



**Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge**  
**Sunday July 25, 2021**

**Ninth Sunday after Pentecost Worship at Home**  
**Rev. Marian Raynard Phone: 905-892-4055**

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Take a moment to quieten yourself, and to prepare for worship, bringing your heart and mind to this time with God. (You may light a candle for your time of worship)

**Call to Worship: Psalm 145: 10 – 12**

Your creation gives thanks to you, O God. And we, your faithful, bless you.

We shall speak of the glory of your realm and tell of your power.

We shall let all people know your mighty deeds and glorious splendor.

Let us worship God.

**Opening Prayer of Adoration and Confession:**

Gracious and generous God, we gather each week in wonder, marvelling at your mysterious presence in the awesome beauty of the world, and in surprising encounters in our lives. We gather with grateful hearts, amazed by the abundance in your creation, abundance we can share at our tables and in our communities, abundance in food, in friendship and in faithfulness. We gather with hopeful hearts, seeking another taste of your love for us, hoping that others will share in the wonders of that love. Your love for us all is mysterious and miraculous, O God, with the power to transform times that overwhelm us and lives that hunger for hope. We gather, trusting that you will move once again in our worship, and open before us the new possibilities you create for all your people in Christ, the Bread of Life, bread for our journeys.

Gracious and Generous God, we gather each week to be fed by your love, trusting that you embrace each of our lives. We confess we are not nearly so generous with our love. We hold back what we have, fearful we lack enough for our own purposes and desires. We take advantage of opportunities for ourselves, and forget to see if someone else is in need. Forgive us, O God, when our fear makes us stingy with your gift of abundant love.

(A time of silent reflection)

And we respond using the words, that He taught us:

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 evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Hymn of Praise: # 682 Book of Praise Words: Public Domain**

1. Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me,  
and that thou biddest me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
2. Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
3. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
yea, all I need in thee I find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
4. Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

**Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 4: 42 – 44 (NIV)**

A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. “Give it to the people to eat,” Elisha said.

“How can I set this before a hundred men?” his servant asked.

But Elisha answered, “Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the LORD says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’” Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.

**John 6: 1 – 21 (NIV)**

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” So, they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

**Message: “The unbelievable gift of caring”**

Where oh where to begin. Elisha feeds a hundred men with 20 loaves of barley bread and there is some left over. Elisha's servant does not think it is possible and complains, saying "How can I set this before a hundred men?" Yet it goes around - and there is some left over.

And then there is Jesus and he feeds 5000 men and it seems that he does even better than Elisha, because He has only five loaves and two fish to start with, and 4900 more people to contend with. Except for the numbers, however, the two accounts are similar.

With Jesus - as with Elisha, there is a servant, a disciple, who does not think it is possible to feed the people, and when all is said and done in both stories, there are leftovers, in the case of Jesus enough we are told, to fill twelve baskets.

A notable miracle this; so notable in fact that it is the only miracle that Jesus did that is described in all four gospels if you take out your pew bibles you can find the story in Luke 9:10-18, or Mark 6:40-44 or Matthew 14:13-21, there each story is much like the other.

It has been talked about a lot, this miracle of feeding 5000 people, an awful lot, and perhaps more than any other miracle, people have tried to figure out how Jesus did it.

Most people more readily accept the healing stories, they understand that the mind has a strong effect on health, that faith can in fact bring about healing. But multiplying loaves and fish this seems more incredible, more difficult, and so theories have arisen to explain how it was done.

The most notable theory is that when the boy who had the loaves and fish shared them with others his example inspired others to bring out what they had brought with them and share as well. I can't say how it the loaves and the fish multiplied nor do I want to try.

What I do want to say has to do with another miracle in the story of Jesus feeding the 5000, and indeed a miracle that is found as well in the story of Elisha feeding the 100. It is a most ordinary miracle, one that both you and I can perform, yet it has extraordinary results, and leads to all other manner of miracles. I call it the unbelievable gift of caring.

Think of the story about Elisha for a minute. A man comes to bring the prophet an offering during a famine in Gilgal - some bread made from the 1st ripe grain of the season. It was a faith offering, the type recommended by Moses in the Torah. And Elisha, after receiving the offering, says to his servant "give it to the people to eat". Give it to the hungry ones here with me, feed them, for they need it. And what does he get in return - what is said to him? He is told that it is not possible, that there will not be enough to go around.

In the four gospel stories about the feeding of the 5000 we hear something similar. Jesus is teaching on a hillside there are over 5000 people there, and when evening approaches the disciples become concerned, they fear that the crowd will go hungry, and their solution is to ask Jesus to send the crowd away so that they will not have to worry about them.

But Jesus says to them - you feed them, and he asks Philip, knowing what will occur, "where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip replies "eight months wages would not buy enough bread to for each one to have a single bite" Immediately afterwards Andrew, who has found a boy with 5 loaves and two fish among the crowd, pipes up about his discovery and then adds "BUT how far will they go among so many." It all sounds so familiar, doesn't it? You can hear words like this just about anytime, especially when there are social or political problems that require an infusion of economic resources.

How can we help with what little we have? We don't even know how we will we make do ourselves. How can we feed so many? How can we fund so many? We have so little and the need is so great. What we can do is only a drop in a bucket. We don't have enough money to help out. We don't have what it takes. But Jesus didn't listen to this from his disciples, he didn't accept it, and neither did Elisha.

Jesus believed that what was needed would appear, and he cared he had compassion for those who around him, compassion for those who were hungry, just as Elisha believed and cared, and sought to feed the hungry around him. And just as Elisha commanded his servant to give the twenty loaves of bread that he had received to the people anyway, saying - despite the sounds of doubt around him, "They will eat and have some left over", so Jesus, after giving thanks to God, divided the 5 loaves and 2 fish, and, with the disciples, begins to feed the crowd. And there was enough to go around. And there were leftovers so many that there was more than there was to start with.

Mark, Matthew, and Luke all begin their account of this story by saying when Jesus saw the crowd he had compassion for them, that he cared for them. And what he did, from the time he

first saw them, the teaching, the healing, and the feeding, showed that compassion, and showed that care.

Jesus commands us to do the same he asks us to care, to have compassion, and to go out into the world, and teach, and heal, and feed the people. The first miracle in the stories of Elisha and of Jesus is the caring miracle. It is the fact that they were concerned for others, and wanted to reach out to them and help them. The rest of the miracles follow from that first one whether it be the food that multiplied somehow under both Elisha's and Jesus' hands or the healing touch, and the words that bestowed hope that Jesus uttered.

If we care, if we care not just for God, but for those around us as well, if we care enough to try to help, the other miracles follow in our trail as well, and there is enough bread, enough fish, enough money, enough energy, and enough hope to go around and still have more than enough left to spare. What Elijah asked of his servant, and Jesus asked of his disciples, when they protested that the job of caring was impossible, was for them to start doing it, to prepare the people by getting them to sit down, and then to begin distributing the food that they already had their hands on. God, they said, would look after the rest. And God did.

In the last chapter of the gospel of John just before Jesus ascends into heaven Jesus asks Peter three times "do you love me?" Peter replies "Yes Lord, you know I love you" And Jesus then says to him - each time - "Feed my sheep".

Love, my friends, is like the proverbial Jewish mother, it wants all the children, young or old, to eat. Love, if it is love, wants to provide, and it attempts to provide, Love wants to give, and it attempts to give, Love wants to help the other person be whole, and it attempts to show the way to wholeness.

The story of the feeding of the 5000 shows that Jesus cares, that Jesus loves, and that he provides. And this story shows too, that when we care and when out of that care, we obey Jesus in faith and get on with the deeds of caring we are called to do, that we can indeed feed the hungry with the little we have, we can do what seems impossible with what appears to be nothing and amazingly, we may even end up with more left over than we started with.

The unbelievable gift of caring, the miracle of love in action. We all have a ministry of caring, a ministry of love that we can perform. It might be feeding crowds of thousands (all I have to do is to think of the World Vision commercials from a few years ago – or for that matter some of the current ones that speak of how a whole village could have milk or food for a day, with a donation of only a couple of dollars.)

Or it might be a more spiritual feeding like that which is found in the ministry of correspondence, in sending a letter of thanks or appreciation to someone or a sympathy card to someone who is ill. Such letters are tremendously meaningful to those who receive them. Just a few words on a piece paper lets them know that someone cares, someone notices, and brings hope and joy to their hearts, a hope and joy that they then are able to give to others.

Like the loaves and fishes, the little things done in sharing and caring tend to multiply and produce a rich harvest of thanksgiving to our God. The little things, the small offerings, work - despite their apparent insignificance. So many people say, when they go to see someone who has lost a loved one "I don't know what to say" They believe that they have nothing to offer, nothing to really help their friend with, but they are wrong. Their presence despite that so-called nothing they have to offer, does more than a thousand wise words. It shows those that mourn that they are cared for, that they have some place to turn, that there are others who understand and sympathize with them.

That simple ministry of presence, a ministry that arises out of caring, is fruitful and creates in those who see it, and those who experience it, a new sense of hope, a new sense of faith. Do you love me? Feed my sheep.

Write to them, email them, show up and keep them company, help them carry their burdens. Share the crusts of bread that you have, the fish, the kind deed, and God will take care of the rest, and do so abundantly, so that even more is left than when you started more love, more joy more care, more hope, more food, more of everything that is good - because God too cares and because that is how he made the world to work.

The word of God - the seed - the love - it falls upon the ground, and despite all that is snatched up, all that is choked off, all that withers and dies, it produces a harvest that is 30, 60, even a hundred times that which was sown.

This unbelievable gift is this you always have enough to care with. And when you start to care with what you have, you, and those you care for end up with more than you began with. Amen.

### **Our Offerings:**

You are able to make your offering by sending a **cheque or using the PAR** (pre-authorized remittance). For Rockway contact Bonnie Roland (905-685-3985), 213 Rykert Street, St. Catharines, ON L2S 2B5 and for North Pelham contact Janice Aulph (905-892-5244) or mail 602 Metler Rd, Fenwick L0S 1C0 or drop them in the mailbox.

### **Prayer of Dedication      Let us pray:**

God of abundant love, we offer our gifts to you willingly, yet sometimes we wonder what they can achieve in a world of great need. Bless our gifts and multiply them in your love. Surprise us with your power, working in us and through us, to accomplish worthy things in the name of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION**

God of mystery and miracle, You are calm in our storms and challenge in our satisfaction. We give you thanks for all the ways we have tasted your abundance, in friendship and fellowship, in food on our tables and safety on our doorsteps. Amid these everyday satisfactions, keep us mindful of those who lack the necessities of life and who find each day unpredictable and anxious. Like Jesus' disciples caught on the rocky sea, we fear the storms of life. So many people know turmoil in war and displacement.

Into the unrest around us, call out to us. Come near to us and overcome our fear.

Throughout the world and in our own communities, we witness increased divisiveness and hatred toward those considered a threat.

Into the unrest around us, call out to us. Come near to us and overcome our fear.

In so many countries and in our own neighbourhoods, we witness great inequity and deep need for even the staples of life.

Into the unrest around us, call out to us. Come near to us and overcome our fear.

In our communities, congregations and families, we witness uncertainty about the future and the cost of months of pandemic isolation and lockdown.

Into the unrest around us, call out to us. Come near to us and overcome our fear. In our own lives and the lives of so many friends and neighbours, we witness depression, anger, anxiety and despair, as we cope with the uncertainty of these months of restrictions and the grief they have caused.

Into the unrest around us, call out to us. Come near to us and overcome our fear.

In a moment of silence, we bring before those people and place in need of your healing presence. Those who are known to us, and those who are known but to you.

(A time of silence)

Into the unrest around us, call out to us. Come near to us and overcome our fear.

And now, trusting in your steadfast love and faithful presence, we lift these prayers to your gracious and loving care. In your name we pray. Amen.

### **CLOSING BLESSING**

We have been upheld and raised by our God. May God continue to strengthen your inner being and carry you out into the splendour of God's kingdom. Amen.

### **Sung Response: Go Now in Peace**

Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.

Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see.

God will be there, watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Don Besig & Nancy Price © 1988

**We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional  
territory of the Haudensaunee and Annishnaabee**

**The Sessions of Rockway and First, North Pelham continue to monitor the situation closely with regards to the resumption of In-Person worship. There will NOT be any summer worship services (indoor or outdoor at North Pelham through to the end of August).**

**At this time Rockway are planning for an outdoor service on Sunday August 22<sup>nd</sup>, there will not be any other indoor or outdoor services scheduled at this time.**

### **Mission Moment – Food Assistance provides comfort during difficult times.**

In Afghanistan, Razia and her four children lost their home when they could no longer afford to pay rent. Abandoned by her husband and left with few prospects to earn an income due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Razia and her children sought refuge in a spare room at the local mosque. Razia's son did small jobs to earn money, but it wasn't enough to sustain the family. Fortunately, the family was selected to be recipients of a food assistance project run by Community World Service Asia, a partner of Presbyterian World Service & Development. Monthly cash transfers were provided to 1,100 vulnerable families, including many who had returned to Afghanistan from Iran. "We were blessed as the cash helped us to purchase essential groceries. I have also bought warm clothing for my children so the winters will be warm and comfortable," Razia said.