

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, January 25th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

At the foot of the Cross
Third Sunday After Epiphany
John 19:31-42

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

The Lord reigns in holiness and power,
His purposes stand firm forever.

**We come to worship the God whose will cannot be overturned
and whose mercy endures forever.**

He is faithful in all His works
and righteous in all His ways.

**We lift our hearts to the Lord,
trusting in His steadfast love.**

He calls His people from fear to faith,
from darkness into light.

**We come with humble hearts,
seeking His presence and His truth.**

Come, let us worship the Lord our God.

We will rejoice and be glad in Him.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O eternal and sovereign God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
we bow before You in humble reverence and holy awe.

You are the God who speaks and it is done,
the God who ordains the end from the beginning,
the God whose wisdom is unsearchable

and whose purposes stand forever.

We adore You for Your holiness that is without shadow,
for Your justice that cannot be bribed or bent,
and for Your mercy that flows freely to the undeserving.
You are glorious in majesty, perfect in righteousness,
and steadfast in covenant love.

We praise You for Your great work of redemption,
for Your faithfulness to Your promises,
and for Your power to save completely
all who come to You in faith.

Now, gracious God, we ask that You would draw near to us.
By Your Spirit, quiet our hearts, sharpen our attention,
and turn our thoughts from earthly concerns
to heavenly realities.

Open our mouths to sing with sincerity,
our ears to hear with humility,
and our hearts to respond with obedience and trust.

Meet with us in this place,
not because we are worthy,
but because You are gracious.

We ask all this in reverence and faith.
Amen.

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God,
we confess that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed.
We have trusted ourselves,
loved comfort more than obedience,
and neglected mercy and truth.
Have mercy on us, O Lord.
Forgive our failures,

cleanse our hearts,
and give us courage to live in faithful obedience to You.
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news:
God is merciful and faithful.
To all who repent and trust in Christ,
He promises forgiveness, cleansing, and new life.

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: "There is a Redeemer"

There is a redeemer
Jesus, God's own son
Precious lamb of God, Messiah
Holy one.

Jesus my redeemer
Name above all names
Precious lamb of God, Messiah
Oh, for sinners slain.

Thank you oh my father
For giving us your son
And leaving your spirit
'Til the work on earth is done.

When I stand in glory
I will see his face
And there I'll serve my king forever
In that holy place.

Thank you oh my father
For giving us your son
And leaving your spirit
'Til the work on earth is done.

There is a redeemer
Jesus, God's own son
Precious lamb of God, Messiah
Holy one.

Thank you oh my father
For giving us your son
And leaving your spirit
'Til the work on earth is done.
And leaving your spirit
'Till the work on earth is done.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 118:19-24

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.

²⁰ **This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.**

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

²² **The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.**

²³ This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ **This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): "He My Shepherd Is"

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

John 19:31-42

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Sermon

We gather again today at the foot of the cross. We have walked through the arrest, the mockery, the torture, the abuse, the crucifixion, and the death of Jesus. We have been summoned to behold the Man—to look upon Him not with passing curiosity, but with sober hearts and searching souls.

And in beholding Him, we are confronted with a choice that cannot be avoided. We are called either to worship Him as Lord and Savior, or to turn away and cling to a life shaped by our own desires. There is no neutral ground at the cross. We must either bow before Him in faith or push Him aside so that we may continue to enjoy this world on our own terms.

The cross demands everything. It calls us to stand upon the finished work of Christ, to surrender our lives fully and without reservation, trusting not in our own strength or wisdom, but in what He has accomplished once and for all. Or we may attempt to retain control for ourselves—

seeking comfort, wealth, power, and even cherished sins—while keeping Christ at a safe distance.

What the cross will not do is allow us to remain undecided. It exposes our hearts. It strips away our illusions of control. It forces us to reckon with the truth that life is found only when humbling ourselves and losing ourselves to Christ.

Here, at the foot of the cross, we must decide whom we will serve.

John 19:31-32

³¹Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.

Once again John is very specific in his word choice. He wants to not only see what happens, but also to understand why it happened. Timing matters, motives matter.

It is the day of Preparation, the day before the Sabbath, and it is not just an ordinary Sabbath. It is a Sabbath that falls in the midst of a Passover. John refers to it as a High Day, which meant it was a day heavy with religious meaning, ceremony, and expectation. And it is the urgency of that Holy Day that causes the Jewish leaders to act as they do.

They are anxious. Their law commanded that a body should not remain hanging on their Holy day as it could defile the land. So, they want the crosses cleared, not because they have empathy, sympathy or even pity for the men dying that excruciating death, but because they fear the contamination of their Holy day. There is a great ironing in their desire to protect the purity of the Passover and Sabbath in not entering the courtyard of Pilate when they accused Jesus and here at the foot of the cross where they have just participated in the crucifixion of the Lord and want his body cleared to maintain spiritual purity for the Sabbath.

Calvin exposed this contradiction with ruthless clarity

They are scrupulous about the day, but not about the deed. They strain gnats and swallow camels. They arrange the murder of the Son of God and then rush to cleanse their hands before sundown. -Calvin

The truth is that they are caught up in religious ritual, untouched by the truth of God's Word. They are embracing devotion and a meticulous adherence to ceremony utterly indifferent to justice, mercy and love.

The same could be said of many Christians in the world today, who either grasp religious ceremony and righteousness believing themselves above the world or adhere to false doctrines and embrace the world believing that they are saved because they attend services and call themselves Christian with no understanding of the truth of God's Word.

John refers to the crucified men with the word 'somata', a simple word meaning body. A word that is meant to make us confront the reality of what has taken place. Jesus did not just appear to suffer, he did not hover above the pain, the suffering, the humiliation and degradation. He endured it on his flesh, his wounds were real, and the death he experienced was a real death.

The Sabbath is to be honored; the bodies will be removed.

The method ordered is 'crurifragium', the breaking of the legs. As we learned last week, Roman crucifixion was designed to prolong suffering, the only way a man could breathe was by pushing up with his legs. By breaking a man's legs, pushing up to breathe becomes impossible and the person upon the cross dies quickly of suffocation.

The Soldiers carry out their orders. They move from one cross to another. At the first cross they swing the hammer and break the legs of the man hanging there, they move to the second cross and swing the hammer breaking the legs of the man hanging there. With each swing of that hammer the sound of splintering bones and the scream of agonizing pain fills the air.

This is not compassion, this is religious pride, this is the fear of defilement overtaking the compassion of God.

This is being more concerned with appearing faithful than being faithful. More concerned with an outward appearance than an inward observance. And it can go both ways, a strict adherence that forgets about mercy, compassion and grace or a loose adherence that embraces love, grace and mercy and forgets about truthfulness, obedience, righteousness, wrath and sin.

John 19:33-34

³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

Finally, the soldiers come to the base of the central cross. They are seasoned executioners, they know death when they see it, and the very minute they arrive at the base of the cross, they recognize what has already occurred.

He is dead.

There is no need to break His bones, no further suffering is required. His life has already been handed over to God.

Still to remove all doubt for those gathered observing a spear is driven into the side of Jesus. John records it with precision. The verb is clear and decisive. There is no hesitation, this is no accident, it is a quick strike, a fatal blow, meant to ensure death.

The wound it creates is wide and deep, if any life had remained it would have been snuffed out with this strike.

John is clear, at that moment, blood and water flow out from the wound.

The church has debated this moment for centuries, not out of morbid curiosity, but in awe of the event.

Augustine thought that the blood and water signify the cleansing and life flowing from the finished work of Christ.

Chrysostom say that just as Eve was taken from the side of Adam, so the church is born from the wounded side of Christ.

Later generations sang of the event.

Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be the sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power

Modern churches look at the field of medical science. A ruptured heart, one that dies under extreme duress, can release both serum and blood, that would appear like blood and water.

But what John is offering us in his description is not a lesson in anatomy, he is offering us a lesson in assurance.

The certainty of the death of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith in His resurrection.

John describes the death in the perfect tense. Jesus is fully dead, not partially, not provisionally. He is fully and finally dead, there is no doubt in the minds of anyone gathered there at the foot of the cross.

However, His death is not his defeat, instead it is the end of the Law, the fulfillment of all righteousness and the payment for all sin.

The spear does not conquer Christ, instead it bears witness to the work that He has already completed.

John 19:35-37

³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

John uses the language of the law. John testifies as a witness of the death of Jesus upon the cross. He writes as one who saw, one who knows and one who speaks the truth.

And he tells us why; that you also may believe'

Faith is not built on a myth or feeling. It rests on a historical reality, attested to by eyewitness testimony.

Jesus then lifts our eyes to the hand of God which is behind every detail.

The unbroken bones mark Jesus as the true Passover Lamb. The command that was given in Exodus, the promise written in the Psalms, the patterns shown in numbers all converge in this moment.

He who did not break the law in His death will fulfill it in His resurrection.

Zachariah's prophecy is coming to fruition. The piercing has occurred. Yet the focus upon the Savior on the cross continues. Every time a sinner in this world raises their eyes and fixes their gaze upon the crucified Christ in repentance and faith those words are fulfilled yet again.

The cross forces us to make a choice, it is not a causal glance. It is a look filled with mourning, supplication and conversion, or it is a look of indifference.

Understanding the death of Christ upon the cross, its manner and its meaning is an essential part of the Christian faith.

The cross was not chaos, it was choreography. God governed everything right down to the smallest detail.

John 19:28-42

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Joseph of Arimathea steps forward. The secrecy of his discipleship ends, he is making a public declaration of his loyalty, here at the cross. Nicodemus follows, showing his faithfulness in bearing the spices that would be used to prepare the body of his Rabbi.

Men who once hid their discipleship are forced to reveal it at the foot of the cross. They step forward knowing that they will lose status, power, wealth and prestige. Knowing that they might become outcasts in their society as they step forward and publicly declare their allegiance to the crucified Messiah.

They take down the body of Jesus, they bind him in linen. They treat his body with dignity and care.

Isaiah had foretold of this,

Isaiah 53:9

**And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.**

The burial is hurried, but not careless. The wounds are cleaned; the body is wrapped carefully. Every movement is done with respect and love.

The body is moved to a tomb that is surrounded by a garden. The first Adam fell in a garden and brought death to the world. The second Adam is buried in a garden and will rise to undo the curse and bring new life to those who come to faith.

The burial serves to amplify the reality of the death. And the death magnifies the power of the resurrection.

Paul later summarizes the Gospel simply.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

As we stand together at the foot of the cross, we are reminded that the journey does not end in sorrow or defeat, but in the hope and promise of resurrection. The cross calls each of us to make a choice—not to remain undecided or indifferent, but to respond with faith, humility, and boldness. We are invited to surrender our lives, to let go of fear and secrecy, and to embrace the new life offered through Christ’s sacrifice.

Let us leave this place not merely as observers of a sacred story, but as participants in its ongoing reality. May we be transformed by the assurance of Christ’s finished work, emboldened to live out our faith openly, and committed to serving with compassion, truth, and love. The cross is not just a symbol of suffering—it is the foundation of our hope, the source of our new family, and the call to a life that proclaims Jesus as Lord.

May we go forth, trusting in the power of the resurrection, and determined to live lives that reflect the grace, mercy, and truth we have found at the foot of the cross as we boldly walk as the Salt and Light of God’s Word in this dark and broken world.

Let us Pray,

I want to close with a prayer of one of the early church fathers Augustine, listen to the reverence he had for his Savior:

Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know You,
and desire nothing save only You.
Let me hate myself and love You.
Let me do everything for the sake of You.
Let me humble myself and exalt You.
Let me think of nothing except You.
Let me die to myself and live in You.
Let me accept whatever happens as coming from You.
Let me banish self and follow You,
and ever desire to follow You.
Let me fly from myself and take refuge in You,
that I may deserve to be defended by You.
Let me fear for myself, let me fear You,

and let me be among those who are chosen by You.
 Let me distrust myself and put my trust in You.
 Let me be willing to obey for the sake of You.
 Let me cling to nothing but to You,
 and let me be poor because of You.
 Look upon me, that I may love You.
 Call me, that I may see You,
 and forever enjoy You. **Amen.**

Augustine of Hippo

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn: "Psalm 29"

The Lord's my Shepherd,
 I'll not want.
 He makes me lie
 in pastures green.
 He leads me by
 the still, still waters,
 His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone,
 and I will trust in You alone;
 For Your endless mercy
 follows me,
 your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways
 in righteousness,
 and He anoints
 my head with oil;
 and my cup,
 it overflows with joy,
 I feast on His pure delights.

And I will trust in You alone,
and I will trust in You alone;
For Your endless mercy
follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.

And though I walk
the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one;
for you are with me,
and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.

And I will trust in You alone,
and I will trust in You alone;
For Your endless mercy
follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.

Pastoral Prayer

O gracious and faithful God,
we thank You for meeting with us by Your Word and Spirit.
We confess that we are often slow to understand,
quick to fear,
and hesitant to trust You fully.

Yet You remain faithful.
Your purposes are sure,
Your mercy is steadfast,
and Your power is sufficient for our weakness.

We thank You for the hope You have given us—
a hope not grounded in human strength,
but in Your unchanging promises.
A hope that stands firm even in sorrow,
and shines brightest in the shadow of death.

Teach us to walk in humble obedience.
Give us courage where we have been silent,
faith where we have doubted,

and love where we have withheld ourselves.

Strengthen Your people for lives of faithfulness,
for costly obedience,
and for joyful endurance.

As we go from this place,
may we live as those who belong to You—
bearing witness not merely with our words,
but with lives shaped by truth, humility, and hope.

We entrust ourselves to You now,
asking that all glory, honor, and praise
would be Yours alone.

Amen.

Benediction

Beloved,
may the God of peace strengthen your hearts,
guard your faith,
and lead you in steadfast hope.

May you walk in confidence,
knowing that His purposes are sure,
His mercy is abundant,
and His grace is sufficient for every need.

Go in peace,
to live faithfully,
to love deeply,
and to hope confidently,
now and always.

Amen.