

# Walking The Talk

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Date: 23 January 2000

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good evening, and welcome to St. John's. I'd like to begin our service by reading from Matthew 11.

Tonight we have a special preacher, the Reverend Dr. Harry Robinson, and he's the one that has a clergy collar on.

And he wanted me to explain what that means, but I'm not sure. So don't be too put off by the collar. I'd like to read from Matthew 11, verse 25, following.

Jesus said, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Let's stand and sing our first hymn from the yellow song sheet, For the glories of God's grace. A I kaliyah Amen.

[ 1 : 5 2 ]     Amen. Amen.

Please be seated. Our first reading tonight is from the book of 1 John, chapter 1, verses 5 to 10, and it can be found on page 221 of the back portion of your Blue Pew Bible.

1 John 1, verse 5. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[ 4 : 1 3 ]     If we say we have not sin, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. This is the word of the Lord. There's two great words of truth in that passage.

One is that we have sin within us and the second is that Jesus cleanses us from all sin and that's why we every Sunday confess our sins to God. So let's kneel together and confess.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbor in thought, word, and deed.

In the evil we have done and in the good we have not done. Through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault, we are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life.

[ 5 : 2 7 ]     To the glory of your name. Amen. Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sin, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen. Please stand. Amen. O Lord, open our lips, and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord. All praise to his name. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever.

[ 6 : 42 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

Lord, there is not like you, all of my days, I want to praise the wonders of your mighty love.

My comfort, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength. Let every breath, all that I have, never cease to worship you.

Shout to the Lord on the earth, let us sing. Power and majesty praise to the King.

[ 8 : 14 ] Mountains bow down and the sea will roar at the sound of your name. I sing for joy at the work of your hand.

Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand. Nothing compares to the power I stand with you.

My Jesus, my Savior, Lord, there is not like you.

All of my days, I want to praise the wonders of your mighty love.

My comfort, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength.

[ 9 : 19 ] Let every breath, all that I have, never cease to worship you.

Shout to the Lord on the earth, let us sing. Power and majesty praise to the King.

Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of your name.

I sing for joy at the work of your hand. Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand. And nothing compares to the promise I have in you.

I sing for joy at the work of your hand. Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.

[ 10 : 25 ] And nothing compares to the promise I have in you.

Be proud of you, Lord of everything. All the things you've made, reveal your greatness.

And one of all, always adore, we give to you a praise. For yours is the kingdom, the power, the glory, forever and ever, O Lord, O night, O Lord, O time.

The love you give by which I live is not measured by what I can give.

To your gifts so free, you give to you a praise.

[ 12 : 10 ] For yours is the kingdom, the power, the glory, forever and ever, O Lord, O time, O Lord, O time.

I worship you in all I do. And God has done to show your glory for all my life.

It's mighty time to give to you a praise. For yours is the kingdom, the power, the glory, forever and ever, O Lord, O time, O Lord, O time.

O Lord, O time. O Lord, O time.

A verse from Psalm 18. As for God, His way is perfect.

[ 13 : 46 ] The promise of the Lord proves true. And He is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. We are today. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 16 : 31 ] Thank you. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Lord, lift your love. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

[ 17 : 57 ] He descended to the dead. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 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. At this point in the service, we turn and greet the people who are around us and especially meet those who you might not know. We can do that right now.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Our next two songs focus on Jesus' sacrifice for us. And so we'll begin with Lamb of God. Lamb of God Your only Son Sealed to hide You have set Him by Your side To walk upon His filthy side To become Lamb of God O Lamb of God

[ 20 : 23 ] O Lamb of God Lamb of the Holy Lamb of God O wash me in this precious blood By Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God The Lord The Lord The Lord The Lord The Lord The gifts of love They crucified They lost them for Him And He died The humble things They came along The sacred life Lamb of God O Lamb of God O Lamb of God O Talk to you seria MRS Actually The true life The Lord It getsseen To be Was national The takiego siu Leah The investment zeal O Florent is one V ■■■

For youth among traditions The■■ In something offgen's People they say I was so loved I should have died, but you have brought me to your side to be led by yourself and love.

To be called Lamb of God, O Lamb of God, this Lamb of God, I love the Holy Lamb of God, who brought me in this precious blood, my Jesus Christ, Lamb of God.

O Lamb of God, this Lamb of God, I love the Holy Lamb of God, who brought me in this precious blood, my Jesus Christ, Lamb of God.

Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God Lamb of God

[ 23 : 36 ] I am grateful I am so I want to die To find rejected The Lord The Lord Oh, Lord He I am in love For the sacrifice The Son of God For me My death is pain And my death is pain That I My guilt That I My guilt And I

In love of Christ Shall pour My great earth Your blood Your guilt Your guilt Away Give The Amazing love For what sacrifice The Son of God Give for me Or O Here My Dear My Mirror My Mirror Oh Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving Jesus Christ to us in your great love for us to free us from the power and grip that sin has over our lives.

We thank you for the freedom to follow you with everything that we have in our life. And we ask that these gifts given would be used to bless ministries that will reach people in your name.

We ask, Father, that you would bless us with your presence, that you open your word to us. In Jesus' name, amen. Please be seated. Amen. The second reading tonight is found on page 655 in the front portion of your Bibles.

[ 26 : 44 ] It's taken from the book of Isaiah, chapter 60, beginning at verse 17, the second half of the verse, and reading to verse 22. That's Isaiah, chapter 60, 17b to 22.

I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders.

And you shall call your walls salvation and your gates praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night.

But the Lord will be your everlasting light and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself. For the Lord will be your everlasting light and your days of mourning shall be ended.

Your people shall all be righteous. They shall possess the land forever, the shoot of my planting, the work of my hands that I might be glorified. The least one shall become a clan and the smallest one a mighty nation.

[ 28 : 04 ] I am the Lord. In its time, I will hasten it. This is the word of the Lord. I expect I've been at evening services in John's, more than most of you.

But when I was here, we met in that corner. And, well, it was different. I expect that I have reason to believe from reading the Bible that I am talking to a congregation that is blind, deaf, and hard of heart.

There is some comfort you might get from knowing that there is also reason in Scripture to suggest that the preacher you have to listen to is blind, deaf, and slow of heart.

So, it's strange that we have to look at 1 John chapter 1, verses 5 to 10.

And if you look, and turn it up, will you? Because I want you to read it with me. If you look at it, you will see that it is practically monosyllabic.

[ 30 : 13 ] It is the most, I mean, it's full of significant two- and three-letter words.

It's extremely simple. And there could be nothing in Scripture more profound than how John put this down.

Ignatians, you know, St. Ignatius left a sort of pattern of discipline for Christian disciples. And the way they pray is to take a passage of Scripture, and this is in the Ignatian disciplines.

They take a passage of Scripture and a notebook, and they go off by themselves, and they sit down, and they read it, and then they write, and then they read, and then they write, and then hopefully they have someone they can share with at the end of an hour or two as to what they've done and what they've found.

And I could recommend you would find it extremely fruitful if you could read and write at this passage for an hour or two sometime, just because it is deceptively simple.

[ 31 : 49 ] And as I say, it's practically monosyllabic, and yet it's very profound. So what I want to do is read it with you first, and the way I want to read it with you is that we will exchange ifs.

In other words, I will start reading, and when I come to an if, you start. And at the next if, I'll start. And at the next if, you start.

All right? You follow that? It's all, just look at the book, and you'll see. This, we're 1 John 1, 5 to 10.

Okay. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

- [ 33 : 08 ] This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you. God, pray with me, will you? Our God, this brilliant passage of scripture blinds our eyes, and the simplicity of the word, of the word makes us deaf.

And our hearts are hard because of the huge number of preoccupations that they contain.

And so we ask that your word might penetrate our hearing, and your light might fill our eyes, and that the sword of your word may pierce our hearts.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, it begins the message.

- [ 34 : 45 ] Those are the first words. And this is the message. It's not something that John has discovered, which he's passing on to you.

It's not something that he has contemplated and articulated and is passing on to you. It is a message that he has given in order to pass on to you.

It is a message that he has received. And it's a message heard and then proclaimed.

Do you want to know what the message is? Look in 1 John, chapter 1, verse 2 to 3, and probably remember what you heard last week.

This is the message. Verse 2, The life appeared. The life appeared. The life appeared. We have seen it. And testify to it.

- [ 35 : 52 ] We proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim the message to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us.

So, fellowship is, in the epistles of John particularly, what it's all about.

That you come from a community which is in alienation to one another, and you find fellowship with one another.

So, he says that you also may have fellowship with us.

So, in order to have fellowship, you have to receive the message from those who have themselves received the message.

- [ 36 : 56 ] And the implication should be clear, that having received the message, you also pass it on to others. And by doing that, you bring them into fellowship with you.

Because the fellowship is built around hearing the message. I could talk more about that, but I won't. But let me look and see what comes next.

It says, the message which we proclaim to you is this. That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

God is light. Three monosyllabic words. But it is what these three monosyllabic words do, is to condense the message down into a highly concentrated form.

And that is, God is light. God is light. Now, just remember, you've got to hear this, you see, in a special way. Because God is not like light.

- [ 38 : 12 ] God is light is not a metaphor for God. There is not light, which is a primary reality, of which God is a derived reality.

Light is not what God does. It's not how God appears. It is that God is himself light.

That's what light is. And the psalmist at one point says, and I say the psalmist because I can't remember the psalm. But it says, in his light we see light.

That means that he is the source of light. He is light. And if you look, for instance, at Genesis chapter 1, verse 3, which is the first page of your Bible, and you see the description of the chaos and the darkness, the earth was formless, empty.

Darkness was over the face of the deep. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light.

[ 39 : 46 ] God, by his command, provides from himself the source of the light, which he commands into existence as the first act of creation.

So that the whole of nature begins with light. And God, who is light, has manifested himself in the light which he has conferred on the chaos and the darkness in the beginning of the creation.

So, God, you have to see God as light in absolute terms. But consider, too, the fact that light is self-revealing.

As soon as you turn on the light, you can see the source of the light. Light is self-revealing.

And so, God has revealed himself in nature when he says of the whole of his creation, the beginning is let there be light.

[ 41 : 09 ] God, who is light, has created light in nature. And then it says, light means that God has not only revealed himself, but God is able to bring into your life and my life light so that we understand ourselves.

that God further reveals himself in the specific, like in creation, let there be light.

And in the incarnation, I am the light of the world. That God reveals himself in Jesus Christ.

God reveals us in that we are created in the image of God. In the course of his earthly life, Jesus was transfigured so that his garments became dazzling white in a revelation of who he was as the light of God and God's purpose in your life is that you may be transfigured by exposure to God, who is light.

So, we encounter light. Now, the thing I want you to sort of go with me on this is that if you write a book, you want to write the great novel, how do you do it?

[ 43 : 14 ] Well, if your book was Cinderella, and you would see that Cinderella goes from the darkness of dishonor and poverty to becoming a princess, the story moves from darkness to light.

Whenever you read a novel, the story, some of them move from darkness to light. Some of them move from light to darkness.

Some of them move from darkness to light. And if you're very with it nowadays, you almost invariably will end with darkness.

If you want anybody to read your books, because the idea of it ending in light is difficult. And the reason it is difficult is because this statement of John is so utterly contradictory to the world we live in.

If you were to read The Vancouver Sun, a notable paper, I'm sure, you would discover that God is a shrouded, mysterious, unknowable mystery that nobody can possibly penetrate through so dark is the circumstances of his life.

[ 45 : 01 ] God is darkness and in him is no light at all. And that gives rise to religion because what religion does is it selects a few elite people spiritually who say, though for most of you God is darkness, we understand him and we will speak to him on your behalf under the following conditions.

And so, religion is strange that way. And, it's dangerous for you to be here tonight for that reason.

because, and you'll see that this is, this is, but you see how there was really a prelude to this sermon which I didn't arrange but it became very convenient.

And that was on New Year's Eve when in Sydney and in China and all around the world we went to the great cities of the world by satellite and television and all of them put magnificent displays of fireworks against the night sky.

And the thing about it, I mean, it was magnificent and it's a delight to see it. It's a magnificent thing to see. But you see, it's, it's a burst of light and then gravity takes over and darkness comes back.

[ 47 : 04 ] And the reality of our world is that darkness prevails. and we think that in the course of our life we can enjoy a season of light or a moment of light but that ultimately darkness prevails.

And so we, we live our, we live our lives that way. But it's, you know, it, the, the sort of fireworks at New Year's is sort of an, was a sort of picture of man attempting to light up the whole of the night sky and to turn darkness into the most magnificent and splendid display of light.

But almost as soon as it reaches its pinnacle, darkness again prevails. And that's, that's our experience of light.

And so you see how utterly contradictory it is for John to make the claim God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

There is none. So what are we going to do? Darkness, darkness, as you read through the epistle, there are, there are certain categories of darkness.

[ 48 : 49 ] One of the categories of darkness is the presence of the lie. That brings darkness. Evil brings darkness.

Sorrow greets darkness. darkness. Peril is a matter of darkness. And death is the final darkness.

And humanity is caught in the inevitable closing up on our world of darkness. Comes in and takes over.

So, you see, it's very radical when it says God is light. I mean, it requires of you to think of, because we're so used to, the prevalence of darkness.

To say that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. To say that, you see, that ultimately there is light.

[ 50 : 04 ] And there is only light. And darkness is utterly banished. When we have been thought to live our whole lives as though there is sparkles of light here and there, but darkness prevails.

Look at it. That's what John is saying. So, if you go on from there, you'll see that if we say we have fellowship with him, now, I told you that fellowship is what it's all about.

You know, when between a married couple, darkness comes in, fellowship breaks down. When between two friends, darkness comes in, fellowship breaks down.

When in a congregation like this, darkness comes in, fellowship breaks down. When in a business partnership, darkness comes in, fellowship breaks down.

Between friends, when darkness comes in, fellowship breaks down. you can think about that.

[ 51 : 29 ] That this fellowship, light creates fellowship, and darkness destroys it. And so, if we say that we have fellowship, while we walk in darkness, that means we live our lives in darkness, in a preference for darkness.

darkness, if darkness invades our lives, then fellowship becomes more and more impossible. And the way we can tell is that we're caught in three ways.

It says, these three ways, if you look at them, are these. first, we deny the reality of sin. By walking in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.

But the insidious nature of this lie is that it's not a lie told because you are ignorant of the truth. It's not a lie which comes out of your misunderstanding of what the truth is.

It's not a lie that perhaps we consider to be better for people to think a lie than to know the truth and so we help them by telling them a lie.

[ 53 : 02 ] It's not that. The lie is something which you tell yourself and something that you know to be true, you lie about it.

And you see, the difficulty with this is that the person you're lying to is yourself at the deepest level of your life.

You allow a lie to take root. and that's why, John says, we deny the reality of sin by creating a lie.

And we live by that lie. We walk by that lie. We pretend we're having fellowship by that lie when we're not. That's the first thing we do.

The second thing we do is we deny responsibility for our sins. And, you see, that comes in verse 8, where it says, we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

[ 54 : 26 ] We don't hold ourselves responsible for sin. We cannot imagine that we would come under the judgment of God because of our sin, because we deceive ourselves.

And the truth is no longer part of who we are. We have replaced it with the lie. Maybe I should just take a minute here and tell you what sin is.

Sin can be on three levels. One, it can be against the community, and very often that kind of sin is legislated, and you break it and you suffer the consequences as the community brings you to task for having sinned against them.

You can sin against yourself by telling yourself a lie and believing it, and you can sin against God.

Now, you see, what happens, I mean, sin, I think you, it's best to understand it as sin being ultimately against God.

[ 55 : 58 ] And as you, God is light, and as you come into the presence of God, that light is self-revealing, and you become aware of your sin, and as you become aware of your sin, you become aware of your unworthiness before God, and you become aware of the need for something drastic to take place in your life to deal with that sin.

Now, you see, the difficulty that we're having at this particular point in history is that so many of the things concerning our sexual life, the community no longer says, this is a sin.

Does that mean it's not a sin? Well, it may not be a sin as far as the community is concerned. It may not be a sin as far as you yourself are concerned, but it may be a sin in your relationship to God, who is light, and as he brings light into your world, you become aware of the fact that your behavior, though acceptable in your community, though you have, in a sense, come to terms with it and learned to live with it yourself, still in relationship to God, it is a sin.

That's, I mean, that's the reason that I, one of the reasons, I mean, I guess in some ways it's an important reason for me to say that we cannot legislate sexual morality and say that it's not a sin because we may be deceiving people by doing that.

And, uh, and that is a very great sin, that we deceive people by, by saying that that it's not a sin when they know, perhaps not in relation to the community, perhaps not in relationship to themselves, but they know that in relationship to God, it is, and they have to deal with it.



[ 58 : 51 ] And that's why, you see, the Bible says men love darkness rather than light. or, it says again, they hate the light because their deeds are evil.

But, you see, until light penetrates into the darkest places in our lives, the possibility of having fellowship with others that is meaningful and not built on a lie, it's impossible.

love. And so, it goes on and says, the third thing we do, remember, I told you, I've told you three things, I've told you two, that we deny the reality of sin, and then we deny responsibility for sin, and the third thing we do, is we say, sin doesn't apply to me.

And, of course, the way John describes that is in verse 10, which says, if we say that we have not sinned, well, we make God a liar.

God, instead of being light, becomes darkness, and we are light. And God knows we need help when we get to that point.

[ 60 : 30 ] We need something very drastic to happen. Well, what can happen? Our humanity, the humanity to which we belong, consistently turns from the light and develops a preference for darkness.

And that's the end. I mean, we abandon ourselves to the ultimate victory of darkness in our world.

The darkness will ultimately take over. Not God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. But for us, God is darkness, and in him is no light at all.

We reverse it. And by doing that, we've made him a liar. He's not the self-revealing God, whom scripture tells us he is.

But then there's two other ifs here that I want you to look at at least briefly. It says, if, in verse 7, we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

[ 62 : 04 ] And you see, it's somehow necessary that we be cleansed. the wonderful thing about being a Christian is that it doesn't mean that you are a paragon of light and virtue.

It means that you are a broken person in a dark world, constantly in need of cleansing from sin.

you need it as a consistent experience in your life. And that consistent experience comes as you walk in the light and allow the light to penetrate into the corners of your life.

Then you find that you have fellowship with one another. fellowship doesn't exist in two people lying to each other successfully.

Fellowship is based on two people exposing themselves to the light together and acknowledging who they really are. Lots of marriages spend years in the precarious balance.

[ 63 : 34 ] both parties to the marriage thinking that if my partner knew who I really was, he would leave me immediately or she would leave me immediately.

So I must make sure that they don't know. And then some overwhelming circumstance breaks in on them and they no longer can protect themselves from one another and they discover who each other really are and then their marriage begins.

because light has come into their world and fellowship begins and is maintained by the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son.

And the next thing that can happen is if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins, cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

And again, you see, it's not the matter of living the kind of life where you never sinned, but having sinned to confess your sins to that God whose purpose is to bring light into your world so that you will see who you really are, how infinitely precious you are to him and how far he is prepared to go to make you just and to forgive your sins by what he has done for you through Jesus Christ.

[ 65 : 21 ] just pause there for a moment and remember that in the record of the crucifixion, when the hour of noon came about, there was darkness over the face of the whole earth.

that Christ went into the darkness in order to bring light, and Christ goes into your life and mine.

God penetrates your life and mine to bring light into the darkest recesses of our lives in order that we may have fellowship with God and with one another and that the energies of our life are not to be consumed with hiding the reality of our darkness, but in allowing that God to whom we confess our darkness, our sins, that God who is faithful and just, and who forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

That's what it is. That's what it is to that's the message, the message we've been given.

That message brings us in to a personal encounter with the God who is light and in whom is no darkness at all.

[ 67 : 18 ] And through that encounter to bring us into a world where we have fellowship one with another, the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness of our sins from all our unrighteousness by that God who is light.

Light is very powerful and very healing, as you know. And it is the purpose of God that his light should come like a sword right into your heart to the center of your being so that it is not for you any longer a place of darkness but a place of light and on the basis of which your relationship to God, your relationship to one another is transformed.

You are by that light transfigured and you become someone someone in whom God finds opportunity to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, to forgive us our sins, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and we encounter the God who is light and in whom is no darkness at all.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

[ 70 : 16 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

I will end each prayer with the words, Lord, in your mercy. Please respond with, hear our prayer. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you. Almighty and everlasting Father, you have invited us in your holy righteousness to be in fellowship with you and with one another, and so we gather here tonight.

True joy can come only through your Holy Spirit and your mercy, which binds us to you. We celebrate your light that shines through the ever-present darkness around us.

[ 71 : 53 ] We pray that we may actively seek your presence and follow you into the light. Lord, in your mercy. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Spirit of truth, we pray for our church, for the Anglican Church of Canada, for our diocese, for our Bishop Michael, and for our ministers here at St. John's, for David, Dan, and Felix.

[ 73 : 43 ] We are thankful for the gifts and talents you have given them that they weekly offer to us. May you bless them with continued wisdom, discernment, and for courage to boldly speak your truth.

We pray that as a congregation we would have open ears and hearts to listen. We pray for those working in ministries to children and youth, for Darren, Ruth, and Kim, and for the many serving alongside them.

May they be bold in teaching and sharing the gospel, and may they be touched by the innocent questions of children and be drawn closer to you through them. We pray for the interns learning and growing amidst us, for Linda, Sandra, Sean, Jonathan, and Pete.

May their questions and study draw them to wisdom and discernment, and may their time of ministry enrich them and draw those whom they serve to your side. Lord, in your mercy.

Glorious Creator, it is with awe that we thank you for the gift of our being. You have created us in your image and have called us to your side.

[ 74 : 55 ] We marvel at the gift of relationship, both to you and to one another, and celebrate our similarities and differences. We pray that your glory may shine in our interactions.

Great comforter, there is much to be thankful for. The gift of a friend's touch, a smile from a passerby, the fuzz on a new bud of a tree, the miracle of your word, and the wonder in the cool whiteness of a snowflake.

And yet sometimes, Lord, these things are blurred because of pain, anxiety, depression, illness, and loss. We pray for those sitting among us now and those who are in our hearts who are struggling.

May they know the gift of your healing touch, and may your love meet them where they are. May you also strengthen your community, Lord, that we might rise up to support and encourage one another in true fellowship.

May we be better able to sense those needs and respond lovingly. Lord, in your mercy. Blessed Redeemer, you have given us the greatest gift of love.

[ 76 : 08 ] We pray that as we leave this place of quiet, we would remember that you have called us to act out that love and carry it to others. In fellowship with one another, may we find encouragement, and in relationship with you, may we find strength to share that joy.

Through the gift of Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen. Well, again, I do welcome all of you to St. John's, and I hope that you could come and join us for coffee and refreshments in the Trendle Lounge, immediately behind the church here.

And I just have a couple of announcements to make. The first is I have an announcement that has to do with our stewardship. We had several talks about that late last year, about the needs that St. John has.

And God very graciously provided, and we ended the year with a small surplus. And we do want to thank you for your generosity, for responding to the needs here at St. John's as well, and hope that you can continue to do so.

And it was a very good exercise in our need to depend upon God for all the things that are important in this church. If you turn in your bulletins, there are two small leaflets.

[ 77 : 38 ] One's yellow, one's green. The green one is a Bible study guide if you want a very simple Bible study guide to go through. And it's for February and March. And it has something to read every day.

And the yellow one is a sheet that talks about parish prayer meetings. And they have the dates for all of them coming up. And they're always on Wednesday nights from 7.30 to 8.45.

It's just a time when we pray for our church and for the things that are happening around us as well. And everything good that God does, we pray to God for and depend upon Him.

And I hope you can come for these times of prayer. And finally, there is prayer in the South Chapel for anybody who is feeling in need of prayer, of asking God for forgiveness, or sharing with God the burdens of your heart.

There are people who are happy to pray with you. And that's in the South Chapel just a few minutes after the service. Let's stand and sing together our final hymn on your service sheet.

[ 78 : 43 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

We close with a reading from 2 Corinthians 5.

[ 81 : 16 ] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

Please be seated. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.