

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth

Sunday, August 30th, 2026

Rev. Gerry Gallant

But God Was With Him

Proper 17

Acts 7:1-16

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, let us worship the Lord, who is gracious, holy, and worthy of all praise.

We lift our hearts to the Lord, for His steadfast love endures forever.

The Lord calls His people to Himself, to hear His Word, receive His grace, and rejoice in His salvation.

We come before Him with thanksgiving, trusting in His mercy and resting in His promises.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, our Saviour and King, who gathers us by grace and leads us in hope.

Let us worship the Lord with gladness, for He is good, His mercy is sure, and His name is worthy of praise.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Holy and gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

we come before You with reverence and joy.

You alone are worthy of our worship.

You are the Maker of heaven and earth, the giver of every good gift,
the God whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

We praise You for Your holiness,

Your wisdom, Your power, and Your steadfast love.

You have called us out of darkness into Your marvelous light,

and You have gathered us in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and King.

By Your Holy Spirit, lift our hearts from distraction to devotion.

Quiet our restless thoughts, humble us beneath Your Word,

and awaken in us true faith, sincere repentance, and grateful praise.

Be present among us as we worship.
 Receive our prayers, inhabit our praises,
 speak to us through Your Word, and turn our eyes to Christ,
 in whom all Your promises are yes and amen.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

Beloved in Christ, when we come before the Lord in worship, we come before the One who is holy, gracious, and merciful. He knows our hearts completely, and He invites us to draw near with honesty and repentance. Trusting in His steadfast love and in the saving work of Jesus Christ, let us confess our sins together.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, the God of glory, we confess that we are slow to trust You when the road ahead is hidden. We have resisted Your Word, questioned Your providence, and clung to what is familiar rather than resting in Your promises.

Forgive us for the times we have failed to see Your hand at work in waiting, suffering, and disappointment. Forgive us for trusting our own understanding more than Your covenant faithfulness, and for resisting the very grace by which You call us back to Yourself.

Have mercy on us for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Beloved Son who was rejected by His own, brought low for our salvation, and raised up to give life to His people. Cleanse us by His blood, renew us by Your Spirit, and teach us to trust and follow You, even when we cannot see the way. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news: Though Christ was rejected, He was raised up for our salvation. In Him, all who repent and believe are forgiven, cleansed, and received by grace. God has been faithful, He is faithful now, and He will be faithful forever.
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 #57: "On Eagles Wings" (V 1,2,3)

You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord,
Who abide in His shadow for life,
Say to the Lord, "My Refuge,
My Rock in Whom I trust."

Refrain:

And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of My Hand.

The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
And famine will bring you no fear;
Under God's Wings your refuge,
God's faithfulness your shield. (Refrain)

You need not fear the terror of the night,
Nor the arrow that flies by day,
Though thousands fall about you,
Near you it shall not come. (Refrain)

Responsive Reading

Psalms 105:1-11

105 Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples!

**²Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wondrous works!**

**³Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!**

**⁴Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually!**

**⁵Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,**

**⁶O offspring of Abraham, his servant,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones!**

⁷He is the Lord our God;

his judgments are in all the earth.

⁸ He remembers his covenant forever,
the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
⁹ **the covenant that he made with Abraham,**
his sworn promise to Isaac,

¹⁰ which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
¹¹ **saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan**
as your portion for an inheritance.”

Anthem (Music Ministry)

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Acts 7:1-16

7 And the high priest said, “Are these things so?” ² And Stephen said:
“Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham
when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘Go out from
your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ ⁴ Then he
went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died,
God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. ⁵ Yet he gave
him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a
possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. ⁶ And God spoke to
this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who
would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. ⁷ ‘But I will judge the nation
that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this
place.’ ⁸ And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the
father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of
Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹ “And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him

¹⁰ and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before
Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.

¹¹ Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and
our fathers could find no food. ¹² But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt,
he sent out our fathers on their first visit. ¹³ And on the second visit Joseph made
himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴ And
Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons

in all. ¹⁵ And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, ¹⁶ and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

Sermon

There are seasons in life when we can see where we are going. Where we understand what God is doing, or at least we think we do. Then there are other seasons when the road ahead disappears into the fog. We pray, but we do not know what God is doing. We wait, but we do not know how long the waiting will last. We need to learn to trust, even when we cannot see.

We see it in Abraham, who stepped out toward a land he could not yet name. We see it in Joseph, whose path wound through betrayal, slavery, and prison before the purpose became clear. And in a different way, we see it in Stephen, who trusted God even when the road ended at the stones.

What Acts chapter 7 does is remind us that faith does not mean that we always understand the road ahead. Faith means that we trust in the God who does.

Two weeks ago we learned that Stephen is standing before the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish religious court of his day. He has been accused of speaking against Moses, the temple, and the Law. But instead of defending himself with a long list of arguments, Stephen begins with the history of God's dealings with His people.

The High Priest begins by asking,

Acts 7:1

And the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

Stephen could have attacked the false witnesses or pleaded for mercy. But instead, he tells the story of God's faithfulness because the real issue before the council is not just Stephen's innocence. The deeper issue is whether these leaders know the God they claim to defend.

You see Stephen is not merely retelling Israel's history. He is showing how God has always worked beyond human expectations and that His people have often resisted the very servants that He sent.

That pattern begins with Abraham, continues through Joseph, and will finally be revealed in their rejection of Christ.

The great truth of this passage is simple: God is faithful to His promises, present with His people, and sovereign even over their suffering.

And throughout chapter 7 we will see the same truth again and again: when God's people cannot see what He is doing, God has not stopped working.

Stephen begins his response with:

Acts 7:2-3

² And Stephen said:

“Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’

Stephen starts by addressing the men prepared to condemn him as “brothers and fathers.” He is courageous without being cruel, showing us how truth can be spoken firmly and graciously, and how we can stand for Christ and disagree with people without forgetting that our hearers still need His mercy.

Stephen calls the Lord ‘the God of glory.’ He is reminding these religious leaders that the God who appeared to Abraham is not small, local, or bound to one sacred building. He is majestic, free, and able to reveal Himself wherever He pleases.

And notice when God appeared to Abraham: before there was a temple, before there was a tabernacle, and before Abraham possessed the Promised Land.

Abraham came from a family and culture shaped by idolatry. Joshua 24:2 tells us that his ancestors ‘served other gods.’ Abraham did not find God because he was wiser or better than others. God came to him in mercy. Abraham’s story begins with God’s initiative, not his own achievement.

God said to Abraham, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.’ God gave Abraham a promise, not a map. Hebrews 11:8 says he went out ‘not knowing where he was going.’ Abraham did not know the road ahead, but he knew the One who had called him to walk that road. That is faith: not seeing the whole way, but trusting fully in the God who leads.

The God who called Abraham also taught him to wait. His promise was real, but it would not be fulfilled all at once.

Stephen then continues:

Acts 7:4-5

⁴ Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. ⁵ Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child.

God promised Abraham land, but he owned none of it. God promised descendants, but he had no child. From the outside, Abraham had nothing but God's word; yet that word was more solid than anything he could see.

Stephen says that Abraham did not receive 'even a foot's length' of the land at first. He lived there as a pilgrim. Then when Sarah died, the man who had been promised the land still had to buy a burial place for his wife.

But that did not mean God had forgotten him. It meant God was teaching him to trust.

Often God's promises seem buried beneath our circumstances, but hidden does not mean forgotten. Like a seed beneath the soil, what God has planted will live, grow, and come to pass in His time.

Romans 4:20–21 says this of Abraham,

Romans 4:20-21

²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Romans 4 reminds us that Abraham was not made right with God because his faith was perfect. He was made right because he trusted God's promise. That is good news for us. It means that our relationship with God does not rest on our strength, consistency, or achievement. It rests on Jesus Christ and is received by faith.

Stephen next says that Abraham's descendants would be strangers in another land, enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years, a long period of waiting and affliction.

God's promise did not lead to an easy road at all. Between the time of the promise and its fulfillment stood slavery, suffering, and generations of waiting. Yet none of those things cancelled the covenant. God always keeps his word.

We can easily think that if God is with us, our lives should become simpler. But Scripture teaches something deeper: God's presence does not mean the absence of trouble; it means trouble cannot separate us from His love or defeat His purpose.

That waiting in Abraham's life prepares us for Joseph's suffering. God's promise did not always look powerful from the outside. Sometimes it looked hidden, delayed, and even opposed. But God's purpose was always moving forward.

His grace does not just rescue us from guilt; it trains us to live for Christ while we wait for His appearing. God's people do not wait passively or hopelessly. We wait as those redeemed by Jesus, purified by His mercy, and made zealous for good works.

Stephen goes on to remind them that God did not leave Abraham with a promise only in words. He gave a covenant sign to mark His people and remind them that the Lord keeps what He has spoken.

Acts 7:8 says:

Acts 7:8

⁸ And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

The Greek word for covenant is *diathēkē*. A covenant is a binding relationship established by God with promises and obligations.

God made a covenant with Abraham and gave him the sign of circumcision. In the New Covenant, baptism is given as the covenant sign of belonging to the visible church. It points us to the cleansing found in Christ, marks us as belonging among God's covenant people, and reminds us that salvation is God's gracious work from beginning to end.

But we must never confuse the sign with the thing signified.

The sacramental sign is precious, but the sign is not the Saviour. Christ is.

And there is encouragement here for Christians. We cannot give our family, friends, or colleagues new hearts. Only God can do that. But we can teach them, pray for them,

bring them into the worship and life of the church, and model repentance and faith before them. Our responsibility is faithfulness. The results belong to God.

And Stephen's history lesson for these men does not stop with the covenant sign. He continues showing them that even among the covenant family there was jealousy, betrayal, and suffering. And through all of it, God was present.

Stephen is showing a pattern: again and again, God's people resisted the very servants God used to carry His promise forward. Abraham was called away from the familiar. Joseph was rejected by his brothers. Later, Israel would reject Christ Himself. Stephen is preparing his hearers to see their rejection of Jesus within that same tragic pattern.

Acts 7:9-16

⁹ "And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him ¹⁰ and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. ¹¹ Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. ¹² But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. ¹³ And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴ And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. ¹⁵ And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, ¹⁶ and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

Stephen now moves from covenant promise to covenant suffering.

'And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him.'

Those last few words of verse 9 change everything.

Joseph was in the pit—but God was with him.
Joseph was in slavery—but God was with him.
Joseph was in prison—but God was with him.

And when Joseph finally stood in Pharaoh's palace, God was with him there too. His circumstances changed. God's presence did not. God did not remove every affliction from Joseph's life, but He kept Joseph through them all.

That should comfort every believer. Like a child walking through a dark room while holding the hand of a father. The darkness is still real. The child may still be afraid. The

child may not know what is around the next corner. But the child is not alone. A strong hand is holding on.

And that is our hope. Our hope does not rest in how tightly we hold on to God. Our hope rests in how faithfully God holds on to us.

What Joseph's brothers meant for harm became the means God used to save many lives. Their sin was real, and they were responsible for it; God was not the author of their evil. Yet their evil could not overthrow God's saving purpose. Above their sinful purpose stood God's sovereign purpose.

God delivered Joseph and raised him up to preserve life. In that pattern, we begin to see the shadow of a greater Saviour, one who would be rejected by His own, brought low in suffering, and raised up to save His people forever.

Joseph was loved by his father and rejected by his brothers; Jesus is the beloved Son of the Father, rejected by His own people. Joseph was sold for silver, brought low, and then raised up to rule; Jesus was betrayed for silver, humbled Himself to death on a cross, and was highly exalted. Joseph gave bread during a famine and preserved people for a time, but Jesus is the bread of life who saves His people from sin and eternal death.

At the cross, Jesus took the place of sinners. He bore the judgment we deserved so that those who trust in Him might receive His righteousness.

Then from Joseph's suffering, Stephen now turns to the wider purpose of God. The Lord was not only sustaining one man; he was preserving the whole covenant family and carrying his promise forward.

The famine brought Jacob's family down to Egypt to look for grain. They did not know, at first, that the brother they had rejected was the one God had raised up to save them. On their second visit, Joseph made himself known, and the family was brought into Egypt.

Stephen moves quickly through the final part of this section. The patriarchs went down into Egypt, they lived there, and eventually they died. But even in death, the promise of God had not failed.

Their lives remind us that God's promises are larger than one generation. They died trusting what God had promised, even though they did not see the complete fulfillment of those promises in their lifetime.

Egypt had been their temporary home. It was never their final home.

And brothers and sisters, this world is not our final home.

Hebrews 11:16 says God's people desire 'a better country, that is, a heavenly one.' Our homes, families, work, and communities matter, but none of them is ultimate. We are pilgrims travelling toward the city whose designer and builder is God.

Christian hope is not wishful thinking. We do not say 'I hope everything works out.' We say, 'Christ has risen, Christ is reigning, and Christ will come again.' Our hope rests on a risen Saviour and a promise God cannot break.

So where does all of this leave us? Stephen has taken us from Abraham's calling, to covenant waiting, to Joseph's suffering, and finally to God's providence. All of it tells us the same truth: God's people can trust Him even when they cannot see what He is doing.

When you cannot see the road ahead, remember Abraham. When suffering makes you wonder if God has forgotten you, remember Joseph. When evil seems strong, remember the providence of God.

Through all of it, God was with him.

If you belong to Christ, that is your hope too. Your circumstances, health, plans, and relationships may change. You may not understand what God is doing. But God does not change, and He does not abandon His people.

Above all, look to Jesus. Abraham trusted a promise. Joseph trusted God's providence. We have seen the promise fulfilled in Christ.

He was rejected so that we might be received, condemned so that we might be forgiven, and raised so that we might inherit life. He reigns now and will bring every one of His people safely home.

So let us trust His promise, follow His call, rest in His providence, and worship His Son.

When we cannot see the road, He is still leading.

When we suffer, He has not abandoned us.

When evil seems to have the upper hand, He is still sovereign.

And when this earthly pilgrimage is over, Christ will bring His people safely home.

The God who called Abraham, preserved Joseph, stood with Stephen, and raised Jesus from the dead is our God.

He has been faithful.

He is faithful now.

And He will be faithful forever.

So let us go forth and walk as the Salt and Light of His Word in this dark and broken world.

Amen.

Let Us pray,

O Lord our God, You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You. Turn us from the false confidence of what we can see, and teach us to cling to Your promises when the way before us is hidden.

Grant us, by Your Holy Spirit, a humble and obedient faith. As You called Abraham to go where You would lead, make us willing to follow Your Word. As You were with Joseph in affliction, make us confident that no suffering can separate us from Your covenant love.

Forgive us for our unbelief, our impatience, and our desire to know the whole road before we trust You. Subdue our proud hearts, mortify our sins, and conform us to the image of Your Son.

Fix our eyes upon Jesus Christ, who was rejected for our sake, raised for our salvation, and now reigns at Your right hand. Let the truth we have heard not pass away from us, but take root in us, bear fruit through us, and strengthen us to walk as pilgrims toward our heavenly home.

We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom Your promises are sure, Your mercy is full, and Your grace is enough. **Amen.**

Adapted from the prayers of Augustine

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn #290: “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise” (V 1,2,4)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
 in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
 most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
 almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
 nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
 thy justice like mountains high soaring above
 thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
 thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
 all praise we would render, O help us to see
 'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious Father, we thank You for gathering us in the name of Jesus Christ. We thank You for Your Word, for the mercy that meets us in our weakness, and for the promise that You are with Your people in every season.

Teach us to carry the truth we have heard into the days ahead. Strengthen the weary, comfort the grieving, encourage the discouraged, and give wisdom to all who face uncertainty. Help us to trust Your providence when we cannot see the road, and to rest in Christ, who is faithful forever.

We pray for our church family, for those who are absent, for those who are suffering in body, mind, or spirit, and for those who carry burdens known only to You. Keep us near to Christ, knit us together in love, and make us a people who bear witness to Your grace in this community.

We also thank You for the food and fellowship that will follow this service. Bless the hands that prepared it, bless the food to our nourishment, and bless our time together so that our conversations would be marked by gratitude, kindness, encouragement, and joy in You.

Send us out in the peace of Christ, strengthened by Your Word, sustained by Your grace, and ready to love and serve in His name. We ask all these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction

Go now in the peace of the God who called Abraham, preserved Joseph, stood with Stephen, and raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

May the Lord keep you when the road is hidden, strengthen you when suffering comes, and assure you that His covenant mercy will never fail.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. **Amen.**