

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

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Worship This Week Jan 22, 2023

WELCOME & Prayer –

PRAISE SONGS – Refiner’s Fire, You are my all in all

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART – Rita

SONG – I’m in the Lord’s Army

RECEIVE OFFERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS –

GOD IS MY WITNESS –

PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Colossians 3:5

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don’t be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

MESSAGE -- The unbelievers, the skeptics and critics would love this verse. They’d say, “here we go again – another list of things we shouldn’t do. It’s what all you people are about.” **They’re correct** in one way: the verse does wag a finger in our

face. It’s like when you read it, this is the image you see. No-no-no! Thou shall not!



Scripture is filled with warnings and prohibitions. Take the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20. “You must **not** have any other god but me. “You must **not** make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of

anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. 5 You must **not** bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. . . . “You must **not** misuse the name of

the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. “Honor your father and mother. . . You must **not** murder. “You must not commit adultery. “You must **not** steal. “You must **not** testify falsely against your neighbor. “You must **not** covet your neighbor’s house. . . wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.” There are a lot of negatives in there. There are some positives too: “I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.” Those who honour their parents: “Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” But people remember the negative stuff.

It’s easy to see how nonbelievers can get fixated on images of church ladies and Bible-thumping pastors coming across as judgmental. All of this feeds the image of the church as about following a whole bunch of rules, things which get in the way of life. We’re known for good things, of course. But it’s the negative images that keep people away.

I once had that perception. While I was curious about the evangelical church, I didn’t want to enter the doors for fear that cultish people would descend upon me. And they would somehow find out where I lived and they would not leave me alone.

There was some truth to it. The times I found myself in “those churches” or in the midst of “born-again types” there was a sense of being judged. Are you saved? I **had this strong** sense that it was all about scoring. All these zealots wanted was to be credited with bringing someone to a point where they can say the sinner’s prayer, repent and be born again. Adding another notch, and person in the pew – along with 10 per cent of their income. Rightly or wrongly, that was the image. And it wasn’t attractive.

What was missing was joy, peace and strength. Where were the Christlike people? Where were the “real” people who weren’t afraid to be themselves –

those who cast no judgment on you because they're just as much a sinner. Of course, they were there. But because they spoke in actions rather than words, the sharks got the attention.

So I remained in the old-fashioned, mainline denomination I grew up with, where the order of service and rituals are the same and no expectations are placed on you. It was much easier and less threatening to my way of life.

This is a huge challenge for the church. It's something evangelical churches have wrestled with. Some have gone too far the other way. In an effort to look cool and unthreatening, they downplay the message. They're more about image. I don't want to dwell on that because I believe most of them have the best of intentions.

There is a healthy balance – a middle ground. It's where you find real people, who are genuinely caring, friendly and loving. People who want to get to know you before they start judging. People who accept you, just the way you are. People who have found great spiritual treasure and want to share with others. Carefully and gently.

By the way, I don't see this congregation as filled with finger pointers. I use that image as an example. The fact that we have new life in this place is a good indication that we're doing something right. But we could do better.

Back to our scripture verse. Colossians 3:5 is absolutely true. But it doesn't stand alone. By itself, it's nothing but negative. It requires context. First, with the rest of Colossians. Second, with scripture as a whole. Last week, we saw the big picture of Paul's letter to the Colossians. The first two chapters were a reminder of who Christ is and what He did and our need to accept that. That's being right with God the Father. Chapters 3-4, which we are just getting into, are about finding the lifestyle that fits our belief.

Let's state the obvious here, for the record, that being right with God means that we are a follower of Christ. Not a bunch of rules.

Let's take a closer look at verse 5.

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. **Don't be greedy,** for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

These things are not healthy in any sense of the word. They promise everything and deliver nothing. Greed – wanting more of something – will eventually destroy because you will never be satisfied.

Where the church has gotten itself in trouble and produced all these rule followers is by pointing fingers at all these things and drumming them into peoples' heads. It starts in Sunday School and continues in youth group. And it's all backed up in the home – either from mom and dad or from the grandparents. Generations of kids have grown up with commandments of the things they should not do.

But all of that is useless unless one is first seeking Christ.

How many people attended churches in which all these lifestyle commandments were drilled into them without first ensuring that their hearts and minds were in the right place. It would take a superhero to resist the temptation to indulge those sins listed in verse 3:5. It's why we're secret sinners. We privately think and do things and publicly put on an angelic face. Nothing new here. It's been going on for thousands of years.

“Thou shalt not” is a negative approach. From a positive point of view, if we fill yourself with something else, we won't want those things.

The solution is being right with God through Christ. Allow your spirit to merge with Christ's Spirit. **The eternal and powerful truth is that the more we are submitted to Christ, the less we will want to do the things of this world.** Repeat that and let it sink in.

The concept is very easy: “Jesus, fill my heart. Be in my head. Invade my operating system.” Here's a powerful statement from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: “But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.” 1 Corinthians

6:17. The Lord Jesus is one with the Father: “In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” John 14:20

This is a powerful invitation. Many people accept it. But few do deep and make the most of it.

It doesn't take dropping out of society and or even going to a retreat centre for several weeks to unplug from society, plug in with the Holy Spirit and emerge as a changed person. It's not spiritual rehab. It can be done right where you are. All it takes is a bit of spiritual discipline.

Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, Knock and the door will be opened to you. Do this early morning, midday and at the end of the day.

The closer our spirit is to Christ's spirit, more peace we will experience. The greater strength we will have. We know that. The bonus is that we will want less of the things of this world.

Of course, we will never be completely free of sinful desires. That's human nature. Only Christ, as the Son of God, lived that perfect life. Paul recognized this. In his letter to the Romans, chapter 7, he rants about his inability to live a pure life. Paul is way up there on the scale of being right with God. But he still wrestled with it. So it's OK. If you are struggling with sin, don't beat yourself up. It will only make matters worse. Rather, go to the source. In this case the source of life, our strength. Go to the One who was able to completely resist. The One who didn't desire to sin.

When we are truly submitted to Christ, as cut off – or vastly reduce – the desire to sin. Get to the root. The best way to remove evil weeds from your garden is to pull them out by the roots and burn them – or put them somewhere far away.

So why did Paul even mention these things? And why did God give Moses those negative commandments? The reason is that we have to know what's wrong and right. Otherwise we just invent our own rules.

The Sarum prayer has been used by believers for centuries. It's used at the beginning of the day, midday and at the end of the day.

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.

I often talk about discipline. And this is what it's about. The deliberate process of growing closer to Christ. Anything else is a band aid. This same Spirit what was in Christ can be with us today.

HYMN – Yield not to temptation

BENEDICTION – May the Spirit of the Lord rest upon you and provide wisdom and understanding and strength (based on Isaiah 11:2)

PRAYER -- requests can be sent to the pastor, either for sharing or in confidence. If a need is not listed here it's because the family has opted for privacy.

NEW PRAYER

Healing – Bill Eves, in hospital following a fall; thanks for progress, pray for continued healing.

Church budget – Pray for the treasurer/board as they draft a 2023 spending plan, for the board as they consider fundraising and session as they discern how to encourage faithful giving.

Test results -- Dianne Richards MRI this week.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

1. Jennie Atherton, Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Mark Labadie, Bette Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Whitson
2. Awaiting surgery: Dan Shaw
3. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
4. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression
5. Karen Northcott – thanks for good biopsy results but continue to pray.

There are many whose names are not listed here – God know who they are and what they need.

Seniors and shut ins – Alan (Curly) Clark and Norma Latimer at Riverview Gardens, Jim Lusk and Ross Fuchs at Oaks Wallaceburg, Joyce MacTavish at Barrie Manor, Bill Lozon at Tilbury Manor, Aubrey Butler at home.

Session – Mark Labadie (clerk and representative elder), Cindy Brewer, Sheila Eves, Andrew Neely, Mark Richards and Julie Shaw.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Paul Vandenbogaerde (treasurer), Will Brewer, Ross Fuchs, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Dan Shaw and Mike Wicks.

WHAT'S UP:

Pop can fundraiser – Bring your pop cans to church! Leave them in the bin behind Rutherford Hall. They're worth money!

DATES

Feb. 6 – Session

GIVING:

E-transfer to pcvan1313@gmail.com. Bring envelope on Sunday or if you have a key, leave it in the treasurer's mailbox. Mail it to the church, PO Box 93 Dresden. NOP 1M0. Put it in the mailbox at the home of treasurer Paul Vandenberg. 1313 North Street, Dresden. Telephone number 519-683-6194

GIFT CARDS – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. **Next deadline January 29. Order form attached.**