



MESSAGE: GRATITUDE IS AN ACTION WORD

**Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday October 10, 2021
Thanksgiving Sunday Worship at Home**

Email: northpelham.rockwaypc@gmail.com **Website:** <https://northpelhamrockwaypresbyterian.ca>

Our sincere thanks to **Reverend Maria Lallouet**
for leading us in worship today. Rev. Maria is the Coordinator of Seniors Ministry at St. John's
Presbyterian Church in Grimsby.

Call to Worship:

Lord, we gather before you in faith and thanksgiving.

We come to praise and worship you in spirit and in truth.

We pray that the Spirit of God will bless us and touch us today.

We also come with all our hopes and dreams.

We come knowing that God will not turn us away.

We come as we are, because God has called us. Thanks be to God.

Opening Prayer of Adoration and Confession:

Blessed, Exalted,

Glorified, Magnified

Praised and Honoured be the name of the Holy One, who made heaven and earth.

Blessed be God on this worship of celebration and every day.

But today is a special occasion. It is Thanksgiving Sunday and our hearts are filled with gratitude.

Creator God, we give you thanks for all creation:

for the vastness of the universe, and

for the tiny insects and butterflies.

For the beauty of the rolling meadows and the high mountains.

We thank you for creating us in your image,

for your children around the world,

for family and friends.

Gracious God, you have promised a new life to all. Renew and increase our faith today,

so we always take the path that leads toward you.

We thank you for the gift of forgiveness. May we always choose to be kind, compassionate and forgiving to others.

May the peace that passes all understanding fill our hearts and minds forever.

Amen.

Hymn of Praise: #434 For the beauty of the earth

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 12:1-6
I Thessalonians 5:16-18

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Albeit Thanksgiving has historical roots in religion and cultural traditions, it has long been celebrated a secular holiday as well.

Thanksgiving is particularly rich in legend and symbolism , and the traditional feast that typically includes roasted turkey, stuffing that sometimes turns out amazing, other times, well less inviting, cranberries with it's amazing colour, mashed potatoes with gravy of course, pumpkin pie, and all the rest. Are you getting hungry now?

Thanksgiving started with the pilgrims who came to America to worship God freely. After suffering through a harsh winter, drought, death, illnesses, the surviving members of the community came together to worship and thank God for his blessings.

Interesting lesson for us to learn from: those early settlers, primitive people, saw the greatness of God beyond all hardship and wanted to act upon it. You know why? Because they knew that GRATITUDE is an an action word!

Nevertheless, over the centuries Thanksgiving became less and less about religion and more and more about festivities, travelling, partying. In the craziness of the modern world, it is easy to loose sight what thanksgiving really is and what being thankful really means. During our current pandemic, we have faced a life different than any of us ever known. We have lost jobs, families, friends and chances to socialize with people in person disappeared in a flash.

Because of these circumstances and other alterations in our lives, celebrating Thanksgiving might be different. Actually, what I am proposing, let us make it different, indeed. Let us make it more God-centred. Let us make it more reverent and more lasting experience. To be able to that sometimes we have to go away to a special place, called memory. Remembering the roots, the original purpose, and most importantly we have to simplify a good number of things, especially what we do and how we do things around holidays.

To Indigenous people, including the Haudensaunee and Annishnaabee tribes on whose territory we worship, thanksgiving is a way of every day life, rather than a one day celebration. Thanksgiving, as the dictionary explain is an expression of gratitude, especially to God.

According to the prophet Isaiah, and as we heard it in the first reading today, our salvation depends on our thankfulness. Isaiah therefore is asking us to “give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name make known his deeds among the nations, proclaim his name exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, shout and sing for joy” What Isaiah is really saying in here that we have to realize how blessed we are and take action: pray, proclaim, sing, shout! When we realize and express our thankfulness, God's heart melts and more blessings are on the way.

Are you still with me?

Excellent, because I am going to tell you a secret.

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In both of our readings this morning we heard the word: rejoice or joyful. The reason being that the thankful heart is always joyful. Being joyful means that we are content, regardless of what little or more we have. First step therefore is to remain joyful, knowing that God will meet our needs every day. In James Chapter 1, verse 17 we read: “Everything that is good coming from God.” We will grow closer to God when we understand this truth and build our lives around it. As Christians we must retain our faith in God and spread joy and thankfulness. We are God's instruments and channels to spread our thankful joy. “Rejoice, I say it again, rejoice!” (signed by the Apostle Paul)

If you are still with me we will now talk about how to develop a grateful heart? I arranged the most important things in just three points. Are we ready?

1./ Put God in the centre/Praise God when all is well.

We think this is obvious, but unfortunately human nature proves it otherwise. When things are going well, people tend to forget about God, about his care and blessings. Nevertheless, it is critical that we train our minds to give thanks and praise the Lord when everything is going smoothly. Think about your savings account. We are only able to save when we have the opportunity to save. Think of your thanksgiving prayers being put in the spiritual savings account. This way our faith will increase. We will stay close to God.

Although we do not develop pictures as much as we used to, but we all have an idea how an out of focus photo looks like. Today, so many lives are out of focus. People, especially our young ones, are confused, the world is at a speed we never experienced before, changes are taking place in every aspects of our lives. In people's mind, God is certainly moved from the centre of their lives. We therefore have to train our minds to remember our Maker and expressing our gratitude daily. We need to focus on God more. Someone once said that focusing on God also helps us to focus on the good. With this attitude we can always find something to be thankful for, because as the psalmist says ” the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” (Psalm 33:5) Undoubtedly, one of the most thankful people in the Bible is the Apostle Paul. In his letter to the Thessalonians he writes: Give thanks in all circumstances, because this is the will of God. In Philippians chapter 4 verse 8 he continues: Do not let your minds dwell on negative things, instead, dwell on things that are pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. This takes us to the second part as we are discovering how to develop a grateful heart.

2./ Learn to praise God in difficult situations.

We all experience difficulties in our lives. We all hurt at times. We get discouraged. Things are going sideways from our plans and dreams. We get hit hard with misfortunes. These are the occasions when we have to rewire our mind. These are the times when we have to remember to give thanks in ALL circumstances. Have you ever heard anyone say: “thank you Lord for my cancer?” or “Thank you God that I have lost my job?” Actually, I did! In the cancer case the lady was praying that she got it, because she can deal with it, knowing that the Lord will see her through every step of the way. In the second example, I heard the young man explaining that he lost his job, because God has better plan for him. And He did.

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God never leave us, nor forsake us. God is present in all situations and sustains us. You see thanksgiving or thankfulness are long words, perhaps that is why it is a long process to prepare a thankful heart. We have to devote ourselves to learn to give thanks in everything. It is a journey. It is a spiritual practice. It is therapeutic and the end it can bring healing to the troubled heart. It is also said that people who went through extremely tough situations, they are the most grateful and they lean on God increasingly.

Are you still with me? Great! Because, thirdly, we are going to look at some practical ways to develop a thankful heart.

3./ We should make a habit of expressing gratitude.

Have you heard of a default setting or a default position? All these new electronic gadgets, smart phones, smart computers, smart everything have that position. It is a factory set up, a standpoint that most likely will serve the majority of users, nevertheless, it can be specialized. Can be added to it. However, if some interruption happens, the gadget will go back to default position. My proposal is to make thankfulness our default position. The Apostle Paul is urging us to do so as well. "Give thanks in every situation. In everything give thanks because that is God's will" God made us after his own image. We are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved according to Colossians, chapter two and such we must learn to give thanks and praise the holy name of our Maker.

The big question is how can we make it an every day habit to express gratitude. One easy but powerful way is to use prayer, remembering that before we make the long wish-list, first we thank the Lord for absolutely everything. Start the prayer with a praise and thanksgiving.

Secondly, you may start a Journal of thanksgiving. Very simply find every day something to be thankful for, and write it down. If you are an old fashioned as I am, you can use the day-timer.

Another idea to remember to remember and practice a thankful heart is to have a paper bag. Call it a thanksgiving bag. Place it on a fridge or the side of the cabinet or any place that is visible. Have little pieces of paper ready and when your heart is being filled with thanksgiving, write it down and place it in a bag. It is indeed surprising to see when we open the bag how many things there are to be thankful for.

Gratitude provides a load of strength, you know. Thanksgiving is a superpower. It springs from our understanding who God is. For it is impossible to love God without expressing our gratitude and thank him for absolutely everything.

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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

God reminds us that we have been blessed with gifts and resources so that we might share our abundance with others. Let us bring our offerings to God with thanksgiving.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Holy and loving God,

Words cannot express how thankful we are to you. We can make an endless list of everything that we are grateful. But first and foremost, we thank you for your greatest gift and sacrifice in your son Jesus Christ. Because of him, we have hope that one day we can see you face to face.

Lord, on this blessed Thanksgiving Sunday, we pause. We pause to remember your goodness and greatness toward your creation. We pause to thank you for the essential gifts of our days, such as water, food, clothing, housing, the land we gather upon.

We pause and remember and thank you for our families, friends, and neighbours, distant or near. Bless us and pour your grace upon them.

WE pray for the lonely and depressed. Bring joy, friendship and hope into their lives.

WE pray for those who are grieving the loss of their loved ones. Bring comfort and peace into their hearts.

WE pray for your constant presence in our lives, and ask to bless us with a grateful heart that constantly recognizes your blessings.

We bring these petitions before you through Jesus, our Saviour. Amen.

Hymn: #338 Let All Things Now Living

CLOSING BLESSING

Go into the world with thankful hearts!

May the love of God, the peace of Christ and the joy of the Spirit surround you, encourage you and keep you today, tomorrow and forever. Amen

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

Happy Thanksgiving!

October 17th Worship will be at Rockway at 10:00 am with Rev. Tijs Theijsmeijer

The WMS will meet Tuesday, Oct. 12 at Kirk on the Hill at 10 AM
There will not be any lunch, bring your own drink if you wish.

Wednesday October 13 – Joint Session Meeting @ Rockway

7:00 – 7:45 pm – North Pelham Session will meet

7:45 – 8:15 pm – Joint Meeting

8:15 – 9:00 pm – Rockway Session will meet

Moment for Mission for October 10 - Supporting New Ministries

In 2019, with support from Presbyterians Sharing, The Presbyterian Church in Canada started Cyclical PCC, a church planting support initiative. Since its beginning, God has blessed this initiative with 47 faithful, dedicated and innovative people who feel called to begin new ministries. Rani Ibrahim, a participant in Cyclical PCC, said that the relationships he has formed with other Presbyterian leaders have been especially meaningful.

