

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, July 5th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

When the World Pushes Back
Proper 9
Acts 4:23-31

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, let us gather before the Sovereign Lord,
the One who made heaven and earth.

We come to worship the God who reigns over all things.

The nations may rage, and the world may resist,
but the purposes of our God stand forever.

We trust in the Lord, whose plans cannot be shaken.

He calls His people to Himself,
to lift their voices together in praise and prayer.

We are His people, gathered in His name.

Let us worship the Lord with reverence and joy.

Let us fix our eyes on Christ, and worship Him.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty and everlasting God, our gracious heavenly Father,

We come before You this day with thankful and reverent hearts, acknowledging that You alone are God. You are the Maker of heaven and earth, the Lord of history, and the King whose purposes can never fail. From everlasting to everlasting You are God, and there is none like You.

We praise You for Your infinite wisdom, Your perfect holiness, Your steadfast love, and Your unfailing faithfulness. Every good and perfect gift comes from Your gracious hand.

You uphold all things by Your sovereign power, and You work all things according to the counsel of Your perfect will. Your throne is established forever, and Your kingdom rules over all.

We thank You that though we are sinners, You have not dealt with us according to our sins, but have shown us mercy through Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We rejoice that through Him we have forgiveness, peace with You, and the sure hope of eternal life.

As we gather before You today, quiet every distracted heart. Lift our eyes above the concerns of this passing world and fix our thoughts upon Your greatness and glory. By Your Holy Spirit, prepare us to worship You in spirit and in truth. Open our ears to hear Your voice, soften our hearts to receive Your Word, strengthen our faith, and conform us more and more to the likeness of Christ.

May everything that is said, sung, prayed, and heard this day bring honor to Your holy name and build up Your people in faith and love.

We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

Beloved in Christ,

Our Sovereign Lord sees us clearly; our fears, our failings, and our faltering faith. He knows when we have grown silent under pressure, when we have sought comfort more than courage, and when we have tried to carry our burdens alone.

Yet He invites us to come boldly to His throne of grace. Let us therefore draw near with honest hearts, confess our sins, and receive the mercy that is ours in Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Confession

Sovereign Lord,
we come before You with humble and honest hearts.

We confess that we have often failed to live as those who belong to You. Instead of running to You and to Your people in times of trouble, we have withdrawn in fear and carried our burdens alone. We have been more concerned with our comfort than with Your glory, more eager for safety than for boldness in Your service.

Forgive us for the times we have trimmed Your truth to please the world, for the times we have trusted our own strength instead of Your Holy Spirit,

and for the times we have loved the praise of men more than the honor of Christ.

We have not loved You with our whole hearts,
nor loved our neighbors as ourselves.
Cleanse us from these sins, O Lord.
Renew a right spirit within us.
Fill us afresh with Your Holy Spirit,
and make us a people who live courageously for the glory of Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Brothers and sisters, hear the good news of the Gospel: God did not abandon His Son in the hour of darkness, and He will never abandon you. At the cross, the worst evil served the greatest good; our sin was judged, and grace was secured.

Look to Christ! He is the true King who forgives His timid disciples, restores His failing witnesses, and pours out His Spirit on His weak saints. By the obedient sacrifice of the Anointed One, your sins are washed away. You are forgiven, reconciled, and free.

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 #274: "Crown Him with many Crowns"

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 Son of God,
before the worlds began;
let all who tread where he has trod,
crown him the Son of Man,

who every grief has known
 that wrings the human breast,
 and takes and bears them for his own,
 that all in him may rest.

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!

Responsive Reading

Psalm 46:1-7

¹ God is our refuge and strength,
 a very present help in trouble.

**² Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way,
 though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,**

³ though its waters roar and foam,
 though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*

**⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
 the holy habitation of the Most High.**

⁵ God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
 God will help her when morning dawns.

**⁶ The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
 he utters his voice, the earth melts.**

**⁷ The Lord of hosts is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

Anthem (Music Ministry): “Wonderful, Merciful Saviour”

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Acts 4:23–31

²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’—

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Sermon

I have a question for you?

What should God’s people do when obedience becomes costly?

You know when the pressure rises, and the world threatens, how should people or the church as an organization respond?

Acts 4 gives us the answer.

When faced with a choice between the world and God, a Christian under pressure does not panic, Christian under pressure does not compromise and a Christian under pressure does not become silent in fear.

Instead, a Christian under pressure prays. And when they pray, God meets them, fills them with the power of his Holy Spirit, and sends them out once again with boldness to testify, witness and share the Glory of who He is with the world.

Look at the Scripture today. Threats come. Prayer rises. God answers and the Gospel goes forward. That is how Christ builds his church.

We need to remember where this is all taking place. Peter and John have just been released by the Jewish authorities. The Sanhedrin had warned them, commanded them,

threatened them, and tried to silence them because they had preached Christ crucified and risen.

However, when they are released, they do not go into hiding, they do not begin to find ways to protect themselves, and they do not give into the pressure of the religious authorities.

They instead go to their own people, God's People.

Just a few weeks after the ascension of Jesus Christ the church is already being set apart from the world, they are becoming a distinct people, a family, a household, a fellowship marked by belonging in Christ and not to the ways of the world.

The threats of the world only make the fellowship of the saints more precious. These believers understood themselves to be one people, one body, and one company under Christ. Their first instinct in trials, troubles and tribulations was not to turn to the way of the world, instead it was to gather with fellow believers and seek God together.

And that should speak to each and every one of us.

Because one of Satan's oldest tricks is to isolate believers. He wants you all by yourself, he wants you to hide when the pressure comes, to stop fellowshiping, to withdraw away from worship, to go silent, and carry your fears all alone.

The early church did the opposite.

They did not withdraw, go silent or avoid fellowship.

They ran towards the people of God. They knew isolation is dangerous and fellowship is strengthening.

Like I said a few weeks ago, 'A coal that is pulled out from the fire cools quickly. The same way a sheep cut off from the flock is easy prey.'

When believers gather, pray, and fix their eyes upon God together they are strengthened in their faith. The church is not meant to be a Sunday add-on to the Christian life. The church is where the family of Christ gathers and helps us stay strong and grow in the Christian way of life.

And that is what we see in the Scriptures.

Acts 4:23–31

²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

After Peter and John were released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

The first thing we should take note of is that they did not deny the danger they were facing. They did not pretend the threats were not real. They heard the words of the Sanhedrin clearly. They understood what was happening. They knew the hostility was serious, so they took it to God.

This is what mature faith looks like. Mature faith does not mean that you feel no pressure or weight from the world. Mature faith means you take the weight of the world off your shoulders and give it to the Lord.

There is a kind of false spirituality in some people today where they like to pretend their troubles do not actually trouble them.

The Bible teaches us something different. The Bible tells us to be honest about fears, honest about the pressures we have in our lives, honest about dangers we face; and then to carry all of them into the presence of God.

That is what the early church does.

They take it all to God and then they pray.

Luke wrote that they lifted up their voice 'with one accord.'

The Greek word used here carries the idea of shared passion, united mind, and common heart.

This was not a divided church mumbling different thoughts on what they felt should happen. This was a church turning together as one to the Lord with all of their worries.

Some commentators note that the word translated as 'voice' is singular, as if one person led, and the entire congregation agreed.

There is no chaos; just unity.

Now listen to how they begin: 'Sovereign Lord.'

That Greek word behind this translation is important. It is not the more common word *kyrios*, Lord, instead it is *despotēs*, which translates something like Master, absolute ruler, the one with unquestioned authority.

Their prayer does not begin with the size or severity of the threats they are facing, instead it begins with recognizing the greatness of God.

This is how every prayer should begin.

Too often we start our prayer focused on ourselves: our stress, our confusion, our urgency.

They began with God: 'Sovereign Lord.'

Before they say anything about men, they confess who God is. Before they speak about the rulers of earth, they worship the ruler of heaven and earth. Before they speak about their danger, they confess who holds absolute dominion.

That is probably one of the most practical lessons for us to take away and put into usage in our own lives from this passage.

How you begin your prayers shapes how you face your trials.

If you begin prayer with your fears, your fears will grow larger. If you begin with God, your fears begin to shrink to their proper size.

The early church did not get bold by pretending the Sanhedrin was a minor threat, they get bold by remembering that God is great.

Then the prayer continues: ‘who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.’”

Why do they say that? Because creation tells us that God is not part of the system. He is not one God among many. He is the Maker of all things.

Therefore, everything is under him and nothing is outside his command, nothing is beyond his reach, no power can overrule him, and no empire can outmuscle him.

The One to whom they pray is the Creator, and because he is Creator, he is also the rightful King over all things.

And this should bring us great comfort.

When we pray, we are not sending up hopeful wishes into uncertainty. We are speaking to the one and only Maker of all things.

We are kind of like young children in a storm; when the wind rattles the windows, thunder shakes the house, and we are afraid. However, when our parents come into the room, even though the storm has not stopped, we now know we are no longer alone.

That is what happens when we pray. The storms in our life are still raging outside. The threats are still real. But our prayers remind us that our Father is here, and that He rules over all things in this world.

Acts 4:25-29

²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place

Then their prayer does something we need to take note of.

They quote Scripture, Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:1

2 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

This is one of the richest parts of this passage. They are not reacting emotionally to events. They interpret the events Biblically.

They do not let the world define their reality, instead they let Scripture define the realities of the world to them.

And that is another lesson for us today.

Christians become weak and are easily led astray when they start interpreting the Word of God through the lens of culture, emotions and headlines.

Christians become strong when they instead look at the world through lens of God's Word.

These early believers understood that opposition to God's people is not an interruption to God's plans.

Instead, it is part of the story God had already told. David had written of raging nations, plotting peoples, kings of the earth setting themselves, rulers gathering together against the Lord and against His Christ, long before it ever happened.

The early church is in effect saying, 'This is what we are seeing. This is exactly the kind of rebellion God told us about.'

And notice the early church's doctrine of Scripture here. God spoke 'through the mouth of David' 'by the Holy Spirit.'

That is a clear and compact statement of God's inspiration in the Holy Scriptures.

God spoke it, and David wrote it.

Human author, divine author; not in competition, but together.

The early church treats Psalm 2 as the very Word of God. This high view of Scripture is present throughout the entire passage, and throughout the entire New Testament. That is the view of Scripture that the Reformed church holds, Sola Scriptura.

Scripture Alone is suppose to guide our lives.

Scripture is both ours and the church's authoritative lens for understanding everything in our lives and in this world.

This is important because Scripture does not just inform us; it steadies us. It tells us what is happening. It tells us what to expect and it tells us what will fade away and what will endure through the ages.

Psalm 2 tells us that the rage of the nations is real, but it is also vain. That does not mean it is harmless, it means it is futile.

The opposition to Christianity is always going to be noisy. Men will gather, scheme, and threaten. But all their rebellion against God and His Word cannot overthrow the reign of Jesus Christ.

Then they take this understanding and directly apply it to Jesus. 'For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus... both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.'

This is remarkable. They name names.

Herod. Pontius Pilate. Gentiles. Peoples of Israel.

In other words, Jew and Gentile, rulers and crowds, religious power and political power, all were united against Christ.

The historical details fit what the Bible claims: Herod Antipas ruled Galilee under Rome, and Pontius Pilate served as Roman prefect in Judea from about A.D. 26 to 36. The church understood that Psalm 2 reached its great fulfillment in the conspiracy against Jesus that they had all witnessed.

And then comes one of the strongest statements in Acts about God's sovereignty: they had to do 'whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.'

Throughout everything that had happened, through the wicked actions of the religious leaders and the execution of Jesus upon the cross, the sovereign hand and plan of God was supreme.

This is a Biblical reality, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are often found standing together.

The book of Acts teaches both clearly. The world's foolishness is exposed when it revolts and fights against God; but even the enemies of God are only capable of doing what God allows them to do.

This is a truth that should keep the saints from collapsing. Because at the cross itself, the worst evil ever was committed, and it was still under the hand and plan of God, and because this is true then our own lesser trials are not outside his rule either.

The cross proves two things at once: man's sin is real, and God's sovereignty is greater.

This means that the threats you face in this world are not random, and at the same time they are not outside your Father's hand.

It also clearly does not make evil good and does not excuse the actions of wicked men.

But it does mean this: nothing touches you unless it is allowed by the wise, fatherly, holy permission of God. The same God who governed the cross governs your life and He did not abandon his Son in the hour of darkness, so he will never abandon you.

Now we come to one of the most searching parts of the passage.

Having set up their prayer what do they ask for? Do they ask for protection? Do they ask for lighter work? Do they ask that their enemies would disappear?

No.

Acts 4:29–30

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

That is the heart of their prayer.

They ‘Look upon their threats.’ that they are facing and they do not ask for comfort, safety or an easy life; instead they ask for courage, faithfulness and boldness.

‘They say, ‘Lord, make us bold.’”

The honor of Christ in their lives matters more than their comfort. The spread of the Gospel matters more than the easing of pressure. Their obedience to God and His Word matters more than worldly acceptance.

They know the first priority in their lives is the sharing of the truth with the world about who Jesus Christ, this is the Great Commission, and because of that, they ask not for a way to escape from their hardships but for the divine strength they need to witness through any hardship they may face.

And notice the phrase ‘your servants.’

The Greek word here is *doulos*; which means slaves or bondservants and that might sound sharp to our modern ears, but the meaning is precious. They belong to God. Their lives are not their own. Their calling is not self-chosen. Their agenda is not self-defined. They are the Lord’s servants.

And if they are the Lord’s servants, then their deepest concern is not self-preservation but faithful service. We are not independent owners of our lives; we are not our own. As Christians we belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

Then verse 30 adds, ‘while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’

The power is God's. The hand is God's. The name is Jesus'. The apostles are not asking to become impressive miracle workers. They are asking that God would act in their lives so that the name of Jesus would be exalted.

Every miracle we will read about in the book of Acts, does not exist to make the miracle worker famous, every one of them instead points directly to the saving authority of Jesus Christ.

And notice how Jesus is described: 'your holy servant Jesus.'

The Greek term here is *pais* can mean servant or son/child depending on the context, but here the strongest sense is servant; a title with deep echoes of Isaiah's Servant and of Jesus' obedient messianic calling.

He is also the one 'whom you anointed.'

The Greek verb used here is *chriō* which is related to *Christos*. Jesus is the Christ because he is the Anointed One. He is the true King who reigns as the holy Servant, the one who suffered, obeyed, died, and rose again.

Peter and John did not come back to the others boasting about how they had answered the priests. They went to their brothers and sisters prayerful, humble, and dependent upon God. They showed godliness because their chief concern was not their own personal safety but for the increase and advancement of the kingdom of Christ.

And this exposes our own faith in a helpful way, it makes us think about what we pray for when trials, tribulations and troubles come in our lives?

Do we pray, 'Lord, get me out.'

There is nothing wrong with asking for relief. The Psalms do that often. But Acts chapter 4 teaches us to ask for something deeper: 'Lord, if you leave me in it, make me faithful in it. If you do not remove the pressure, sanctify the pressure. If you do not silence the threats, make me bold under the threats. If the path is hard, make me holy on the path.'

Too often we are like a student who is not prepared for an exam and prays, 'Lord, let the test be easy.' But a wiser prayer is, 'Lord, help me know what is true, help me think clearly, help me be steady, and help me honor you whatever is on the page.'

In the Christian life. We should not be praying for easier circumstances, but for God-given strength to obey under any circumstances that God appoints us to be in.

Then God answers.

Acts 4:31

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

The shaking is not the main thing happening here, it is a sign that points to the main thing. Throughout the Old Testament, trembling, shaking, and earthquake imagery often accompanies the manifest presence of God. Here the shaking is a visible token that God has heard their prayers, God is present, and God is not indifferent to what is happening.

The main thing is that: 'they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.'

They asked for boldness, and God answered by filling them afresh with the Holy Spirit.

This is not Pentecost repeated because Pentecost was somehow insufficient. This is Pentecost continued. The same Holy Spirit who came down at Pentecost now strengthens the people of God once again for fresh obedience.

Remember this always, the filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event; believers who already possess the Spirit need repeated fillings, repeated strengthening, repeated empowerment for the task of witnessing to the world.

That is such an important truth. We are not meant to live our Christian life today only on yesterday's grace. We are not meant to witness to today's battles with last month's communion.

We need a fresh supply of the Spirit. Not a new Savior. Not a new Gospel. Not a new Pentecost. But fresh filling, fresh inflaming, fresh strengthening by the same Holy Spirit. That is what they received.

And what was the result of this refreshing?

'They spoke the Word of God with boldness.'

The Greek word often translated 'boldness' is *parrêsia* — frankness, plainness, freedom of speech, open confidence.

They do not trim the truth. They do not whisper where God has spoken plainly. They do not keep the sharp edges off the Gospel so the world will approve. No, they speak God's word with freely, with boldness, clarity, and courage.

And that is what the church and God's people need to always be doing. Not with rudeness or argumentative vanity. But with holy boldness that comes from being obedient to God in all things, filled by the Holy Spirit, and driven by love for Christ.

Christian boldness that tells the truth plainly because eternal realities are at stake. It is a boldness that is gentle, faithful, tender and unashamed, a boldness that refuses to be silenced to appease the ways of the world.

We need that type of boldness in pulpits and in our homes. We need that type of boldness in our conversations with our neighbors. We need it in classrooms, workplaces, hospital rooms, care homes and coffee shops. We need Christians who can say hard truths without harsh hearts, who can speak clearly without cruelty, and who hold fast to Christ and His Word never fearing the disapproval of man.

So what does this mean for us?

It means, do not be surprised by opposition in this world if you speak God's truth. Psalm 2 is still true today. The world still rages. The kings of the earth still set themselves against the Lord and against his Christ. The names may have changed. The institutions might be different. The slogans are new, but the rebellion remains the same. Christ's kingdom has always advanced in the face of resistance.

And that means, that we do not interpret opposition as proof that God has lost control. The threats against the God's people and His church do not overthrow Christ's reign. They serve, in ways those men do not intend, they serve the larger purposes of God.

It also means, we need to pray bigger prayers. Pray 'Lord, make me faithful.' Pray 'Lord, fill me with your Spirit so I speak well under pressure.' We need to pray as a church for our elders, missionaries, parents, young believers, old saints — that all might speak the Word of God in truth and with boldness.

And it means, we need to remember that the goal has been and always will be the sharing of God's Word and the spreading God's kingdom.

Acts chapter 4 begins with God's sovereignty and ends with God's Word going out. That is no accident. Correct doctrine leads to correct worship, and correct worship sends us back into the world with correct witness.

Prayer and worship are not just little things in the book of Acts. They are central to the life of the faithful.

As you can see clearly now, the church in Acts 4 was not strong because it is influential, wealthy or popular. It was not strong because it was protected by the authorities. It was not strong because the culture was favorable to it. It was and is still strong because it knows its God. It knows the Scriptures. It prays together. It asks for boldness. And it is filled with the Holy Spirit.

But above all, it is centered on Jesus Christ; the holy Servant, the Anointed One, the one against whom the world gathered, and the one whom the world could not defeat.

Everything in this passage points to him. The rulers gathered against him. And in that gathering God accomplished Salvation. At the cross, the rage of the nations met the purpose of God. At the cross, the worst evil served the greatest good. At the cross, our sin was judged and grace was secured. And from the empty tomb Christ now reigns as the One True King.

So if you are weary, look to Christ. If you are fearful, look to Christ. If you are ashamed of your own silence, look to Christ. He is not only the one we speak about, He is the one who gives us boldness to speak. He forgives His timid disciples. He restores His failing witnesses. He pours out his Spirit on His weak saints.

The world may rage on in chaos around us, but Christ reigns supreme. The law of man may threaten us but Christ reigns Supreme. And because Christ reigns, we pray.

Because Christ reigns, we speak the truth, we can endure and we can worship even when the world rages against us.

So let us be like the early church, let us be those kinds of people. A church that runs to God together. A church that interprets our lives through His Word. A church that asks for boldness rather than comforts. A church that depends upon the Holy Spirit in all things. A church that loves the name of Jesus more than the praise of men.

Let us lift our voices every day to the Sovereign Lord. Let us ask him to look upon the troubles we face and grant us His Holy Spirit so we can continue to speak his Word in boldness and truth.

And when he answers, may he make us a people who do not merely admire boldness from a distance, but receive it from his very hand. May he fill us again, steady us again and send us again into this dark and broken world as the Salt and Light of his Word where we proclaim the glory of Jesus Christ, the holy Servant, the crucified and risen Lord, the King whom God is enthroned, and the Savior in whose name sinners are healed and saints are strengthened.

Let us pray,

Grant, Almighty God,

since we are placed in so much danger from every side, and our weakness is so great, that we may not yield to any fears or be terrified by the noise of this world. But let us rely on Your power and be steadfast in our faith.

Grant that we may always look to Your Son, the true anchor of our salvation, and walk boldly in the path You have set before us, sustained by Your Holy Spirit, until we are safely gathered into Your heavenly rest.

Amen.

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we have been reminded that the early church did not find its strength in favorable circumstances, influential leaders, or worldly power. Their strength was found in the Sovereign Lord who rules over all things, in the Scriptures that reveal His truth, and in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Savior.

Now that same Lord invites His people to His Table.

This is not merely a time to remember something that happened long ago. It is a gracious gift Christ has given to strengthen His church as we continue to live and witness in a world that often stands against Him.

We do not come because we deserve a place here.
We come because Jesus Christ has made a place for sinners through His body broken and His blood shed upon the cross.

We do not come trusting in our own righteousness.
We come trusting in Christ alone.

If today you have repented of your sins, are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, and desire to follow Him in faithful obedience, then this Table is prepared for you.

Come with humble hearts.
Come with thankful hearts.

Come looking away from yourself and fixing your eyes upon Christ.
For He is the One who forgives timid disciples, strengthens weak saints, and nourishes His people for faithful service.

Let us pray.
Gracious and Sovereign Father,
We confess that we are sinners who have fallen far short of Your glory.

Too often we have feared the opinions of men more than we have feared You.
Too often we have remained silent when we should have spoken.
Too often we have trusted our own strength instead of depending upon Your Spirit.

Yet we thank You that our hope does not rest in ourselves.
Our hope rests entirely in Jesus Christ, Your holy Servant, whom You anointed, who willingly gave Himself upon the cross for our sins and whom You raised again in power and glory.

Forgive us.
Renew us.
Strengthen us.

As we come to this Table, fill us afresh with Your Holy Spirit, that our faith may be strengthened, our love for Christ may grow deeper, and our lives may become bold witnesses to Your saving grace.
We ask these things in Jesus' name.

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 indeed right and our joyful duty to give You thanks and praise, O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

Nothing is outside Your rule.

Nothing is beyond Your wisdom.

Nothing can frustrate Your holy purposes.

When the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain, You remain seated upon Your throne.

We praise You because even at the cross, when wicked men gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, they accomplished only what Your hand and Your eternal purpose had already determined.

Through what appeared to be the greatest defeat, You accomplished the greatest victory.

Through Christ's suffering came our salvation.

Through His death came our life.

Through His resurrection came our everlasting hope.

Therefore we gladly proclaim,

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gracious Father,

send Your Holy Spirit upon Your people.

As we receive these visible signs according to Christ's command,
strengthen our faith,

deepen our communion with Christ,

unite us together as one body,
and prepare us to leave this place ready to speak Your Word with humility,
courage, and holy boldness.

May this meal remind us that the same Christ who died for us now reigns over
us,
and the same Spirit who filled the early church still strengthens Your people
today.

To You alone be all glory,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
world without end.

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. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

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

Taking of the bread

This is the body of Christ,
 given for you.
 Given under the plan of God.
 Given in the face of opposition.
 Given so that sinners might be forgiven
 and brought near to God.

As you eat, remember—
 Christ gave Himself for you.
 Christ was broken for you.
 Christ now unites you to Himself.

Let us eat together,
 with faith in Christ,
 and thanksgiving in our hearts

Drinking of the cup

This cup is the new covenant
 in the blood of Christ,
 shed for the forgiveness of sins.
 Shed according to the plan of God.
 Shed though the world raged against Him.
 Shed so that mercy might triumph over judgment.

As you drink, remember—
 your sins are forgiven.
 your guilt is removed.
 your peace with God is secured.

Not by your works,
not by your strength,
but by Christ alone.

And as you drink,
look not only back to the cross,
but forward—
For the risen Christ reigns,
and one day we will drink with Him
in His kingdom.

Let us drink together,
proclaiming the Lord's death
until He comes.

Prayer after Communion

Sovereign Lord,
we thank You that You have met us here
and fed us with Christ.

We thank You for His body broken for us
and His blood shed for us—
that through the cross,
our sins are forgiven
and our peace with You is secured.

Strengthen us now by Your Spirit.
Fill us afresh,
that we may go from this place
faithful, steady, and united as Your people.

Make us bold to speak Your Word,
fearless under pressure,
and fixed upon Christ—
our crucified and risen King.

Keep us trusting,
keep us speaking,
and keep us walking in Your strength,
until we see Him face to face.

To You be all glory—
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 now and forever.

Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #445: “Open Our Eyes Lord”

Open our eyes, Lord,
 we want to see Jesus,
 to reach out and touch him,
 and say that we love him.

Open our ears, Lord,
 and help us to listen.
 Open our eyes, Lord,
 we want to see Jesus.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious Father,

as we prepare to leave this gathering,
 we do not ask for an easy path or a life free from trials.

Instead, we ask that You would make us faithful
 in whatever circumstances You have appointed for us.
 If You do not remove the pressure of this world,
 sanctify the pressure;
 make us bold under the threats we face.

Grant us the courage to speak Your truth plainly,
 with gentle and unashamed hearts.
 Keep us from the danger of isolation,
 and hold us tightly together as one flock.

We ask Your blessing upon the time of fellowship that follows.
As we share together, may our fellowship be a true source of strength.
May the conversations encourage the weary and reflect the deep unity we have in Christ.

Fortify us for the week ahead,
that we might serve as the salt and light of Your word in our community.
In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we pray.
Amen.

Benediction

Now may the God who reigns over all things
strengthen you with His Holy Spirit,

May you be steadfast in faith,
May you be unshaken in hope,
May you be and bold in witness.

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all,
Today and forevermore.

Amen.