same is true of this world, when you take part in the pleasures of the things of this world, when you find joy in the things of this world, the reality is that they will run out.

Jesus is going to supply joy in abundance in this sign. He is going to transform water into wine, the same way that he transforms us when we live our lives in him, finding joy in the Lord and no longer in the ways of this world.

John 2:6-11

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

There were six water pots of stone. These were water pots for washing up, the religious purification that the Jews participated in before a feast. They were empty, and each one held 20-30 gallons, so that is 120-180 gallons of water, or for those of you that do not know the conversion, that is 455 to 681 liters of water that would have been collected into these pots when Jesus said to fill them to the brim.

It is important for us to understand that they were filled to the brim. This meant there was no way that Jesus could have added anything to the pots, they were filled to the brim with water and then Jesus told them to draw some and bring it to the master of the feast, the one who was responsible for the governance of the feast.

And in verse 9 we are told the sign, the water in the pots which had been filled to the very brim, had become wine. Notice there is no big display of a miracle, there are no words chanted or mystic symbols, no dance to ritual. Jesus says fill the pots to the brim and then draw some and bring it to the master of the feast.

Jesus performs this miracle to save the honor of the groom and his family in secret. And when the master of the feast tastes this wine, he is blown away and calls upon the groom. He tells him that he is surprised because the groom has saved the best wine till the end, most people serve the good wine first and the really watered down, bad stuff at the end, once everyone is already a little tipsy.

I wonder what was going through the groom's head as this happened. He knew that they had run out of wine, and he was probably expecting to be reprimanded by the master of the feast. And instead of getting chewed out he is lifted up by the praise of the master of the feast. He probably was a little shocked and stunned, especially later when he learned that it was Jesus who had turned water into wine.

This sign points to the deity of Jesus, his majesty, his sympathy, his kindness. He transformed water into wine, with his power alone. He creates one thing out of another through his will alone.

This is what Jesus does in us, we are filled to the brim, he does not add to us, he simply changes us from the sinners we are into the saints that we are to become through the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

He changes us from bad wine into good wine. The world served the good wine first and the bad wine at the end. However God does it differently, our lives only get better as we walk with the Lord.

By contrast the world teaches people to pursue good stuff now, chase it while you are young, and it only gets worse as time goes on. What was pleasing in the past no longer is enough, that is the pit of addiction that so many addicts fall into regardless of their addiction.

You will see a marked difference in those who have walked with Jesus their lives and those who have walked in the world as they age. At the end of their days, the Godly are happy and looking forward to eternity, and the worldly are angry and bitter at the world they are leaving behind.

An old hymn says that 'every day with Jesus, I loved him more and more Jesus saves and keeps me he's the one I'm living for every day with Jesus is better sweeter than the day before.'

So, Jesus changes the water into high quality wine, but also an abundance. He made 455 to 681 liters of wine for a party. No matter how many people there were there that was more than enough wine to keep them satisfied.

Jesus shows that he cares through this sign, he cares for the groom and his family, and in his kindness and compassion he creates an abundance of what they need in that moment.

Biblically wine is often used as a symbol of joy and of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 104:15

**You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth
¹⁵ and wine to gladden the heart of man,
oil to make his face shine
and bread to strengthen man's heart.**

This is why in Ephesians we are told that we are not to get drunk on wine, but to get drunk of the Spirit.

When we are filled with the Spirit we find joy in our lives. And Jesus Christ creates joy in abundance for the people at this feast. More joy than they could have in this world.

This sign. This transformation of water into wine was performed so that his disciples could witness this sign and believe that he was indeed the Son of God.

This first sign shows us that Jesus comes to transform our lives, to bring us abundance joy as we walk with him. In our reading of this Scripture, we need to know that we can bring God our problems and place our trust in him, knowing that he will deal with whatever we bring him, and we just need to **'Do whatever he tells us to do.'**

So let us all do as we were told to do by our Lord and walk as the Salt and Light of his world in our communities sharing the joy he gives us with the lost.

Let us pray,

Restore Us to Your Right Path

Lord God, heavenly Father,
we all like sheep have gone astray.
We let ourselves be led away from the right path
by Satan and our own sinful flesh:
Graciously forgive us all our sins
for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ;
and quicken our hearts by your Holy Spirit,
that we may remain in your Word,
and in true repentance and a steadfast faith
continue in your Church to the end,

and obtain eternal salvation;
 through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity 3

Hymn #548: “Let us Break Bread Together”

Let us break bread together on our knees;
 let us break bread together on our knees;
 when I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees;
 let us drink wine together on our knees;
 when I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees;
 let us praise God together on our knees;
 when I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,
 the Holy Supper that we are about to celebrate
 is a feast of remembrance, of communion, and of hope.

We come in remembrance
 that our Lord Jesus Christ was sent of the Father into the world
 to assume our flesh and blood
 and to fulfill for us all obedience to the divine law,
 even to the bitter and shameful death of the cross.
 By his death, resurrection, and ascension
 he established a new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation,
 that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken by him.

We come to have communion with this same Christ,
 who has promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world.
 In the breaking of the bread he makes himself known to us
 as the true heavenly bread that strengthens us unto life eternal.
 In the cup of blessing he comes to us as the vine,
 in whom we must abide if we are to bear fruit.

We come in hope,
 believing that this bread and this cup
 are a pledge and foretaste of the feast of love
 of which we shall partake when his kingdom has fully come,
 when with unveiled face we shall behold him,
 made like unto him in his glory.

Let us Pray,

All-powerful God, I am sinful. Nothing I can do can save me. I turn away from my sin, and I flee to you. I need you. I need the life-giving death and resurrection of Jesus. Send me your Spirit so that I can be made new. Thank you for offering me forgiveness. Thank you for taking the punishment I deserved. Thank you for loving me more than I could possibly imagine. **Amen.**

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you;
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts;
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God;
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is truly right to glorify you, Father,
 and to give you thanks,
 for you alone are God, living and true,
 dwelling in light inaccessible from before time and forever.
 Fountain of all life and source of all goodness,
 you made all things and fill them with your blessing;
 you created them to rejoice in the splendor of your radiance.
 Countless throngs of angels stand before you
 to serve you night and day,
 and, beholding the glory of your presence,
 they offer you unceasing praise.

Joining with them,
and giving voice to every creature under heaven,
we glorify your name
and lift our voices in joyful praise:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name
in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

We acclaim you, holy God, glorious in power;
your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love.
You formed us in your own image,
giving the whole world into our care
so that, in obedience to you, our creator,
we might rule and serve all your creatures.
When our disobedience took us far from you,
you did not abandon us to the power of death.
In your mercy you came to our help,
so that in seeking you we might find you.
Again and again you called us into covenant with you,
and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.
Almighty God, you loved the world so much
that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior.
Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
he lived as one of us, yet was without sin.
To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation;
to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy.
To fulfill your purpose, he gave himself up to death
and, rising from the grave, destroyed death
and made the whole creation new.
And that we might live no longer for ourselves
but for him who died and rose for us,
God sent the Holy Spirit,
God's first gift for all who believe,
to complete God's work in the world,
and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all.
When the hour had come for him to be glorified
by you, his heavenly Father,
having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end:
at supper with them he took bread,
and after giving thanks to you,

he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,
 "Take, eat. This is my body, which is given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me."
 After supper he took the cup, saying,
 "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
 shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins.
 Whenever you drink it,
 do it for the remembrance of me."
 Holy God, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption.
 Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead,
 proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand,
 awaiting his coming in glory,
 and offering to you, from the gifts you have given us,
 this bread and this cup,
 we praise you and we bless you.

We shall do as our Lord commands.
We proclaim that our Lord Jesus
was sent by the Father into the world,
that he took upon himself our flesh and blood,
and bore the wrath of God against our sin.
We confess that he was condemned
to die that we might be pardoned,
and suffered death that we might live.
We proclaim that he is risen to make us right with God
and that he shall come again in the glory of his new creation.
This we do now and until he comes again.

Living God,
 send your Holy Spirit upon us
 as we share your heavenly meal;
 nourish us with your grace
 so that we are strengthened
 to do your work in this world;
 unite us with you so that we are renewed;
 and join us with your covenant people
 throughout time and space
 so that all divisions will be healed.
 May we gratefully and joyfully remember that Jesus, our Savior,
 lived, died, and rose to give us new life
 and make us new creations in him.
 May we live in the hope
 we discover through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Let us together confess the faith of the church at all times and in all places:

The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

Communion

We celebrate this feast in obedience to Christ's example and mandate.

[as the minister breaks the bread]
The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread,
and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,
"Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

[as the minister lifts or pours the cup]
In the same way he took the cup, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this in remembrance of me."

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord

until he comes.

Congregation of Jesus Christ,
the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him
and trust in him alone for their salvation.
All who are truly sorry for their sins,
who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus
as their Savior,
and who desire to live in obedience to him as Lord
are now invited to take part in
the table of the Lord.

Taking of the bread

Take and eat.
This is the body of Christ, which is [given] for you.
Do this, remembering him.

Drinking of the cup

This cup is the new covenant
sealed by Christ's blood,
which was shed that the sins of many
might be forgiven.
Drink from it, all of you

Prayer after Communion

Loving God,
you graciously feed us
with the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation.
May we who have received this sacrament
be strengthened in your service;
we who have sung your praises
tell of your glory and truth;
we who have seen the greatness of your love
see you face to face in your kingdom.
For you have made us your own people
by the death and resurrection of your Son, our Lord,
and by the life-giving power of your Spirit. **Amen.**

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Closing Hymn #411: “Stand Up and Bless the Lord”

Stand up and bless the Lord;
 God's people now rejoice;
 stand up and bless the Lord your God
 with heart and soul and voice.

God is our strength and song;
 now is salvation ours.
 God's love in Christ we now proclaim
 with all our ransomed powers.

Stand up and bless the Lord;
 the Lord your God adore;
 stand up and bless God's glorious name
 henceforth forevermore.

Pastoral Prayer

O God, your love is patient.
 We give you thanks for all those who have been patient with us,
 teaching us and caring for us in so many ways.
 We pray for the patience to love others as you have loved us.

O God, your love is kind.
 Thank you for every unexpected gesture of kindness we have received.
 Give us the courage to be kind to others,
 serving those who seem unkind, rude, or difficult to love.
 Remind us that each one we meet is your child,
 our sister or brother made in your image.

O God, your love is not arrogant, nor does it seek its own interests.
 Thank you for all who work to serve those who cannot fend for themselves.
 Strengthen those who have lost hope and confidence in their own value.
 Give us insight to speak the truth in love,

O God, your love bears all things; it never fails.
 We thank you for those we have loved in this life
 and who now dwell in the peace and joy of your presence.
 Let your comfort settle on those who are bereaved or lonely this day.
 We remember before you those with heavy burdens, many cares, much stress,
 and those who find too little comfort and help.
 Open our eyes to those in need around us
 and show us how to offer support and companionship,

for the sake of Christ, our friend and savior,
in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

May our Lord Jesus Christ,
the one who came with grace and truth,
also fill your hearts with grace and truth,
as you serve him in the days ahead.
And may the joy of the Lord—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
be your strength. **Amen.**