

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Do Not Be Afraid  
Second Sunday of Easter  
John 6:14-21

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Joyful is the sound we make this morning!  
**For this day liberates us from doubt and fear.**

Thankful is the song we sing!  
**For this day moves us past darkness and despair.**

Hopeful is the prayer upon our lips!  
**For this day awakens in us long-awaited new life.**

May his peace and presence be known to you.  
**And also, to you**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow,  
we rejoice in this new day you have made.  
We praise you for the abundant life with which you bless us,  
and for all the beauty that surrounds us as spring takes hold again.  
We praise you for your Son Jesus,  
and the power of new life promised in his resurrection.  
We praise you for your Spirit at work in human history,  
to restore and redeem our hope with that power of new life.  
God of steadfast love,  
we worship you with the Spirit and the Son,  
and claim your gift of new life,  
even in the face of any doubt or danger within the world you love.  
All praise, honor and glory be yours, O God,  
now and evermore. **Amen.**

Children's Video

Call to Confession

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

### **Prayer of Confession**

**O God of might and mercy,  
in raising Jesus from the dead, you showed us your power  
to defeat all that brings fear and sorrow to our lives.  
In his resurrection, Jesus promised to be with us everywhere and always.  
Yet we confess we are sometimes uncertain about your promises.  
We doubt the promise of resurrection for our own lives.  
Upheaval and anxiety eat away at our peace.  
Forgive us when we struggle to trust your goodness  
and your steadfast love for us.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel.  
In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free from sin and sorrow.  
In Jesus Christ, God offers us the gift of peace.  
May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts this day.

### **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: "I Sing Praises"**

I sing praises to Your name, O Lord  
praises to your name, O Lord  
For your name is great  
and greatly to be praised.

I give glory to Your name, O Lord  
glory to your name, O Lord  
For your name is great  
and greatly to be praised.

I give honour to Your name, O Lord  
honour to your name, O Lord  
For your name is great  
and greatly to be praised.

## **Responsive Reading**

### **Psalm 16**

1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

**2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;  
I have no good apart from you."**

3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,  
in whom is all my delight.

**4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;  
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out  
or take their names on my lips.**

5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.

**6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.**

7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;  
in the night also my heart instructs me.

**8 I have set the LORD always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.**

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;  
my flesh also dwells secure.

**10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,  
or let your holy one see corruption.**

**11 You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

**Anthem (Music Ministry): "Come Kneel at the Cross"**

## **Prayer for Illumination**

### **Scripture**

#### **John 6:14-21**

<sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

<sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. <sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near

the boat, and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.”  
<sup>21</sup> Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

### Sermon

This week we return to the book of John. If you can recall the week prior to Holy Week, we had just looked at the feeding of the five thousand and how there were so many important details in the miracle that pointed to the truth that everything that Jesus did while he walked on this earth served a purpose, the discipleship of the people he was with.

If Jesus had just wanted to feed the people who were gathered, he would have just snapped his fingers and fed them, he would not have asked Phillip how to feed them, he would not have needed the small crackers and fish from the boy, he would have just got it done.

But instead, he asked the question, he let the disciples take part in the serving of the people, take part in the miracle, all so that they could understand turning to Jesus, relying on Jesus was the key to overcoming the challenges that seem impossible in their service to God.

And that is where we start today, with the crowd realizing that an impossible amount of food, enough to produce five man-sized baskets of leftover had come from those crackers and fish.

This crowd of people, the five thousand men, the ten to twenty thousand people, had seen a sign that made them believe, even if just for a moment, that he was the prophet who had come to save the world.

They were recalling something that they had been taught from the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. Something from the book of Deuteronomy.

### Deuteronomy 18:15

<sup>15</sup> **“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—**

Moses told the people that a prophet will come along who will be like him, and that they should listen to him.

One of the teachings of the Rabbis of the time about this verse was that when this prophet that Moses spoke of came, he would do like Moses did. Moses provided manna for the people in the wilderness and this new prophet would do the same, he would provide mana for the people of God.

Seeing Jesus take two sardines and five crackers and feed somewhere between ten and twenty thousand people, made them think that Jesus just might be the prophet that Moses wrote about in the book of Deuteronomy.

There is an important and subtle lesson for us here. The crowd, that mass of people was willing to accept Jesus as a prophet, but why, why were they willing to call him that prophet that Moses had written about? They were willing because of what he had given to them; Jesus had filled their bellies, and they were willing to call him a prophet from God.

That is not necessarily a bad thing, but there is a danger in this form of belief. They were willing to see Jesus as the prophet, as long as he provided the mana. They were treating Jesus like a magic food dispenser, and the minute the food supply ran out, their faith would fade.

There are many Christians in the world like this today, when their life is sunshine and rainbows they claim Christianity as their faith, but the moment that they face a challenge, a trial, a moment of tribulation, and they think that Jesus is no longer giving them what they want, their professed belief in God fails them.

Yes, it is true that Jesus loves his people, he wants to give to them, to provide for them, to bless them, and to pour out his goodness upon their lives. However, if you only love Jesus for what he gives you, then you are loving the gift more than the giver. That is the danger when we begin to love the gift more than the giver.

We owe our lives to God not because of what he gives us; what he gives us are blessings. We owe our faith and obedience to God, because he is God, because he is the creator, sustainer, and redeemer of everything that exists. It should not matter if he blesses us or if he puts us through trials in our life, even trials as severe as the ones that Job went through in his life. We are to love and obey God, simply because he is the One True Living God.

Every Christian should be saying in the heart, Jesus it is because of who you are that I love you, it is because of who you are that I surrender my life to you and what you give me is beautiful and I praise and thank you for it. There is a song by Brandon Heath called Highly Favored, which has some really simple lyrics that remind us of this. I will not sing to you, but I will read off the lyrics.

**Just because I feel the rain  
Doesn't mean it's not from heaven  
Just because I feel some pain  
Doesn't mean it's not a blessing  
Though circumstances change  
One thing remains the same  
I am who You say I am  
I'm highly favored  
Deeply loved  
Bought and paid for  
By the blood  
I'm a child of the king  
Friend of the prince**

**You can look it up  
Got my name on the list  
Ask the savior  
I'm highly favored**

We love and obey God, not because of what he gives us, but because of who he is, our king, our prince, our savior.

Which is why when they come to make him the king because of the sign, Jesus withdrew away from the crowds deeper into the mountains.

**John 6:15**

**<sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.**

They were trying to take Jesus and make him, to force him to be king so that they could through off the Roman Government that was oppressing them. They wanted to put him into the political ring, for their own benefit, for what he could give them. And to be honest with you, if Jesus had been just a man and not the son of God, he probably would have went along with it. Yet Jesus saw this for what it was and withdrew away from the crowds.

There are a lot of people who buy into the adoration of themselves because of what they are doing for God. There are hundreds of examples of good Godly men and women who start off in small churches and gatherings, teaching the Word of God faithfully, and as their fame begins to rise so does their egos, until it reaches a point where their egos start to make them wander from God because they are enjoying the adoration of the masses. This happens to men and women, this happens to churches and this happens to denominations, they give up the Word of God because they are courting the world.

Jesus looked at what the crowd wanted to do, how they wanted to make him king for the wrong reasons and saw it for the temptation from the devil that it was and withdrew in solitude. Jesus was not impressed by the applause of the crowd or seduced by the power of being king.

He turned his back on them and went to his Father to pray. That is the example of Godliness that Jesus gives us, one that keeps us focused on the tasks at hand, one that keeps us focused on doing the work of God humbly and truthfully in our lives regardless of the crowds. One that save God comes first, yesterday, today, and tomorrow in everything I do.

With that in mind let us look at what happens next.

**John 6:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.**

This tale of the disciples getting into the boat and crossing the sea appears in Matthew, Mark, and John. And like so much of the Scripture that appears in more than one book, each writer has included different details, ones that they felt were important. If we were to look at this in the Gospel of Mark, we would see this interesting detail.

**Mark 6:45**

**<sup>45</sup> Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd**

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go across the sea without him. We do not know why Jesus does this, he tells his disciples to leave him and get into the boat and cross the sea of Galilee even as it was already getting dark. We do not know why, but we know it was according to God's plan and purpose.

**John 6:18-20**

**<sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."**

Jesus tells his disciples to get into the boat and cross the sea of Galilee in the night. And then a great wind begins to blow across the sea. The sea of Galilee is six hundred feet below sea level and because of its location in proximity to the Mediterranean sea, when there is a storm over the Mediterranean and it shifts west and starts to blow down into the sea of Galilee, it gets fierce.

Some of the disciples were fishermen, they had experienced storms on the sea of the Galilee, but this was a big Storm, and they were busy trying to row the boat to safety. They had rowed the boat three to four miles and suddenly they saw a figure walking to them on the water.

To which they had a perfectly normal reaction. They were afraid.

Jesus told them to cross the sea, and they did, they took down the sails when the storm came and began to row. If you have ever tried to row a boat full of people, it is hard work, they are not just fighting against the weight of the boat they are fighting against the wind and the waves, trying to reach the far side of the Sea of Galilee and the safety that is there.

They are rowing with all of their strength and suddenly they see Jesus, walking on the water. Yes, they were frightened, and when they recognize Jesus, they are probably both a little relived and perhaps a little frustrated.

They had been straining with all of their might to move that boat and Jesus just come strolling through the storm as if it were a bright sunshiny day.

They had been rowing for hours and only made it a few miles, they had been struggling against the storm and were seeing little progress.

This should sound familiar to you all. How many times in this life are you struggling against a storm in your life, working with all of your might, straining to get to the other side and the safety that is promised there, and it seems like nothing you do is helping you move in the right direction?

How many times have you worked so hard for something and feel like nothing came out of it? I am sure that is how the disciples were feeling. Sore, tired, exhausted, blisters on their hands from the rough oars, working with all their might to move a few feet forward in the boat only to have the wind and waves move them back the same distance.

We need to remember that it was Jesus who put them there, he was the one who put them into the boat, he was the one who knew the storm would come, he was the one who knew that they would struggle to move the boat, even with their combined strength. They were completely in the will and the plan of the Lord, the same way that they were when he had asked them how to feed the five thousand.

Think about that for a minute. They were in that place of frustration, that place where they were straining with all of their might, that place where it seemed like nothing that they could do would help their situation, straining at the oars and fighting the waves and wind, because God had put them there. The same is true of your life.

There will be times when we are struggling, fighting, straining to get through trials, troubles, and tribulations, because God has put us there for his purpose. There will be times when Jesus calls us to do something in our lives that is straining, that requires us to stretch, to change, to put in more effort than we think we have, and he has ordained it for us.

And all the while that the disciples were straining to gain an inch against the sea, Jesus sat and watched over them, praying to his Father on the mountain.

The same is true for you and I, when we are in the midst of our struggles, when we are straining against what we believe to be the impossible, Jesus is right there watching us, praying for us, waiting for his time to do what he is called to do for us, according to the will of God, and each of us can take comfort in our times of trial, tribulation and turmoil, because we know our God is with us.

Jesus always has his eyes on his people. And when the prescribed time comes, Jesus walked down the mountainside, and he walked across the water to them. And the disciples were afraid. They did not recognize him, they were not expecting or ready to see the supernatural.

So instead of recognizing Jesus, they believed he was a ghost. This makes sense, until we remember that they had just witnessed the impossible, they had just seen two small fish and



five crackers turned into a meal for thousands. They probably had at least one of the baskets filled to the brim with those crackers in the boat with them. Yet they could not recognize the sign, the miracle that was happening right before their eyes less than twenty-four hours later.

Jesus had just given them every reason to believe in him, to trust in him to look after them even by doing the impossible. He had just shown them that when someone gives of themselves freely, he can do the impossible. Yet they were in that boat, tired, and frustrated and already forgot who Jesus was, until he reminded them. The same way that God had to remind the people of Israel over and over throughout the Old Testament of who he was.

We still do this today. God gives us some reason to believe, some reason to place our trust in him, some sign of his presence in our lives and we forget the next time we find ourselves in a time of trouble.

Until Jesus does the same for us that he does for the disciples, He tells them 'Do not be afraid.' The line spoken by the Angels every time they appear to the people of God. All throughout the Scriptures when God appears to his people, this is his message, 'Do not be afraid.' We know it, we read it over and over in the Scriptures, we have experienced it in our lives, and yet we still have so much trouble doing it.

When we are in times of trial, tribulation, and turmoil in our lives. When we are struggling and staining, physically in pain, suffering in disease, emotionally in chaos, financially, in relationships, in any way in this world, we need to listen to God, 'Do not be afraid, Jesus is with you.'

If we were looking at this sign in the book of Matthew this would be when we see one of the most incredible parts of the life of Peter take place. Peter recognizing Jesus, steps out of the boat and walks upon the water himself, even if it is only for a few steps, after which John tells us that:

**John 6:21**

**<sup>21</sup> Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.**

Did you catch that?

They willingly and gladly accepted him into the boat. They accepted him. In the scriptures you will notice that Jesus almost never imposes himself upon people, he waits for them to willingly accept him. He waits patiently, he serves faithfully, he is humble in their presence, living his life the way that God has called for him to live, waiting to be invited into the lives of the people around him.

Jesus says 'here I am'; will you accept me into your life? He does not force himself into your life. He has every right to do that, he is God.

Yet his way is to walk alongside you and wait for you to invite him in, to willingly and gladly accept his presence in your life.

And when the disciples do this, when they willingly and gladly accept Jesus into their situation, **'immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.'**

We do not know how Jesus did this, how the boat moved from the midst of the sea to the opposite shore in the blink of an eye. There is no logical explanation for this, there is no way to explain in any science, in any worldly understanding how this occurred. Jesus got in the boat, and they were where they were meant to be.

Which means that all of what happened, the sore muscles, the seat, the blisters, the straining against the storm, the frustration, the fear, it all served a purpose.

Jesus could have stepped into the boat with them at the very start and whisked them to the other side in the blink of an eye. But that is not how God works.

Instead, we have to recognize that there was a lesson for the disciples, there was something for them to gain in their understanding and service to the Lord in every strained muscle, in every bloody blister, in every drop of sweat, in their cries of fear and frustration.

There was a lesson for them in their struggle against the storm, in their obedience to the Lord to get to the other side so that they could meet him there. They obeyed the Lord, they did not give up, they could have turned back, the shore that they had left from was closer, but they kept going, struggling against the winds and waves of life because Jesus had said meet me on the other side.

If getting to the other side was the only important thing, Jesus could have snapped his fingers and moved them there, but it was the journey that mattered. Jesus needed them to obey and struggle, obey, and strain, obey, and sweat, so that they could understand that even in the midst of the problems of this world they do not need to be afraid because Jesus is with them.

What an incredible lesson for us. This life is filled with times of trial, times of trouble, times of tribulation. Times when we toil and strain against the ways of this world. Times when we struggle emotionally, physically, spiritually. Times when we sweat, times when we bleed, times when we strain so hard, we want to give up. This journey of life is a struggle, but our God walks alongside us through it all, telling us 'Do not be afraid.'

And for the true believer, for God's faithful follower, the moment that our life on this planet ends, we are transported instantly to the place we are meant to be. A place where there is no more pain, no more suffering, no more trial, tribulation, or temptation. A place of eternal joy and happiness in the kingdom of our God where we are always in His presence.

So, as we struggle in this world, as we strain against the winds and wave of culture, as our hands are bloodied doing the work of God, as we walk as the Salt and Light of God's Word, 'Do not be afraid.'

Let us pray,

**My Heart Rests in You**

Almighty God,  
 you care for me as if you thought of me alone,  
 and you care for all as if all were one.  
 I see the things of this earth pass away,  
 and I see other things take their place,  
 but you remain forever.  
 Therefore, my God and Father,  
 to you I entrust all I have received from you,  
 for then, I can lose nothing.  
 You, O Lord,  
 have made me for yourself,  
 and my heart can find no rest.  
 until it rests in you.  
**Amen.**

**Hymn: "Jesus All For Jesus"**

Jesus, all for Jesus,  
 All I am and have and ever hope to be.  
 Jesus, all for Jesus,  
 All I am and have and ever hope to be.

All of my ambitions, hopes and plans  
 I surrender these into Your hands.  
 All of my ambitions, hopes and plans  
 I surrender these into Your hands.

For it's only in Your will that I am free,  
 For it's only in Your will that I am free,  
 Jesus, all for Jesus,  
 All I am and have and ever hope to be.

Jesus, all for Jesus,  
 All I am and have and ever hope to be.  
 Jesus, all for Jesus,  
 All I am and have and ever hope to be.

## **Invitation to Offering**

### **Offering Prayer**

#### **Closing Hymn: "Christ Is Mine Forevermore"**

Mine are days that God has numbered  
I was made to walk with Him  
Yet I look for worldly treasure  
And forsake the King of kings.

And mine are keys to Zion city  
Where beside the King I walk  
For there my heart has found its treasure  
Christ is mine forevermore.

Mine are tears in times of sorrow  
Darkness not yet understood  
Through the valley I must travel  
Where I see no earthly good.

Mine are days here as a stranger  
Pilgrim on a narrow way  
One with Christ I will encounter  
Harm and hatred for His name.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

We thank you, God, for the many ways you provide for our needs:  
for air and water, for food and shelter, for work to do and rest to sustain us.  
We pray for your creation,  
Help us care for the earth and all its creatures and relationships.  
Show us how to cherish the gifts you have given us in this world

We thank you, God, for family:  
the families we were born or adopted into,  
the families we married into,  
and other families who welcomed us into their midst  
as friends and neighbours.  
We pray for those who have lost family members and relationships,  
and for any who know abuse and pain within the family circle.

God, we also thank you for friendship:  
for friends who have supported us  
and for those who bring us joy and wise counsel.

Help us extend the gift of friendship  
to those who are experiencing isolation, loneliness, or grief.

We thank you, God, for the peace and freedom we enjoy in Canada,  
and pray that the conflict over what these gifts mean  
will be soothed with deeper understanding among us all.  
We pray for the current and new leaders of our country,  
May they be obedient to your will.

We thank you, God, for your Church,  
for our congregation and its leaders,  
and for all who volunteer time, talent, and treasures  
to the work we undertake in Jesus' name.

By your Spirit, guide us as we shine your light in this community  
and inspire us with new insight into mission and ministry.  
We pray for other churches in our community and in our presbytery,  
and the sense of mission that guides each one into service.

O God, thank you for the gift of your Son,  
whose resurrection empowers us to look to the future with hope.  
Thank you for the gift of your Spirit  
who draws us into unity with you and one another,  
as together we offer our prayers to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

May God the Father bless you,  
God the Son heal you,  
God the Holy Spirit give you strength.  
May God the holy and undivided Trinity  
guard your body, save your soul,  
and bring you safely to his heavenly country,  
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever.