



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday November 21, 2021
Reign of Christ Sunday

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

Our sincere thanks to Steven Marsh for leading us in worship today.

Call to Worship: from Isaiah 43

Leader: But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel

All: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you **Leader:** I have called you by name, you are mine **All:** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you

Leader: When you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you

All: For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Leader: Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life

All: Do not fear, for I am with you.

Hymn # 267 Rejoice the Lord is King

Opening Prayer of Adoration and Confession:

Lord, Your words bring calm where there is chaos. Peace where there is fear. Wisdom where there is confusion. Direction where there is need. Love where there is loneliness. Your word and your Spirit equip me for everything I need. For this and all the ways you bless me, I thank you Lord. I pray in the words of the one who offers peace, Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 19:12-29, Isaiah 43:18-19

Message:

“Back when I was a kid, we didn’t have any fancy bike lanes, school busses or even sidewalks. We had to WALK to school in 40 below weather, snow so high you could touch the hydro wires in our bare feet AND it was up hill. BOTH WAYS! How many of us have heard a story like that? We all have. And as my children have gotten older, I have found myself guilty of spouting out one of those myself. Truth be told, most of us have done our part to perpetuate that the next generation has it a lot easier than we did. And it’s not their fault that youth seem to be wasted on the young.

With technology things have changed. The first computer took up an entire city block. Now you have more technological horsepower in your cell phone than that mega computer did. I lost my first job to technology. Once we got a remote control for the TV I lost my job as Dad's channel changer. Can you imagine with all the You-tube, internet, satellite channels, and Netflix could you imagine ever hearing there's nothing on TV"? You'd snap! Unless you could think back to when you said that to your dad. He'd look at you and say "Really, you've got 12 Channels. Back when I was a kid, we had three. And if the weather was good, you might have had 4. And if the weather was bad, you were lucky to get 2, and if the President was on, you only got one. Now, if I told my children, Adria and Jacob that they could only watch 12 channels, I would have a mutiny

We have hundreds of channels...and doesn't it seem like, some nights that there still isn't a darn thing on??

But we have so many channels, in so many languages, with so many different things to watch
The more things change...

Isaiah 43:18-19 says to us, "Forget the former thing; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up do you not perceive it?"

This is God's admonition to us

Don't dwell on the past

Don't hang on to it

Pay attention to where I will lead you

Have faith in where I will lead you

Sometimes the things that we are accustomed to will keep us from pursuing things that are in our future.

We get caught up in the comfort of what is familiar, what has always been,

We keep looking back to what has been our past so much so that we cannot see the future

It's like driving our cars, we can't keep looking in the rearview mirror

There's a reason why the windshield is so big and the mirror is so small

What is before us is so much more important than what is behind

We get in our cars fully expecting to move forward

You can't stay where you are if you expect God to move you forward

The angels of the Lord warned Lot that something was going to happen, and they could not stay where they were.

They had to move forward, had to have faith that God knew what was in their best interest

I believe there was a small part of Lot that wanted to move forward and do the right thing.

But there was something about Sodom.

Sodom represented the old lifestyle, old habits and attitudes.

There are some areas in our lives that are similar to Sodom.

What do you need to leave behind to move forward?

Lot had a divine opportunity to leave the land that He had chosen

But he had to acknowledge that God knew what was best

Lot hesitated because of what he was familiar with.

In order for us to move forward, we must acknowledge God, listen to God without hesitation.

Moving forward requires one to remember what happened but not cling to it

Moving forward will require you to move when God says move.

Moving forward will carry you into your destiny.

What Lot did not realize, because of his procrastination, was God wanted to save his life for a greater purpose.

God wants us to come to the realization, that God has a greater purpose for us too
 We should thank God for where we are and where He has brought us from
 And we should have faith that God wants us to fulfill the mandate that his son Jesus gave us
 To go forth, move forward, and make disciples of all nations
 We aren't going to do that in our world by refusing to leave where we are, like Lot's son in laws
 We aren't going to do that in our world by continually looking over our shoulder and moaning
 about what we are leaving behind, like Lot's wife did
 We aren't going to do that in our world by saying, "but that's the way we've always done it"
 We aren't going to do that in our world by being complacent with where we are, even if it feels
 good right now
 Sometimes we let our hands get so full of what was that we cannot reach out for what might be
 We can't grow because we are stunted by our obsession with staying exactly as we are
 If you are not growing, it may be because we are too satisfied with where we are
 We get attached to our past and it takes many forms
 We get attached to our homes...we don't need the 4-bedroom home after the kids are gone
 And like our church home...the building, refusing to change anything, refusing to acknowledge
 that the structure doesn't fit our lifestyle anymore, doesn't fit what we hope to accomplish in
 ministry
 We get attached to the rhythms and flows of our church year, dinners and specific events, because
 we've always done them, and done them in a certain way and heaven help us if we want to make
 any changes
 Even if making those changes are necessary because what we were doing isn't yielding the results
 that they once did
 We get attached to our ways of doing ministry even if it isn't reaching younger people because it is
 not relevant for them
 We can cry about the fact that no one attends Bible study, or we can make it meaningful in a
 whole new way, call it something different, use different mediums, offer up a whole new way to
 explore God's word
 We get attached to a service format because 'that's the way we've always done it' even if those
 changes are only a decade or two old
 We get attached to our music because we know it, we don't have to think about it, and we can sing
 it without trying
 But that may not be what is inspiring to people outside our walls...and if you want to know the
 truth...for many inside these walls...sometimes infrequently, it's not inspiring either
 I know that these things hurt, and it may seem like I'm attacking all that church means
 But that is what church means for a certain generation
 It may not be what church could mean for a whole new generation
 To lose these elements of what would feel like dishonouring the past
 Certainly, we want to celebrate the past, what has come before
 We want to recognize the people that founded this church
 But you know what...they were pioneers...they were doing something different
 They were moving forward, not looking back
 They left the place they were, dependent on where God would lead them
 They worshipped in someone's house, or a lot..
 But they looked to the future and built this building
 There was courage, there was faith in where God was leading them
 There was a willingness to look forward and not back

We may feel that we are not prepared for something new
 It's going to hurt, it's going to be painful, it's going to shake the foundations of our lives and our church
 But it is totally up to God how He prepares us for shifts that may occur in our lives.
 And when God gets ready to make another shift in our lives, there is always a shaking
 Nothing monumental comes without a shaking up, a change in what was
 If COVID has taught us nothing, it is that
 You may say that God does not change, and you would be absolutely right
 But how we praise him, how we interact with God, how he reaches us has ALWAYS changed
 We do not worship as the Hebrew people did
 When was the last time we had a burnt offering?
 We do not have a way of coming together like the early Christians did, in homes, sharing everything together as we read throughout the book of Acts
 Our services aren't even like those of our great-grandparents
 Our services aren't even the same as they were 5 years ago
 And they shouldn't be!
 We have to set aside the rhetoric that says any change we make is 'not biblical' and truly look at whether it is scripture or tradition that is holding us in place
 Yes, tradition is important, for what it taught us, how it helped us,
 But it is not the be all and end all
 It is not how things HAVE to be done in perpetuity
 By being so consumed by OUR way of doing things, we don't allow for the Spirit to move among us and inspire us to better things
 If we are too rooted in tradition, we can cease to grow and flourish where God coaxes us to go
 We can become culturally irrelevant
 Are we willing to forgo our cultural relativity in favour of our comfort?
 God reaches us where we are...and God always will
 If we let him
 Our God is a God of surprise, of infinite possibilities, of learning and changing
 God offers us a chance at something new, if we are letting HIM lead
 God promises us in Isaiah 43
 Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.
 I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
 I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
 The challenge for the church is to remain open to this radical freedom of God to do this new thing
 Douglas John Hall, who is a wonderful, contemporary Canadian theologian writes, "Wherever Christians are serious enough to let go of the tired old forms their religion has assumed in its' long and established past, they are discovering the courage and imagination necessary to put the good wine of the gospel into new ecclesiastical wineskins"
 We are called to have courage and imagination, to be instruments of praise, instruments of joy, instruments of change
 We cannot continue to dwell on the past,
 It has shaped us, but it does not define us!
 Because we cannot be reborn, we cannot move forward without a metamorphosis, without change
 Change is painful, change makes us uncomfortable
 But listen to what God is saying" I do a new thing." God, not us
 What if we could think about it in terms of growth instead of change

Thinking in terms of reaching, stretching, not change
 Maybe not stepping outside the box, but making the box bigger
 The more things change, the more they stay the same
 Because it is the presence of God that is the constant
 God, calling us to something new, encouraging us to look forward
 To move forward
 Admonishing us “Don’t look back”
 Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.
 I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
 Do you not perceive it?

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 Thanksgiving and for the People

God of many names We give ourselves into the hand of your continuing creativity; Our past, with its joys and triumphs, its failures and regrets, Our present, with its struggles and accomplishments, its hopes and setbacks, Our future, with its fears and freedom, its pain and possibility, trusting the Spirit that breathes life, trusting the love that will not let us go, trusting the promise of the Word made flesh.

Hymn # 461 Be Thou My Vision

CLOSING BLESSING

Brothers and sisters, as we go out into the world, Let us be keep our vision on the horizon and our feet going forward as God intends us to do. I hope the grace of the Son, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with you this day and forevermore. Amen

Sing: Go Now in Peace

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

Next week service will be at Rockway at 10:00 am with Rev. John Congram - it is the first Sunday of Advent and Communion will be shared.

The Mitten Tree at Rockway is accepting donations until Dec. 12. The donated items will go to Community Care of West Niagara.

Meat Pie Fundraiser for the Willing Workers – pick up date for the meat pies is Saturday November 27th from noon to 3:00 pm - remember to bring extra money as there will be a table of baked goods available to purchase.

Thank you for your prayers for my brother, Mervin Wormald. He passed away peacefully on Sunday November 14. Blessings to all! Verna LeGrand.

Moment for Mission for Sunday November 21, 2021

Protecting Children in Malawi

Ten-year-old Joseph lives with his family in northern Malawi. One day, Joseph showed up to school, not quite himself. His friends noticed and asked what was wrong. “My father and mother shout at each other and fight almost every week.

Sometimes my father calls us bad names and chases us out of the house at night, for no reason,” he said. His friends, who had learned about children’s rights and what support was available to them, urged him to speak to a Child Protection Worker. The Child Protection Worker understood the economic challenges that were exacerbating the abuse and connected the family with World Service & Development. Resources to address them. Together, the family is using what they have learned to build a more peaceful home. This project is supported by Presbyterian

