

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

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

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Worship This Week March 19, 2023

WELCOME & Prayer –

PRAISE SONGS – Above all, what a friend we have in Jesus

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART –

SONG – There's no God as Great

RECEIVE OFFERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS – Bible study

GOD IS MY WITNESS –

PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Colossians 4:2 (New Living Translation)

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

MESSAGE – Paul turns the page and changes the subject for his readers in the Colossian church. Fresh from his teaching on God's guide for marriage, family and community, we are reminded to pray. We can understand prayer as many things. Basically, it's communicating to God, hearing back from God. And in that give and take there's the deeper relationship that is formed with God. The primary purpose of prayer is to draw us into greater submission to God's will. It's why Jesus instructed us to open our prayers by addressing God as our Father in heaven, revering His name as Holy, giving Him the glory and asking that "thy or your will be done."

Prayer is the power source, if you will. It is the glue, the current. It is the time in which we offer our broken and sinful spirits to the Lord and asking him to fill us with a fresh wave of His Spirit, removing the effects of our sin and drawing us back into a closer walk with Him.

But there's a problem with all this and it's the fact that our prayers aren't necessarily what God wants. We can say "Prayer works" and it does. But what does that mean? If we say "prayer works" because God grants our requests then we're fooling ourselves. Because He doesn't. "Prayer works" because when it's

done right, then we are drawn closer to God. Again, the essential purpose of prayer is to change us to be more like Christ.

We are invited to have the correct attitude of prayer. That's what Paul is saying in this verse. "Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart." Look closely and there are three key words, three aspects of prayer. There's "devotion," "alertness" and "thankfulness." Devotion to prayer, alertness of mind and thankful hearts. One way of remembering this is by shortening it to three letters: D-A-T or "DAT." If you're into acronyms, there you go. What's prayer about It's about "DAT."

Let's explore that in more detail.

Devotion implies commitment. In one sense, it means we are disciplined in our prayer. We do it regularly. But more than that, devotion means that we are committed to the One to whom we pray. We can be devoted to prayer in a disciplined way, but if our prayers were written by someone else or those prayers are all about ourselves, then we don't have the correct attitude. Here's that submission word again. Are we hopelessly devoted to God? Communion is a good word. When we are praying, either alone or with others, it is as if we are joined spiritually.

Alexander MacLaren was a Scottish Baptist preacher in the late 19th century. Here's what he wrote: "When spirits draw closest together there is no need for speech. Silently the heart may be kept fragrant with God's felt presence, and sunny with the light of His face."ⁱ He's talking here about devotion and submission that's so deep that we don't even need words because the Holy Spirit provides them for us.

Devotion also involves submission. It's not our will that we ask for in prayer, it's God's will.

One of the most powerful phrases in scripture is "I have heard your prayer." God speaks to the faithful one, acknowledging the prayer that has been lifted up.

God can hear everything. He hears our prayers. Some are acknowledged directly. In every scriptural reference to God answering prayer, it occurs in response to righteous prayers, ones which are offered with sincerely, meekness, humility and submission to God. They are focused on seeking God's will. They are often lifted up in response to great need or desire but they are not selfish prayers. They are prayer from people who have to the end of themselves and they have nothing left.

"You called in trouble and I rescued you; I answered you in the hiding place of thunder" (Psalm 81:7)

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him. And saved him out of all his troubles. (Psalm 34:6)

When we come to the end of ourselves and devote our entire beings to the One who created us and sustains us and holds the destiny our of souls in his power, when we can be open to God's intervention.

Alertness. The thing is to find the time when your mind is open and firing on all cylinders. Some are morning persons. Some are not. We all have a time in which we are most awake. Aim for that as your prayer time.

Alert means more than just eyes wide open to our senses. It means our spirit is also seeking God's presence. Being attuned. We can see that as "aspiration" or a desire after God, in which our senses are seeking God and our spirits are wide open to receive.

Here's MacLaren: "The very deepest cry of the heart which understands its own yearnings, is for the living God; . . . hunger of the spirit . . . of the soul which knows where alone that food is."

Unpack that. The soul of the believer which is devoted to God and aspires a closer walk with him will hunger and thirst for spiritual food. And we know that the only spiritual food worth our time is that which comes from God. (On this note, the enemy also offers up a rich and powerful diet which might be tasty and filling but will ultimately kill you.)

Thankfulness. In the First World, this should go without saying. In terms of quality of life, in a physical sense, we are the most blessed humans in history. I'm talking in general about those who live in Canada. Unlike the rest of the world, no enemy nations are threatening us. We are largely free of terrorist threat. We enjoy universal health care, which is not perfect but at least provides emergency, chronic and end-of-life care regardless of our income. We have free access to basic education and even post-secondary and skills training is pretty much accessible and affordable. We have no history of famine in modern times. And the list goes on.

And yet we are among the most emotionally desperate people on this planet. Mental health is a major and growing problem. We seek peace through happiness. Food, drugs, alcohol and entertainment are the sources. But it's a quick fix that will need a chaser. And so on. Reliance on any of those four things will eventually kill your body, your mind or your spirit.

In the Catechism for Today, the first question is: "What is God's purpose for our lives?" Answer: We have been made for joy: joy in knowing, loving and serving God, joy in knowing, loving and serving one another, joy in the wonder of all God's works. (Gen 1:27-28, Isaiah 65:18 and Psalm 40:8. Also Isaiah 58:2, Job 22:26, Luke 1:47, John 16:22 and 24, Romans 7:22, Philippians 4:4 and Revelation 19:7.)

Joy is eternal. Joy is contagious. Joy is the presence and peace of Christ's Holy spirit which allows us to withstand any situation. It's this joy which sustain Paul while writing his letters from a Roman prison.

When we are truly thankful for everything God has given us, and recognize that God is a Good Father, we can get a taste of joy.

Ideally, devotion/alertness/thankfulness would be our typical posture in life. All of this takes effort.

As with anything, we look to the Son of God for a living example. Christ's entire being was in devotion to His Father. Being One with God, the mind of Christ was attuned to the Father at all times. He had a habit of praying thanks to God for

providing. The Lord's human walk was marked by being in a state of constant prayer.

Our Scottish friend suggests that "The Christian life, then, ought to be one of unbroken prayer." Easy to say, hard to do. But if we remember and practice those three elements of spiritual posture, then we have a fighting chance against the spirit of this world, the god of the quick fix and instant solutions, the god of happiness whose slogan is "you only live once." If that was true, we'd have nothingness after we die. In fact, life here is just preparation for eternity.

So what if you never get to go on that South American cruise or those two weeks on a Jamaican beach in January. Or whatever. Sure, it's good to live life and explore God's creation. But real life is exactly where God has placed us. Right here, right now. Not wishing for what we don't have. Or wishing that the problems we have go away.

If all you have in this world is a devoted, alert and thankful prayer life then you have the keys to joy in this life that are greater than anything we can do for ourselves.

HYMN – 638 Take time to be holy

BENEDICTION – "All glory to God, who is able, through His mighty hands working in us, to do infinitely more than we can ask or do for ourselves" – Ephesians 3:20.

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

Standing with front-liners – Another dark day as the nation mourns the killing of two police officers in Edmonton. Pray for their families, colleagues and officers everywhere who have to carry on with a brave face despite the risks.

Jennie Atherton – Gaining strength. Grateful beyond words for her daughter, her church family and neighbours who go out of their way to look in on her especially in emergencies. Thank you!

Sandra Pegg – Continuing to heal and gain strength at home, may this continue!

Lane Douglas – Thanks for the greeting card from the congregation.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

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1. Becky Desjardine, Bill Eves, Margaret Follows, Ron Mason, Bette Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Mary Whitson, Sandra Whitson
 2. Waiting for 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 The Waterford Home in Barrie, Bill Lozon at Copper Terrace, 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:

Bible study – Another great turnout and discussion today – we had 12 people from three congregations. One more opportunity to gather during this series on the Person and Work of The Holy Spirit. Co-led by Pastor Andy and Pastor Rob Elka from Evangel Pentecostal Tabernacle. Final installment Thursday March 23 at 2:30 p.m. Any suggestions for a topic for the spring evening study – let us know.

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

DATES

March 19 – Annual Congregation Meeting in the Rutherford Hall following worship.

March 22 -- Lenten Lunch noon at North Dresden Baptist Church

March 25 – Renewal Fellowship annual meeting in Welland or livestream. Register via Eventbrite or see Pastor Andy

March 26 – Guest preacher Rev. Lillian Wilton

March 26-April 2 – Rev. Andy study leave

April 2 – Guest Preacher Rev. Paul Shaw

April 7 – Good Friday cross walk 9 a.m. starting at St. Andrew's

April 7 – Good Friday worship 10 a.m. at Evangel Pentecostal Tabernacle

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. N0P 1M0. Put it in the mailbox at the home of treasurer Paul Vandenbogaerde. 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 March 26.**