

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, August 24th, 2025
Rev. Gerry Gallant

True Worship
Proper 16
John 11:47 - John 12:11

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

With all our hearts, let us praise the Lord.

With all that we are, we will praise God's holy name!

With all our hearts, let us bless the Lord.

We will never forget how kind God has been.

The Lord forgives our sins, heals our weakness, and gives us life everlasting.

Let us worship God who is merciful and patient, God's love never fails.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, our strength and refuge,

We come together to worship you and praise your loving kindness.

In your presence, we rest from what distracts us,
to focus on your truth and goodness.

You call us to live in relationship with you.

Through the love of Jesus Christ, you repair our lives.

Through the power of your Spirit, you engage us to serve you in the world.

Receive our prayers and our praise this day,

Creator, Christ, and Spirit,

revive our hope and our energy

and make us ready to answer your call. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn #646: "Lead Me, Jesus; I Will Follow"

Lead me, Jesus; I will follow,

Down the dusty pathways,

All along the sea.

Teach me, Jesus, to be loving:

Your disciple I will be.

Open my eyes that I may see;

I will serve you: your disciple will be.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**O God, our judge and our hope,
we confess we often turn away from your truth,
and ignore your call to do justice.
Forgive us when we say one thing in worship
but do another in the ways we live.
Forgive us when we ignore how others are treated
and think only of ourselves.
Let your judgment awaken us and your mercy refresh us.**

Assurance of Pardon

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
Believe the good news of the Gospel.
In Christ, God has offered us mercy and love.
Receive God's forgiveness this day
and share it with each other for Christ's sake.

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 #376: "Shine Jesus Shine"

Lord, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me, shine on me.

Chorus

Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze

Set our hearts on fire
 Flow, river, flow
 Flood the nations with grace and mercy
 Send forth your word
 Lord, and let there be light.

Lord, I come to your awesome presence
 From the shadows into your radiance
 By the blood I may enter your brightness
 Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
 Shine on me, shine on me. (Chorus)

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
 So, our faces display your likeness
 Ever changing from glory to glory
 Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
 Shine on me, shine on me. (Chorus)

Responsive Reading

Psalm 84: 1-4

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
 O Lord of hosts!

**2 My soul longs, yes, faints
 for the courts of the Lord;
 my heart and flesh sing for joy
 to the living God.**

3 Even the sparrow finds a home,
 and the swallow a nest for herself,
 where she may lay her young,
 at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
 my King and my God.

**4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house,
 ever singing your praise! Selah**

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

John 11:47 -12:11

⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them,

“You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?” ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

12 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” ⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Sermon

We continue in our study of the book of John today finishing up the story of Jesus’s raising of Lazarus from the dead and moving into a meal that he shared with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

Two weeks ago, when we looked at the raising of Lazarus, we had learned that Jesus had come to Bethany from the region around the Jordan river where he had been baptized by John the Baptist, but only after he had waited for two days, ensuring that Lazarus would have been dead for at least four days before he arrived to bring him back to life. We know that he did this so that no one could question whether or not Lazarus was truly dead, by four days there was no doubt that he was indeed dead as the body would have started to decay.

When Jesus arrived both Martha and Mary confronted Jesus, telling him that if he had been there their brother would not have died.

When Jesus called Lazarus from the grave, the man walked out, a reflection of what it means to be a Christian who is dead in sin, and when we are called out by God, and we listen and obey, we walk out from our death in sin to a new life in Christ. How the grave clothes that are removed from Lazarus after he is reborn represent the sin that is removed from our life after we are reborn.

Unfortunately, there are still many Christians who are walking around in their grave clothes, their sins of this world and refuse to remove them so that they can walk freely with the Lord.

Finally, we saw how even this undeniable miracle divided people,

John 11: 45-46

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done

One group saw the miracle and believed in him. They believed in him as Messiah, as Lord, as the Son of God.

That belief was more than simply acknowledging his existence. Many people in the world today say, 'I believe in God' but it is a purely intellectual practice. They believe in him, but they do not trust and obey him. They do not put faith in him.

When we are one of God's sheep we listen and obey, we put all of our faith and trust in the Lord.

You all came in here today and sat down where you are sitting, placing all your trust in the possibility that the pew you are sitting upon would hold your weight. I am willing to bet not one of you, got on your hands and knees and looked under the pew to ensure that it was structurally sound. I bet not one of you sat down gently and carefully making sure that the pew could support you, instead you walked in and sat down without even stopping to consider that the pew could possibly fall apart under your weight.

That is the kind of faith and trust that we are called to have in Jesus Christ. There should be no doubt that we have eternal salvation because Jesus Christ is our Lord.

Isn't interesting that we live in a world where we place our lives, our faith and trust in so many man-made things, bridges, planes, elevators, even our cars? Things which we use without worry, things which if they fail could kill us instantly, yet when we are asked to place that same faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we question the safety of doing so.

Being one of his sheep, being a child of God is the most important decision we make in this world; it is the only way to eternal life. You either believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, or you do not.

We are saved by grace alone, by our faith in Jesus Christ. The people who witnessed the raising of Lazarus, they believed in him in that moment, they recognized their Messiah and placed their life in His hands.

Then there was the other group, those who did not believe.

And that is where we start today.

John 11:47-54

⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

Some of the people who had witnessed the miracle went to the Sadducees and Pharisees, which called together the Sanhedrin, the council that ruled of the Jewish nation.

And this gathering of the religious leaders of the Jewish nation ask a question, **'What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation'**

Take note that they do not deny that he is performing many miracles. They know that Jesus has done things which no man is capable of doing. They know that people are seeing these wondrous things and starting to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and the concern of the Sanhedrin and the other religious leaders is not how to encourage belief, but instead how to stop it.

Miracles alone do not bring people to faith, there are people in this world who have unexplainable things happen in their lives and they deny the truth that what happened is a miracle, instead they will attribute it to anything other than God.

People in Bethany had witnessed a man who was dead for four days walk out of a tomb, and instead of believing in Jesus as Messiah, they were questioning on how to get rid of him, because their eyes were blinded and their hearts hardened against God because of the sin that existed in their lives.

One of the reasons for the religious leader's rejection of Jesus is exposed in verse forty-eight, **'the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation'** simply put we will lose the power and place we have in society.

The Caiphas, the leader of the Sanhedrin, speaks up and made a prophecy that he was completely unaware of, that Jesus would die for His people.

Caiphas unconsciously states that it is better for one man to die for the people, which echo's the book of Isaiah chapter 53

Isaiah 53:3-5

**He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.**

**4 Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.**

**5 But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.**

The prophecy would come true, and John tells us that it was done through the words of Caiphas and the actions of the Sanhedrin. Jesus would be crucified during the Passover as the Passover lamb, and all of this was being orchestrated by the Hand of God.

The spiritually blind will not ever accept Jesus as Lord and Savior because they cannot humble themselves and give up the sins of this world. John Heywood once said, 'There are none so blind as those who will not see.' People were choosing to not recognize the fact that Jesus was God even though he had raised Lazarus from the dead.

Remember the man in Sheol in the Gospel of Luke, he asked for Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers to change the way that they live or they too will end up in Sheol. Abraham told him that even if someone were to come back from the grave that they would not believe.

Lazarus came back from the grave, and there were still some who did not believe!

No matter what happens, there will be people who choose not to believe in God.

People will give thousands of excuses and reasons for not coming to God, because they are enjoying the sins of this world, their hearts are hardened, and they are spiritually blind. They suppress the knowledge of God, they reject the truth, and therefore they believe the lies of this world.

Jesus then leaves the town of Bethany and heads to the village of Ephraim. He left not out of fear but according to God's will. He walked in confidence, not fear, and he knew his time was coming.

We do not know where Ephraim is, many people speculate it is about 20 kilometers north of Jerusalem, a countryside where Jesus and the disciples went to await the events that would soon take place.

John 11:55-57

⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

We are now coming up to the Passover, only 6 days until the crucifixion. And as the Jews of the city of Jerusalem were preparing themselves, purifying themselves, they were talking about Jesus. Everyone was wondering if Jesus would make an appearance at the Passover feast.

And while there were those who were happily anticipating seeing Jesus there were also those who were scheming his arrest and death.

John 12:1-8

12 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the

poor?”⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.⁷ Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

Jesus and his friends gathered together to celebrate the life of Lazarus just six days before Jesus himself would be crucified.

Martha is busy serving the guests, which is interesting, because if we look at the same event in Matthew and Mark, we learn that this supper was in the house of Simon the leper, or former leper we should say, because he was one of the men healed by Jesus.

There is this incredible celebration of what Jesus has done, a celebration of Lazarus, raised from the dead and Simon cleansed from leprosy. Symbolic of what happened to those who come to faith, they are brought to spiritual life and cleansed of their sins.

They are gathered at the table, remember that this table is not like the tables we have today. It was a long u-shaped table that was quite low to the ground with cushions surround the outside edge, and you would lie down on your side and reach onto the table to eat, this is how Mary could be at the feet of Jesus.

It was also a common practice of the day to open the doors and windows when a Rabbi visited, so that the people of the village could gather and listen in on the teachings of the Rabbi. So, at this meal you have, Jesus, Lazarus, Simon, the disciples, Martha, Mary, and the crowd that is gathered around.

And here at the house of Simon, the former leper, Martha, is serving. which is what she feels is her call to do for the Messiah, and Mary takes this pound of nard, a product of India which only came from one place, making it very valuable, and she anoints the feet of Jesus, and the whole house was filled with the scent of the nard.

That ointment was worth there hundred denarii, a denarius is a day’s wages, so that pound of nard was a year’s wages, poured out on the feet of Jesus.

Remember that feet were and still are in the middle east considered the nastiest part of the body, to show the sole of your foot to someone is one of the worst insults you can give someone in the middle east. So, to fall down and worship at the feet of Jesus, to pour out that expensive nard upon the feet of Jesus, to wipe away the filth of the road from the feet of Jesus with her hair was a sign of humility and service. Mary did this without reservation; she was not embarrassed to show her love of God.

This frustrates Judas: Why would Mary waste such a valuable item on Jesus? That nard could have been sold for cash which could have been used to help the poor, which sounds like wise

words to those who are gathered there, until John tells us in his hindsight that Judas was in fact dipping into the group's money for his own personal gain.

Judas was the treasurer; Jesus knew who Judas was from the very beginning of their journey together and he still allowed him to be in control of the money bag. Remember that, Judas was a disciple, he had control of the money, and he still denied Jesus. In the church in the world today, there are still Judas's.

However, when Judas expresses his dissatisfaction at losing out on his cut of the sale of the nard, Jesus responds defending the act of worship which Mary has just performed.

John 12:7

⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

There is a lesson here for the modern church, a very important lesson that I believe is being lost in many denominations. We are called to help the poor, to take care of the poor, but only in the light of the kingdom of God and for the glory of God. To go out and help the poor, to feed them and clothe them is a good thing to do, but to do it without the Gospel is not Christian love, it is an act of vanity and pride.

Yes, that nard could have been sold to help the poor, but instead Mary used it to praise and honor Jesus in front of all those people gathered listening and watching her act of faith. Mary did what she could do when she could do it to show who Jesus Christ was to as many people as possible.

That is a lesson for all of us, when we help the poor, when we feed the needy, when we care for the sick, the orphan and the widow, are we doing it to glorify God, or to serve our own vanity and pride?

We need to be like Mary, who saw an opportunity to teach people about who Jesus was and took it. We need to be doing what we can do, when we can do it, no matter the cost.

Jesus told us that the night is coming, and that we cannot know when the end of times will come. So now is the time to be doing the work of the Lord in our lives, today, this very minute we should be giving God our lives, not next week, not later in our lives, not when we feel like we have time!

Mary in that moment gave God her best, not what she had to spare, she could have used a cheaper ointment or even just plain water, but instead she uses the most valuable thing she possessed.

Be like Mary, give your best to the Lord, give freely of your time, talents and treasures to serve God and to glorify his name, now while you have the light, because death can come for us at any time. Do it now before it is too late and you no longer have the opportunity.

Jesus told those people witnessing this act of worship to leave Mary alone for she has done this for the day of his burial. Mary, not James, not John, not Matthew, not Peter, only Mary understood that Jesus was on his walk to the cross. Jesus had stated many times before this that he would die, and it seems like they all were hearing but not listening what he was saying. Mary had listened what he had said, and this was her way of offering what she could to the Lord.

Later when Jesus is crucified, we will see his body buried without being anointed, isn't it interesting that here a week before His burial Mary anoints His feet, preparing Him for His death which is to come.

Mary new because she spent her time at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him, worshiping Him, praising Him. This is what we need to do if we want to have a better relationship and understanding of who Jesus is in our lives.

Mary is an example of true faith, and Jesus even told us that.

In Matthew it says this about what she has done:

Matthew 26:10-13

¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."

What Mary had done was a memorial for all generations. We need to be more like Mary, spending our time at the feet of Jesus.

Finally, we come to how the crowd that had gathered responded, and the division that is always present.

John 12:9-11

⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

People came to see Jesus and to marvel at the reality that Lazarus was indeed alive.

And for this reason, the religious leaders now not only want to kill Jesus, they want to kill Lazarus as well, to eliminate the miracle so that they can try to prevent more people from coming to Jesus.

And even though many refused to believe, many also came to believe. In this Scripture we see many of the ways in which people come to believe in Jesus Christ, and the three main ways in which people are called to serve God's kingdom.

Martha is the picture of a person called to service; some people are called to serve in the kingdom of God here on earth through service. They are the ones who keep the church running, the people who sit on the session, the property and finance committee and other groups that serve the church. They are also those people who go out and serve others in God's name, using their time, talents, and treasure to spread the Gospel to others. Martha was serving in the home of Simon the leper without concern or complaint.

Mary is picture of those who are called to worship. Some people show the glory of God in their unreserved praise and worship of God. Those people who listen to Gospel music everywhere they go, people who praise and worship in public, people who pray to God before every meal, even if it is at McDonald's.

Lazarus is a picture of those who are called to witness to the glory of God. Lazarus's presence is a story of the glory of God, everywhere he went people marveled at who God was and what he had done. Lazarus's life is a testimony to God.

Think about that a moment, Martha speaks in the Bible, Mary speaks in the Bible. Yet we have no recorded words from the mouth of Lazarus. Lazarus's life was a testimony.

If we live our life as one of God's sheep our life becomes a testimony to God. Just living our lives as a Christian makes people curious about God. People wonder what changed us from the sinful people we were into the people we are becoming.

Lazarus being alive was a testimony to the power of God. We need more Lazarus's in the world today, people who have been raised from the dead, spiritually reborn and who have begun to shed the sins of this world from their lives.

People who go out and live their life for God instead of for themselves. People who use their time, their talents, and their treasures for His kingdom instead of their own gain.

Living your life as one of God's sheep means that you understand that:

Worship is service. Those who serve the church and go out into the world doing service in his name are offering him worship.

Worship is sacrifice. Mary poured out that expensive nard over the feet of Jesus. We need to give of the things we have to the kingdom of God. Churches do not operate for free in this world, it costs money to keep the lights on. It takes people's time and talents to do the things that need to get done to spread the Gospel to the world.

In second Samuel David says

2 Samuel 24:24

²⁴ But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing.

Isn't it interesting that so much of what is given to the church are things which people no longer need or no longer work properly. Isn't it interesting that the tithe that most people give is calculated after all the bills, and luxuries, and meals out have been paid for, God gets what is left, not what is valued. God should be getting the best of our time talents and treasures.

Worship is a blessing to others. When Mary anointed Jesus with the nard the whole house was filled with the smell of nard, that deep woody, balsamic odor. Everybody that was there breathed in the smell of the nard. When you worship God, you are a blessing to others. You are spreading the Word of God and blessing others just by being near them. Christ is apparent in our lives and blesses others.

Worship bring glory to God. It shows that we live in fear of God, not that we are afraid of Him, but that we honor and revere Him as our creator and our King.

And finally, worship is our testimony. When we live our life for God, we are a witness to God and who he is in our lives.

We are called to love our God first with all of our body, soul and mind, that is true worship, and when we do that, we can finally understand what it means to go out and love our neighbor as ourselves and begin to walk as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this world.

Let us pray,

For Grace By Augustine of Hippo

We ask not of you, O Father,
 silver and gold,
 honor and glory,
 nor the pleasures of the world.
 Grant us grace to seek your Kingdom
 and your righteousness,
 and give us what we need for body and life.

Behold, O Lord, our desire.
 May it be pleasing in your sight.
 We present our petition to you through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who is at your right hand,
 our mediator and Advocate,
 through whom you sought us that we might seek you;
 your Word, through whom you made us and all things;
 your only Son, through whom you call us to adoption,
 who intercedes with you for us,
 and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;
 to him, with you and the Holy Spirit,
 be all honor, praise, and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn #64: “Be Still and Know That I Am God”

Be still and know that I am God.
 Be still and know that I am God.
 Be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord that healeth thee.
 I am the Lord that healeth thee.
 I am the Lord that healeth thee.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.
 In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.
 In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn #274: “Crown Him With Many Crowns” (V 1,3,5)

Crown him with many crowns,
 the Lamb upon the throne:
 hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns
 all music but its own!
 Awake, my soul, and sing
 of him who died to be
 your Saviour and your matchless King
 through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life,
 who triumphed o'er the grave,
 and rose victorious in the strife
 for those he came to save.

His glories now we sing
 who died and rose on high,
 who died eternal life to bring,
 and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of years,
 the Source, the End of time,
 Creator of the rolling spheres
 in majesty sublime.
 All hail, Redeemer, hail,
 for you have died for me;
 your praise shall never, never fail
 through all eternity!

Pastoral Prayer

Loving God, gather us into your presence as we pray.
 Silence our hearts and minds in these moments
 so that we may listen for the movement of your Holy Spirit
 who prays within us through our sighs too deep for words.

O God, we lay before you our thanks and our concerns
 as we remember those who have come to our attention through conversations
 or chance encounters this week.
 We offer gratitude for moments of joy and goodness,
 and remembered pleasures stirred by your Spirit;

We remember all those whose situations are very close to our hearts today,
 those facing stress or sorrow,
 those challenged by pain or illness,
 those making a new beginning or searching for a new path.

We remember the things in the news lately that concern us deeply:
 the stress on the environment and worries about its future,
 the pressures on those who have lost jobs or cannot find work,
 tensions among nations who threaten each other
 And we remember one another and needs known and unknown in this community.

Bless us as we make a new beginning together as summer turns to autumn.
 Show us the paths of ministry you are opening before us.
 We believe you hear our prayers and will be faithful to answer according to your will.
 We pray these words in the name of Jesus Christ, our lord and savior,
 Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
 As the one true Gods now and forever. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love for you,
and keep you in his peace.

May you receive strength
to grow in faith, hope, and love,
to live with joy and delight,
and to give God thanks and praise. **Amen.**