

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

A Heart Made Right Before God
Proper 22
Acts 8:9-25

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

The Lord is holy, righteous, and full of mercy.
His steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness continues through all generations.

God has called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light through Jesus Christ.
We come trusting in Christ alone, grateful for his grace and ready to hear his Word.

Let us worship the Lord with gladness and come before him with praise.
To God alone be the glory. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Holy and gracious God, you alone are worthy of all praise. You made us, sustain us, and redeem your people through Jesus Christ. By your Holy Spirit, turn our minds from distraction and our hearts from self-glory. Help us to see Christ clearly, receive your Word humbly, and worship you in spirit and truth. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

God calls us to love him with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Yet we seek our own greatness, trust our own strength, and try to use God's gifts for our own purposes. Let us confess our sins, trusting the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that our hearts are not always right before you. We seek praise, control, comfort, and advantage for ourselves. We have treated your grace

lightly and trusted in our works instead of Christ alone. Forgive us for our pride, unbelief, selfish motives, and hidden sins. For the sake of Jesus, cleanse us, renew us by your Spirit, and lead us in the way everlasting. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." All who repent and trust in Jesus Christ are forgiven, accepted, and made clean by grace alone. Thanks be to God.

Children's Hymn #655: "Give Me Oil in My Lamp" (V 1,2,4)

Give me oil in my lamp; keep me burning;
give me oil in my lamp, I pray.
Give me oil in my lamp; keep me burning;
keep me burning till the break of day.

Refrain:

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna to the Servant King;
sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna, let us sing!

Give me joy in my heart; keep me praising;
give me joy in my heart, I pray.
Give me joy in my heart; keep me praising;
keep me praising till the break of day. (Refrain)

Give me love in my heart; keep me serving;
give me love in my heart, I pray.
Give me love in my heart; keep me serving;
keep me serving till the break of day. (Refrain)

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: "Way Maker"

You are here moving in our midst.

I worship you, I worship you
 You are here working in this place.
 I worship you, I worship you
 You are here moving in our midst.
 I worship you, I worship you.
 You are here working in this place.
 I worship you, I worship you.

Chorus
 Way maker, miracle worker,
 promise keeper, light in the darkness
 My God, that is who you are
 Way maker, miracle worker,
 promise keeper, light in the darkness
 My God that is who you are.

You are here touching every heart.
 I worship you, I worship you.
 You are here healing every heart.
 I worship you, I worship you.
 You are here turning lives around.
 I worship you, I worship you.
 You are here mending every heart.
 I worship you, I worship you. (Chorus)

Responsive Reading

Psalm 51:10–12, 15–17

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
 and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ **Cast me not away from your presence,
 and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

¹² **Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
 and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
 and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶ **For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
 you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.**

¹⁷ **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
 a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): “Christ is With Us”

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Acts 8:9-25

⁹ But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.

¹⁰ They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” ¹¹ And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

¹⁴ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” ²⁰ But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” ²⁴ And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

²⁵ Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Sermon

Today’s Scripture brings us into a city that is filled with amazement. The people have watched a man named Simon practice magic for a long time. He has built a reputation. He has made himself appear important. From the least to the greatest, people say of him, 'This man is the power of God that is called Great'

And then Philip arrives, not announcing himself or seeking his own prestige, but preaching Christ. Last week we learned that Philip 'proclaimed to them the Christ' and

the difference between these two men could not be sharper. Simon draws attention to Simon. Philip directs attention to Jesus.

Yet this passage is not merely a story about an ancient magician and a faithful preacher. Through their contrast, Scripture shows us the difference between being impressed by the things of God and having a heart made right before God.

Simon wants spiritual power, public influence, and protection from judgment, but God's Word leaves us wondering whether he wants a true relationship with the Lord himself.

That question reaches into every person that has ever sat in a pew and every heart claiming Christianity today: **Do I want God, or only what I think God can give me?**

Church members, church leaders, new believers, and seasoned saints might enjoy worship, admire faithful preaching, and value a Godly reputation while still needing to ask whether their hearts are right before God.

Imagine a man standing beside a clean spring with an empty cup. The water is offered freely, but instead of drinking, he tries to buy the spring and charge others for access. That is Simon's error: he sees the gift but does not understand grace; he wants control when he should receive mercy. This passage will expose his false greatness, show the Spirit building one church, declare that grace cannot be bought, and bring us at last to the question of the heart.

The image brings this warning into focus: outward religion cannot make a crooked heart straight. Yet the passage also comforts us with a Savior who freely gives what no sinner could ever buy.

Acts 8:9–13

⁹ But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰ They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." ¹¹ And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Simon had been 'practicing magic' and 'amazing the people of Samaria. The Greek verb *mageuō* refers to attempts to control spiritual powers. Simon's influence rested on the

promise of spiritual or otherworldly power under human control. As we touched on last week Samaria had a history of mixed worship and deep hostility with the Jews. Yet Jesus had promised that his witnesses would enter Samaria and through Phillip's evangelism the Gospel is confronting false powers and crossing old walls of suspicion and distrust.

Simon had held the city's attention for so long because he has 'amazed' them. But when Philip arrives and preaches the 'good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,' men and women believe and are baptized.

The people begin to turn from a man who claims greatness to the King whose greatness is real. The kingdom of God is not a random or learned spiritual technique. It is God's saving rule arriving through Jesus Christ—through his righteous life, atoning death, bodily resurrection, and present reign.

God's Word uses a clear contrast to help us understand. Simon had amazed the people; and now Simon himself is amazed by the signs and great miracles he sees.

The supposed 'great power' stands astonished before powers that are far greater than his own. Yet, we all need to acknowledge that amazement is not the same as saving faith. A person can be impressed by Christianity without being united to Christ. The book of James reminds us that even the demons believe the truths about God. Saving faith includes more than just knowledge and conviction, it also rests upon Christ and receiving him humbly as Savior and Lord.

Simon's amazement leaves us with a necessary warning: being impressed by the works of God is not the same as possessing saving faith. The passage now moves from that warning to God's public confirmation that the Samaritan believers belong to his one church. When the apostles in Jerusalem hear that Samaria has received the Word of God, they send Peter and John.

Acts 8:14–17

¹⁴ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁷ Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

These are significant messengers being sent. We need to remember that John had once joined James in asking whether fire should fall upon a Samaritan village. Now he comes

not to call down judgment, but to pray for Samaritan believers. Grace has changed the mission, and grace is changing the messenger.

The Scripture then says that the Holy Spirit 'had not yet fallen on any of them,' although they had been baptized in Jesus' name. This is an important point. Baptism by water alone did not grant them salvation, the Holy Spirit being upon them was required and it is not until Peter and John pray, lay hands on them, and they receive the Spirit.

This unusual order of salvation belongs to the unfolding story of Acts, it does not stick to a fixed formula for every conversion. The order differs in Acts 2, 8, and 10, but the giver does not: the sovereign Spirit is never controlled by a human ceremony or method, the giving of the Holy Spirit belongs to God alone.

This delay publicly joins the Samaritan believers to the church born at Pentecost. There will not be one Spirit for Jews and another for Samaritans: 'in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body'. The laying on of hands is not a magical transfer, instead it is a visible sign of prayer, fellowship, and apostolic recognition.

And this matters in a congregation made up of believers from different backgrounds. This chapter serves to remind us that our unity does not depend on having identical histories, customs, personalities, or experiences. It rests in one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. We may carry old suspicions into the church, but Christ does not build separate families for people who once kept their distance. He makes one new people by his blood.

The Spirit's gift has therefore displayed the unity of Christ's church, but Simon sees something very different. Instead of rejoicing that Samaritans have been welcomed into one body, he sees power that he wants to possess. When he sees that the Spirit is given through the apostles' laying on of hands, he offers money to gain the same authority.

Acts 8:18–20

¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

The word translated 'power' here is *exousia*, meaning authority or right. Simon does not merely want to receive the Holy Spirit. He wants authority over the giving of the Holy Spirit. His old trade as a magician has found new religious language, but his old heart still

wants the same thing: power that can be possessed, managed, and displayed for his gain.

It is from this incident we get the word *simony*, which means the buying or selling of church office or spiritual privilege. However, Simon's error is even bigger than just that and the reality is that even today we repeat the same error whenever we think money, influence, service, giving or any other religious activity can place God in our debt. We may never try to buy an office or a title within the church, but we can still turn our prayer into a bargain with God: 'Lord, I have done this for you; now you must do that for me.'

Peter answers Simon with frightening directness: 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!'

The Greek noun *dōrea* means 'gift' and often emphasizes something bestowed rather than earned or purchased. Simon's money cannot purchase what God gives. Isaiah had already cried, 'Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price'. Paul says, 'the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'. The Holy Spirit, forgiveness, justification, adoption, and eternal life are not wages for the deserving. They are gifts of grace secured by Christ for those who do not deserve them.

The church has often defended this truth. Early teachers condemned buying spiritual privilege, and the Reformers opposed the sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic church, a practice that made grace seem purchasable. Luther called the Gospel of God's grace 'the true treasure of the church,' while Calvin said Simon insulted the Spirit by treating heavenly power like magic to be used for gain. Grace is no longer understood as grace when we think God's gift can be bought, controlled, or used for ourselves.

Simon's offer reveals that he has misunderstood grace, and Peter now exposes the deeper source of that error. The problem is not only the money in Simon's hand; it is the condition of Simon's heart. Peter continues,

Acts 8:21–23

²¹ You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

Outwardly, Simon has done what other converts did. He has heard, believed in some sense, been baptized, and remained near Philip. Yet Peter identifies the center of the problem: the heart.

In Scripture, the heart is not merely emotion. It is the inner person—our thoughts, desires, loyalties, and purposes.

Proverbs 4:23 tells us

Proverbs 4:23

²³ **Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.**

Peter tells Simon, 'Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord'. The Greek verb *metanoeō* means to repent—to undergo a change of mind and heart that turns a person away from sin and toward God.

Repentance is not merely feeling embarrassed because we were exposed. It is not simply fearing consequences. It is agreeing with God about our sin, turning from it, and turning to him for mercy. I want to be clear on this one point. Even if you do not agree with God on what sin is, it is ultimately His Word that defines sin, not our thoughts, feelings and convictions which are often led astray by our fleshly desires. Meaning to truly repent you need to be in agreeance with what the Word of God says sin is, turn from those sins, and turn to him for mercy.

Peter describes Simon as being 'in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity'. This language echoes Deuteronomy 29:18, which warns of a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, and Isaiah 58:6, which speaks of losing the bonds of wickedness. Sin often promises us the freedom to live the way we want even while it fastens us in chains. It offers sweetness and leaves bitterness. Simon wants authority, but Peter sees captivity.

Peter's words are severe, but not cruel. He names the danger of the sin clearly because souls' matter. He is like a doctor who speaks plainly about a deadly illness, Peter tells the truth so Simon can seek mercy. He does not punish Simon or treat his case as hopeless; he commands him to repent and pray.

Because Peter exposes the heart rather than merely condemning the outward act, this passage will not allow us to examine Simon from a safe distance. Some of us may begin by examining everyone else, but the Word first teaches us to pray,

Psalm 139:23-24**²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart!****Try me and know my thoughts!****²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!**

So, ask yourself: Do I serve because Christ is worthy, or because I need recognition? Do I give because I love God, or because I think generosity gives me leverage? Do I pray because I desire fellowship with the Father, or because I want relief?

These questions are meant to help us uncover sin in our lives, not to drive believers into endless doubt about every imperfect motive. Mixed motives cling even to those who truly belong to Christ, so we ask questions to bring them into the light. We should neither excuse them nor despair over them. Instead we are called to confess them to the faithful and just God, who forgives and cleanses us through Christ.

Simon answers,

Acts 8:24**²⁴ And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."**

The Scripture does not tell us what finally became of Simon. Later reports connect him with serious error, but they cannot settle the question. The Biblical text leaves Simon at a crossroads.

It shows us that Simon takes Peter's warning seriously and asks for prayer, yet a troubling silence remains.

Peter told him to repent and pray to the Lord; Simon asks the apostles to pray that judgment will not fall upon him. He speaks of the consequences, but not plainly of his sin or the Lord against whom he sinned.

Which is why we are left with this question: Do I want peace with God, or only escape from the consequences of resisting him? Simon seemed to want to escape the consequences with humbly submitting himself to the Lord.

There is a difference between remorse and repentance. Remorse says, 'I wish this had not cost me so much.' Repentance says, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'

In the Old Testament. Pharaoh repeatedly asked Moses to remove the plague, but his heart remained hard. David, after his sin was exposed, prayed, 'Against you, you only,

have I sinned' and 'Create in me a clean heart, O God'. True repentance wants more than changed circumstances; it wants a restored relationship with God.

Scripture leaves Simon's final condition unresolved, but it does not leave the advance of Christ's Gospel unresolved. The passage does not end with Simon at the center, because Christ's purposes do not depend on Simon. Peter and John testify and speak the Word of the Lord, and then the story turns again to the Gospel's advance:

Acts 8:25

²⁵ Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

The Greek verb used here is *euangelizomai* means to announce good news. Simon wants power held in his own hands; and as a result the apostles carry good news from village to village. The Gospel does not exist to make one person great. It announces that Jesus Christ is Lord, gathers a people for his name, and keeps moving even when human hearts prove crooked.

Notice the quiet triumph. John, who once wanted judgment upon a Samaritan village, now preaches Christ in many Samaritan villages. The Gospel has crossed the boundary. The church is being built. Human sin is real, false profession is possible, and motives must be tested; nevertheless, the risen Christ keeps his promise.

That gives courage to any faithful ordinary congregation. Most Gospel work is not spectacular. It takes place in simple conversations, prayer meetings, family worship, hospital rooms, meals shared, children taught, strangers welcomed, and sermons heard week after week. We do not need Simon's platform. We need Philip's message. We do not need to appear great. We simply need to make Christ known.

Acts 8 shows us two kinds of power that exist in the world. There is the power that people grasp in order to make themselves great, and there is the power of God that comes as a gift and makes Jesus great in our eyes.

Simon believed money could secure spiritual authority. The Gospel says Christ became poor for our sake, so that by his poverty we might become rich.

Simon wanted to control the gift. Jesus, the true and greater Son, gave himself. He did not purchase influence; he obtained a people 'with his own blood'.

At the foot of the cross, every attempt to bargain with God will come to an end. We bring no price, no record, no title, and no claim with us when we stand there before God.

Christ alone brings the perfect obedience we lack and the atoning blood we need. He rose from the grave, reigns at the Father's right hand, and pours out the Spirit upon his people. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

Because Christ is still building his church by freely given grace, we can come to him without bargaining and serve him without seeking greatness. If your heart is not right before God, do not hide behind religious activity or wait to make yourself worthy. Repent here and now, and humbly come to Christ, who receives empty-handed sinners.

And because he receives empty-handed sinners, those who come to him need not be crushed by the mixed motives that remain. If mixed motives weigh you down, confess them and look again to the Savior whose grace is greater than your sin. Remember Samaria: Christ crosses old barriers and welcomes all who come. Remember Philip: we do not need to appear great; we need to make Christ known. The risen Lord is still building his church. Come honestly, receive freely, and live so that Christ is seen in your life.

So come—not as buyers but as beggars; not demanding power, but asking for mercy; not saying, “See what I can offer,” but singing, “Nothing in my hand I bring.”

Today we still stand beside the spring with an empty cup, and we discover that the Lord does not despise the empty hand. Jesus says, 'Whoever comes to me I will never cast out'. So, may the Spirit straighten what is crooked in us, loosen every bond of sin upon us, unite us in one body, and make us glad to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Then, as those who have freely received grace, may we live as the Salt of the earth and the Light of the world, so that others may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven. And may all the glory belong, not to us, but to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray,

Almighty and merciful Father, we come before you with empty hands, confessing that nothing in us can purchase your favor or command your gifts. Search our hearts and expose every desire for praise, power, or advantage. Break the bonds of sin, cleanse us

from secret faults, and by your Holy Spirit make our hearts right before you. Teach us to rest in Jesus Christ alone—his perfect obedience, his atoning blood, his risen life, and his unfailing intercession. As John Calvin often prayed, grant that we may not merely hear your Word, but receive it with true humility, be transformed by it, and devote ourselves wholly to your glory. Unite us as one people in Christ, make us faithful in ordinary service, and send us out to proclaim the gospel without seeking greatness for ourselves. Since every good gift comes freely from your hand, make us grateful receivers and generous servants, until faith gives way to sight and we rejoice forever in your presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Adapted from the prayers of John Calvin

Invitation to Offering

As an act of worship and gratitude to God, you are invited to place your offering in the offering box at the back of the church, as you leave today. We now offer our thanks to the Lord for His abundant grace and faithful provision through song and prayer.

Offering Hymn #830: “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow”

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below:
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offering Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Communion

Invitation to the Table

This table belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for all who have turned from sin, trusted in Christ alone for salvation, and seek to walk in fellowship with his church. We do not come because we are worthy, but because Christ is worthy and his grace is sufficient. If you are not yet trusting in Christ, let the bread and cup pass, and receive instead the invitation of the gospel: repent and believe in the Lord Jesus.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Holy Father, it is right that we thank and praise you. You created all things and made us for your glory. When we sinned, you did not leave your people without hope. In the fullness of time, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ. He obeyed in our place, died for our sins, rose for our justification, and now reigns at your right hand. By your Spirit, set apart this bread and cup for this holy use. Feed our faith, strengthen our love, and help us remember with joy that Christ gave himself for us.

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

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. After giving thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper, Jesus took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Taking of the bread

The body of Christ, given for you. Take, eat, remember, and believe that Christ died for you.

Drinking of the cup

The blood of Christ, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Take, drink, remember, and believe that Christ’s blood was shed for you.

Prayer after Communion

Faithful God, we thank you for feeding us at the table of your Son. Strengthen us by the Holy Spirit to trust your promises, love one another, resist sin, and serve Christ with thankful hearts. Send us out in peace to make the gospel known, for the glory of your name. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn #690: “Fight the Good Fight” (V 1,3,4)

Fight the good fight with all your might;
Christ is your strength, and Christ is your right;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Your joy and crown eternally.

Cast care aside; lean on your Guide
His boundless mercy will provide;
Trust, and your trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not, nor fear, those arms are near;
And, changing not, still hold you dear;
Hope and believe, and you shall find
Christ is your all: heart, strength and mind.

Pastoral Prayer

Sovereign and merciful God, we praise you for your saving grace in Jesus Christ. Thank you that salvation cannot be earned or bought, but is freely given to all who trust in your Son. Keep our hearts humble and make our motives pure.

Build your church in truth, holiness, and love. Unite believers from different

backgrounds in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Strengthen pastors, elders, missionaries, and all who make Christ known. Protect your people from false teaching, pride, and the misuse of spiritual authority.

We pray for those who are sick, grieving, lonely, anxious, or burdened. Give comfort to the sorrowful, healing according to your wisdom, daily bread to those in need, and hope to those who feel discouraged. Draw wandering hearts back to Christ.

Give wisdom to those who govern and uphold what is just and good. Bring peace where there is conflict, protect the weak, and restrain evil. Make us faithful neighbors who speak truth, show mercy, and serve without seeking praise.

Search us, O God. Forgive our hidden sins, loosen every bond of iniquity, and renew a right spirit within us. Make us glad to receive grace freely and to give all glory to Christ.

We thank you for the food we are about to share. Bless it to our use and us to your service. Bless our fellowship as well. Help us welcome one another, encourage one another, and enjoy these gifts with thankful hearts. May our time together strengthen the unity of your church and bring glory to Christ.

We ask these things in his name. **Amen.**

Benediction

Now may the God of peace sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Go in the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**