

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, January 4th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The King Who Bears Our Failures
Second Sunday After Christmas
John 18:19-40

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, all who are weary, all who are burdened, all who long for mercy. Come, for the Lord our God is gracious and slow to anger.

We come, confessing our failures and our need for forgiveness, yet we seek the One who restores, redeems, and makes us whole.

Christ is the King who rules not with force, but with truth; not with fear, but with love. He bore our sins, endured injustice, and came to bring life to the guilty.

We come to the One who knows our hearts, who calls us by name, and who invites us to return and follow.

Come, let us worship the Lord together, the King of truth, the Savior of sinners, the One who makes all things new.

Let us worship Him with joy and gratitude, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Heavenly Father, we come before You today in awe and humility. We confess that we are often hesitant, fearful, and ashamed when following Your Son brings risk. Yet even in our failures, You are faithful. Even in our weakness, You are strong.

Lord Jesus, King of truth, we lift our hearts to You. You came not to be served, but to serve; You came not to condemn, but to save. You endured betrayal, denial, and injustice, and yet You never wavered in Your mission. Today we worship You as our Savior, our Redeemer, our King. We honor You for the grace that restores the broken, the mercy that reaches the lost, and the love that lays down life for the guilty.

Holy Spirit, draw us near to Christ in this hour. Open our hearts to see our sin, but also to receive the mercy You freely offer. Give us courage to follow, strength to stand, and faith to trust in the power of the One who was bound, beaten, and crucified—for us. Let our worship today be true, wholehearted, and pleasing to You, as we lift our voices to the One who reigns eternally in glory and truth.

Amen.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
we come before You, aware of our sin and our need for Your grace.
We have followed our own ways instead of Your truth,
sought comfort over courage,
and failed to trust Your mercy.**

**Lord Jesus,
You bore the weight of our failures and died in our place.
Forgive us for turning from You,
for doubting Your love,
and for relying on ourselves rather than Your strength.**

**Holy Spirit,
search our hearts and lead us to true repentance.
Restore us, empower us, and help us walk in the freedom Christ has won.**

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and King. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Your sins are pardoned.
The penalty is paid.
Thanks be to God.

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 to Your Name"

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 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 glory to Your name, O Lord,
Glory to Your name, O Lord,
For Your name is great and greatly to be praised.

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

Responsive Reading

Psalm 103:8-11

⁸The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹**He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.**

¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹**For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;**

Anthem (Music Ministry): "Our Great God"

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

John 18:19-40

¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." ²² When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" ²⁴ Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus Again

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷ Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸ Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" ³⁰ They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." ³¹ Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." ³² This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

My Kingdom Is Not of This World

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” ⁴⁰ They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

Sermon

This morning we continue our study in the Book of John chapter 18. Last week we learned of Jesus’s arrest in the garden and the emphasis that John put on Jesus being the one in control. Those of us who are familiar with the story from the other Gospels know of the prayer and the kiss of betrayal that led up to his arrest.

We saw him led away not by a few armed guards but by a small army, Peter and John following at a distance, trying to stay close enough to see and hear all that is happening, and far enough away for their own safety.

Jesus is first brought to the house of Annas, a man of great political and religious power in the nation of Israel, he is not the current High-Priest, instead it is his son-in-law Caiaphas, but everyone knows that Annas is the one that wields the power, he holds the puppet strings of his son-in-law.

This is why Jesus is brought to Caiaphas, before he is brought to the Sanhedrin, before he is brought before Pilate, he is brought to the real power, Annas to be interrogated.

And as he is interrogated in the house of Annas, Peter and John watch, perhaps through an open door or window. They see Jesus, bound and alone standing before one of the most powerful of Israel, while they look on from a distance.

John 18:19-22

¹⁹ **The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.**

²⁰ **Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.”**

The questions that are being asked serve to reveal the true nature of what is happening here. Annas demands to know the names of those men who are disciples of Jesus, and then he demands Jesus tell Him what it is that he taught.

This is not justice; this is injustice in action. When you arrest a man, isolate a man, and demand that he testifies against himself, incriminate himself, that is not justice, that is persecution.

That was the Roman way of justice, the opposite of what Jewish justice was, and how it was supposed to work. In the Jewish legal system of the time, the accused was not questioned, instead the accusers were required to bring witnesses and evidence against the accused.

This was a horrible corruption of the justice system; you did not simply bring a man before a judge and demand a confession.

Jesus knows this, and he exposes their injustice, He tells them that all he has taught has been taught publicly, in synagogues and in temples, that he has not given any secret teachings to His disciples. He taught the same truths everywhere and in every situation.

To drive home the point, he asks them why they are not calling forth witnesses, people who have seen and heard his teachings. He is not being rebellious, or disrespectful, he is being pointed and direct. He is challenging the legal process that Annas has chosen to pursue, because he knows that under Jewish Law what they are doing is in fact illegal, and Annas has no response that will justify his actions.

And with the question, everything changes, the real nature of the arrest comes to the forefront.

John 18:22-24

²²When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?"

That officer who struck Jesus, did not just give him a light slap, the language use in Greek implies that it was a forceful blow delivered with the palm of the hand.

Peter and John witness this. In there three years with Christ they have seen opposition to his teachings, they have experienced hostility and threats, even attempts to have him arrested and tried. Yet this is the first time they have witnessed this. Their Rabbi being struck across the face, his head snapping back with the force of the blow.

Jesus however does not change, he does not react with anger or fear, instead he responds with truth.

John 18:23-24

²³ Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" ²⁴ Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Jesus confronts them yet again, knowing that there is no justification for their persecution and no justification for their actions.

So Annas does what all unjust powerful people do, he sends Jesus away, to someone else to try to solve the problem.

Once again notice that Jesus is bound. He is submitting to restraint, he is humbling obeying the will of the Father, not because he must, but because he chooses to, for our sake.

And as Jesus is led away, we see Peter again.

John 18:25-27

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷ Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

Peter, outside warming himself by the fire is asked about being a follower of Jesus again. Notice they do not question John, it seems that everyone knew that John was one of Jesus's followers.

They see that Peter appears to be with John, so they ask him, and once again he says, 'I am not.'

We need to understand what is happening here, it is important. Peter is not denying any theological truths about Jesus. Peter is not denying that Jesus is God. Instead he is denying his relationship with Jesus. He is in effect saying to the world, I do not belong to God.

And this is perhaps the most common form of Christian denial of God in the world today. Many of us come to church, give our lives over to Christ while we are with other Christians. We agree with all the right doctrines and know all about our Savior and salvation.

However, the minute that being Christian becomes uncomfortable, or beings to cost us socially, economically or professionally, we deny our faith.

Then a second man steps forward to question Peter, however it is not just any man, it is a relative of the man whose ear Peter cut off in the garden. This is personal now, this man saw him in the garden, cutting off the ear of someone he was related to, that kind of things sticks in your mind.

Peter looks at this man and denies his relationship yet again. If we look at this event in the book of Matthew it says:

Matthew 26:74

74 Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed.

Peter used whatever language he could to disassociate himself from Jesus, trying to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that he could not possibly be one of Jesus's disciples. And in that very moment, at that time of that vigorous profession of dissociation Luke tells us that Jesus looked at Peter.

Luke 22:60-62

⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

While Jesus stands falsely accused and is beaten for telling the truth, His disciple, the one who promised to love him and be with him in all things, protects himself by denying any relationship with Him.

Jesus is then moved from the house of Annas to the headquarters of the Roman Governor.

John 18:28-32

²⁸ Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" ³⁰ They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." ³¹ Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is

not lawful for us to put anyone to death.”³² This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

They walked Jesus from the house of Annas to the gate of the Roman governor’s headquarters. To the gate. The irony here is incredible. They are being so careful, wanting to maintain their ritual purity, while at the same time actively and unjustly, pursuing the death of the righteous Son of God.

Pilate comes out to them and asks a simple and direct question, ‘why have they brought Jesus to him, What crimes has Jesus committed?’

They do not answer clearly, they do not define the charges and the crimes, because there are none. Instead, they give a vague response, one that implies that Jesus has already gone through a proper Jewish trial and been found guilty. One that implies they have brought Jesus to Pilate not for trial, but for punishment.

Pilate’s response is logical, if you have already tried him and found him guilty, then punish him according to your law. This is where the true intent becomes clear, The religious leaders did not just want to punish Jesus, they wanted Him dead, and under Roman law, no one could take a life except for the Romans. Even if the religious leaders had been given the freedom to execute Jesus it would have been by stoning, that was the Jewish way of punishing crime by death. So John tells us this all was taking place to fulfill prophecy, so that Jesus would be crucified upon a Roman cross, Jesus would die exactly as He had said He would.

Pilate then turns and brings Jesus inside,

John 18: 33-40

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

⁴⁰They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate asks Jesus directly, **‘Are you the King of the Jews?’** Pilate is looking at Jesus standing before him, bound, beaten and alone, he is asking Him, you, really you, claim to be the King of the Jews?

Jesus’s response is carefully worded. He asks Pilate if he is asking because he believes it might be true, or because he is repeating the words that he has been told. The meaning of the question that Pilate asked depends on why Pilate is asking it. Is Pilate asking Jesus, are you a political threat to the Roman empire claiming to be a political ruler of the Jewish Nation or are you simply the Messiah of Israel?

Pilate’s only concern is for the Roman Empire, so when Jesus explains that His kingdom is not of this world, Pilate relaxes. A spiritual kingdom is of no importance to the Mighty Roman Empire, after all in the Roman spiritual world, gods come and go, yet Rome stands strong. Little does Pilate know how wrong he is, the man bound before him, is the king of a kingdom that will carry on long after the fall of the mighty Roman Empire.

Jesus continues, **‘For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice’**

Pilate almost mocks him with his question, **‘What is truth?’** To Pilate truth is power, wealth, influence and armies. To Jesus the truth is God revealing himself.

Pilate then makes a powerful declaration, **‘I find no guilt in Him’.** This should have ended this whole process. The man who rules over the region in the place of the Roman Empire had found Jesus innocent of any crime. The judge has spoken and the accused should be set free.

However, Pilate is a man of the world, and he does not want to lose power, prestige or influence with the religious leaders, so he offers a compromise, one he thinks will allow them to release Jesus and save face with the people. He speaks of the Passover tradition of releasing a single prisoner and offers up Jesus alongside Barabbas.

He does this because Pilate is confident that they will not choose Barabbas. Barabbas is a robber, and an insurrectionist, and who has been found guilty of violence and murder. Someone that no sane person would want to see released back into public life.

Yet to his dismay, the gathered crowd, under the influence of the religious leaders calls out for the release of Barabbas.

The cross that Barabbas was intended to die upon becomes the cross that Jesus will be nailed too. An innocent man will die in the place of the guilty. Jesus was a substitution, not just for Barabbas, but for all of mankind. This is the heart of God's Word:

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we step back and take in all that has happened in John chapter 18, there is a striking contrast that we cannot miss.

Here is Jesus, the Son of God, bound, falsely accused, struck, and yet standing firm in truth. He does not lash out. He does not resist. He does not manipulate or compromise. He submits Himself, fully aware that every step, every injustice, every false accusation, is part of the plan to redeem us.

And here is Peter, a devoted disciple, caught in fear, denying his own relationship with the One he loves. It's a reminder for us that faith is not about knowing all the right answers or professing the right doctrines when it's easy—it is about standing faithfully when the world demands compromise, when fear tempts us to run, and when following Christ comes at a cost.

And then there is Pilate, a man of the world, sees no guilt in Jesus. He understands, at least partially, the innocence and truth of the One before him—but he chooses compromise, he chooses expedience over righteousness. And in that moment, the world's greatest injustice is carried out, yet through it, God's ultimate plan unfolds. The innocent dies for the guilty. Barabbas goes free, and the cross that was meant for a criminal becomes the instrument of our salvation.

This is the heart of the Gospel: that Christ would bear our sin, that He would be the substitution for every one of us. That even when the world's powers rise against truth, even when those closest to Him falter, God's purposes remain unshaken. And that, my friends, is the hope we cling to. Not in our strength, not in our courage, but in the steadfast love and righteousness of Jesus Christ, who bore our sin so that we might bear His righteousness.

So let us leave this place today not only remembering what He endured but recommitting ourselves to stand with Him, to live in truth, and to follow faithfully, no matter the cost as we walk as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this dark and broken world.

Let us Pray,

How you have loved us, O good Father,
 who did not spare your only Son,
 but delivered him up for us who are wicked!
 How you have loved us,
 for whom your Son became obedient unto death,
 even death upon the cross!
 He had power to lay down his life and power to take it up again,
 and for us he became to you both Victor and Victim...
 Our hope is fixed upon him,
 who will heal all our diseases,
 who sits at your right hand and intercedes for us.

Prayer of Augustine from Confessions.

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
 this is the joyful feast of the people of God.

At this Table, Christ offers Himself to His church
 as spiritual nourishment and comfort.
 Here, by faith, we partake of the benefits
 of His once-for-all sacrifice,
 and are strengthened in our communion with Him
 and with one another.

Come—not because you are worthy in yourself,
 but because Christ is worthy;
 not because you are strong,
 but because He is gracious.

Come with repentance,
 come with faith,
 come looking away from yourself
 and wholly unto Christ.

For all who belong to Him,
 who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

and who desire to live unto His glory,
this Table is prepared for you.

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 and fitting
to give Him thanks and praise.**

It is truly right, and it is our joyful duty,
to give You thanks and praise,
O Lord our God—
the one living and true God,
holy in all Your works,
faithful in all Your ways,
from whom and through whom and to whom
are all things.

**We bless You, O Lord,
for Your sovereign grace and covenant faithfulness.**

You created us for Your glory
and made us to live in fellowship with You.
But we fell in Adam
and became dead in sin,
unable to restore ourselves
or to escape Your just judgment.

**Yet You did not leave us without hope,
for great is Your mercy toward sinners.**

Before the foundation of the world,
You purposed to redeem a people for Yourself,
and in the fullness of time
You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ,
to be our mediator and redeemer.
He took upon Himself our nature,
fulfilled all righteousness,
and offered Himself once for all
as a perfect sacrifice for sin.

**Thanks be to God
for Jesus Christ our Lord.**

On the night when He was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread,
and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said,
*“This is my body, which is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”*
In the same way He took the cup, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.”

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

Therefore, we remember before You
His perfect obedience,
His sufficient sacrifice,
and His victorious resurrection.
We proclaim His death
as the only ground of our forgiveness
and the sole basis of our peace with You.

**We trust in Christ alone
for righteousness and salvation.**

And now, gracious Father,
we ask for the inward work of Your Holy Spirit,

that as we receive these outward elements
 according to Christ's command,
 we may by faith truly feed upon Him,
 be strengthened in our union with Him,
 and grow in grace, assurance, and obedience.

**Strengthen our faith
 and conform us to Christ.**

Unite us as one body in Him,
 and send us out as a thankful people,
 to live no longer for ourselves
 but for Him who loved us
 and gave Himself for us,
 until the day when faith becomes sight
 and we feast with Christ in glory.

**To You be glory forever,
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 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

On the night He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread,
and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said,
“This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

We remember that His body was broken for us,
that we might be healed, forgiven, and restored.

In the same way, He took the cup, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

We remember that His blood was shed for us,
the innocent for the guilty,
the righteous for sinners.

Taking of the bread

Take, eat, and remember:
Christ died in our place,
and by His body we are united to Him
and to one another in the bond of peace.
Let us eat together, proclaiming the Lord’s body broken for us.

Drinking of the cup

Take, drink, and remember:
we are redeemed, reconciled, and washed clean,
not by our works,
but by the one sacrifice of Christ Jesus our Lord.
Let us drink together, proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes.

Prayer after Communion

Almighty and eternal God,
we give You thanks for the immeasurable gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
We thank You that in His body broken and His blood shed,
He has purchased for us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.
By His sacrifice, You have reconciled us to Yourself
and opened the way to everlasting fellowship with You.

We thank You, O Lord, for the nourishment of our souls in this holy feast.
 By faith, we have partaken of Christ, receiving Him as our Savior and Lord.
 We rejoice that we are united with Him and with one another,
 not by our own merit,
 but by Your covenant mercy and the righteousness of Christ alone.

Gracious Father, strengthen us by Your Spirit to live in obedience and holiness,
 to proclaim Your truth in word and deed,
 and to walk faithfully in the path of Your Son.
 May the memory of this sacrament remain with us,
 shaping our hearts and lives,
 until the day when we shall feast with Christ in glory,
 free from sin, sorrow, and death.

All glory, honor, and praise be to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and
 forever. **Amen.**

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn: "Old Rugged Cross"

On a hill far away, stood an old rugged Cross
 The emblem of suff'ring and shame
 And I love that old Cross where the dearest and best
 For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross
 Till my trophies at last I lay down
 I will cling to the old rugged Cross
 And exchange it some day for a crown.

Oh, that old rugged Cross so despised by the world
 Has a wondrous attraction for me
 For the dear Lamb of God, left his Glory above
 To bear it to dark Calvary.

So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross
 Till my trophies at last I lay down
 I will cling to the old rugged Cross
 And exchange it some day for a crown.

To the old rugged Cross, I will ever be true
 Its shame and reproach gladly bear
 Then He'll call me some day to my home far away
 Where his glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross
 Till my trophies at last I lay down
 I will cling to the old rugged Cross
 And exchange it some day for a crown

Pastoral Prayer

Heavenly Father,
 we come before You in awe and gratitude.
 We confess that we have often wandered from Your ways,
 sought our own paths, and turned from Your truth.
 Yet You have not abandoned us.
 You sent Your Son to bear the weight of our failures,
 to endure what we deserved,
 and to bring us back into Your mercy.

Lord Jesus,
 we thank You for being our substitute,
 for standing in our place,
 and for laying down Your life so that we might live.
 We acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves
 and that our hope rests entirely in Your grace.
 Teach us to walk faithfully in the new life You have given,
 to follow where You lead,
 and to love as You have loved.

Holy Spirit,
 empower us to live in the freedom Christ has purchased.
 Strengthen our faith when fear tempts us to deny Him.
 Remind us always that the One who was bound and beaten for our sake
 now reigns in glory and truth.
 Keep our hearts fixed on Him,

and may our lives bear witness to His mercy, His love, and His kingdom that is not of this world.

We pray all of this in the name of our Savior and King, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the God of mercy go with you.

May Christ, our King of truth, guide your steps, guard your hearts, and restore your souls.

May the Spirit empower you to walk faithfully in the freedom He has won, to live in hope, and to love without fear.

Go in peace, forgiven, redeemed, and filled with the joy of the Lord, now and forever.

Amen.