



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday January 9, 2022
Worship at Home Resource

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Our sincere thanks to Reverend Pearl Vasarheyli
for preparing the Worship at Home resource

Call to Worship:

L. Beloved, God chooses us and calls us by name

P. We belong to God. Allelujah !

L. Our lives have purpose because we belong to God.

P. We are called to follow Christ and follow Him.

L. We will find joy, peace and restoration through God's amazing grace.

P. Let us worship God who claims us and loves us. Praise be to God.

Hymn: #400 – Spirit of the Living God

Opening Prayer of Adoration and Confession:

Almighty God, Creator of the sun and moon and stars, You stir in our midst to reveal your light. By the work of your Spirit, you lead us in new directions. Your beloved Son has called us to new life and by his grace, reconciles the divisions among us. Holy One we praise you for the blessings you give us in our baptism into Christ, and through your love that surrounds us day by day. To you we give all praise and glory, through Jesus Christ, who is one with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and always.

Merciful God, in baptism you promise forgiveness and new life, but we confess that we prefer our old, familiar ways. We cling to destructive habits, we harbour grudges and we are reluctant to welcome a stranger or forgive one another. Nostalgia for the past prevents us from exploring new possibilities. In your loving kindness, forgive us. Have mercy upon us and move among us so that we might pursue new life in Christ together. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON.

Do not be afraid, for Christ has redeemed you. Baptized in the deep waters of death, he has washed away your sins. Risen from death He invites you to be washed in the cleansing tide of God's mercy. Your sins are forgiven; be at peace with God, with yourself, and with each other. Amen.

HYMN : #18 - Through all the changing scenes of life

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

Holy Spirit, you blessed Jesus in His baptism, proclaiming him beloved of God. As we give our attention to God's holy Word, descend on us we pray. Speak to us of God's love for us and renew our faith and commitment to follow Jesus, God's living Word. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

RR. Psalm 29

O.T. Isaiah 43: 1-7

N.T. Luke 3: 15-17; 21-22

Message: **“This is my beloved Son|”**

Happy New Year to you and yours ! What would year 2022 bring ? Good question. Since August 2021 I jokingly call myself half and half. That means that I spent exactly the same amount of years in my old country as here in Canada, 35/35. Before I came to Canada the life back in my old country was very hard to say the least. We had food rationing, stood long hours in line for meat or vegetables. We had to constantly look over our shoulders not knowing who is watching our every move or listening in to every words we say to report it the next day. When this first started we said : O.K. We can handle it for a year in the next one everything will go back to normal. And the another year came by and things got worse. Yet another one and we said that it cannot be any worse than last year was and yet it did. Maybe that's why I really had a hard time handling the situations surrounding this present pandemic, it reminded me too much to the years back home. At the beginning of 2020 we did not expect that things can turn that drastically that fast. Then 2021 rolled in and we said, surely the worse is over to discover that it is not true. So what are we expecting from 2022 ? Are we having to come to that come what may attitude, or the I don't care any more or whatever ?

You see if you carefully peel away all the news and media craze about the Covid pandemic, vaccinations etc. you find out that in the midst of that God was among us, working hard with and through us. The other noises were so loud and strong that we missed His still small voice.

If we look at our readings for today there is a strong common theme through them all and that is “ **the voice of the Lord.** “

R.R. Let us hear the voice of the Lord from our R.R. Have you counted how many times is it mentioned in the psalm? Don't worry I have and it is 7 times. This voice is not a whisper but it is loud and powerful. It is not instructing human beings but rather it is heard in nature : over the waters, in the forest, in flashes of lightning, in the desert. Glory to the voice of the Lord !

In verse 4 we hear : The voice of the Lord is powerful
the voice of the Lord is majestic.

My father as a Hungarian Reformed minister served two large congregations over his 41 and a half years of ministry. The places of worship were big, easily sitting 300, 500 people with no sound system and people without hearing aids. So he learned to project Sunday by Sunday thus developing a powerful voice. We can call it now “ job hazard” I discovered that after 28 years of ministry I became loud myself. Back to my father, I remember school mates or friends hesitating to come to our place if my father was home. In reality in spite of his powerful voice my father was a wonderful, warm heart-ed , kind person and we, his family knew that.

Now it is safe to say that when God is heard over the waters or in the forest there is kindness behind that booming voice, there is love behind the thunder. How do we know that ? Listen to verse 11 of our psalm : “The Lord gives strength to his people, the Lord blesses his people with peace. “

This is a nice blessing for all of us at the beginning of year 2022 !

O.T. Where is the voice of the Lord in our passage from Isaiah ? Right in the first verse :

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have summoned (called) you by name, you are mine .” He continues in verse 3 : “For I am the Lord your God.” It is a wonderful reminder of the covenant God made with us : I am your God, you are my people.

In the passage it is clearly spelled out what it means to be a covenant people:

when you pass through the waters I will be with you
 when you pass through the rivers I will not sweep over you
 when you walk through the fire , you will not be burned .

Fire and water are the two most dangerous elements in our lives. We see devastation of floods and wild fires all over the world. Do we see these as rude awakening and realize that our influence changed the climate- not toward the better- , and it is time to act. Scientists remind us on a daily basis, are we listening, are we taking it seriously ? Most importantly what are we committing to do about it ?

God keeps us calling back into the covenant relationship with Him, do we pay attention to His voice ? Think about it !

N.T. The story we heard from Luke's gospel today is a well known story. None of the gospel writers spent any verse describing the toys little Jesus played with or the friend he had or if he was a good boy. From the nativity we go straight to the consecration in the temple, to the journey to Egypt, to the journey of presenting the yearly sacrifice in the Temple. These are the few and far between events that precede our story we heard today. It is a lovely story as far as the baptism is concerned but today we hear John the Baptist saying the following :

“ One more powerful that I will come. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. “

I cringe whenever I hear before a baptism : We want the baby done. It sounds like part of a bucket list when you have a baby : feeding check, diaper change check, burping check, baptism check. For grandma and grandpa's sake we get the baby done, one less thing to worry about. That's why young couples usually disappear from churches after the baptism of a child. That is wrong on so many levels :

- with the baptism you plant a seed of faith in that child's heart and soul. As with every seed that is not the end you need to water it, expose it to sunshine, have good soil and then it grows. Otherwise it withers and dies.

- not too many people are paying attention any more that the congregation also makes a promise – beside the ones made by the parents and godparents- to help that child to grow and mature in faith. How can they live up to that promise if they don't see that child for years after the baptism ?

With the baptism of the Lord in the Jordan river his earthly ministry just started. Were there bumpy roads ahead, we know there were. Jesus kept on looking ahead, forging ahead but constantly praying to God every step of the way. He reaches out to God as a source of grace and strength and so He demands of us that we reach out to Him in self-commitment, as we seek strength beyond our own strength to live in the world. We have expectations and questions about every aspect of our lives : personal, professional, political. We are well aware that we are passing through massive transitions in every aspect of life. We know that transitions will bring- are already bringing- much turmoil to lives and relationships, to organizations and systems of every kind. High prices are already being payed for the great changes we are experiencing. We have the Greater One , John is pointing to, our Lord, Jesus Christ. We hear God calling from Isaiah “ I have called you , you are mine .” Now we hear the voice of the Lord again :

“ You are my beloved child in whom I am well pleased “. That's the blessing God blessed Jesus with in the waters of the Jordan river. Is God also blessing us today at the beginning of a new calendar year with the same blessing ? “You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased .” I hope and pray that He does !

Let us pray.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we need all the help we can get during our bumpy faith journey. Give us Your blessing we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

HYMN # 183 Christ, when for us you were baptized**INVITATION TO THE OFFERING****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

God, our Maker we bring our gifts to you in thanksgiving for your gifts to us and in creation. Bless what we bring and who we are, so that our gifts will bless the world you love in Christ's name. Amen.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Almighty God, who spoke as the heavens opened to declare your pleasure in Jesus Christ, we praise you that we are called in His name and find favour in your sight. As your obedient servants, He was baptized by John and received the Holy Spirit. We praise you for our baptism, and that in Christ you seal out adoption as your sons and daughters. We thank you for the Spirit, who abides with us as a legacy of that inheritance, and for mothers and fathers in ages past who were faithful in transmitting your promises to our generation. From them we have received our confessions of faith. With Christ as the cornerstone you form us into a building of God. With Christ as our closest kin, you blend us into one household of faith. We rejoice in the remembrance of our initiation into that fellowship. You set us apart and named us, and still continue to do so even if we are young or older; the confession of faith was made and we received your divine blessing. As hands were laid upon us and we joined with brothers and sisters in ministry, so now we commit ourselves again to go into all the world, to proclaim good news and make disciples. Through the grace of our Saviour and empowered by your Holy Spirit we will teach them all that you have commanded us- even to the close of the age. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who is 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, for ever. Amen.

HYMN # 174 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness**BENEDICTION**

May the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen

Sung Response : Go Now in Peace

Announcements:

- A reminder that next Sunday January 16th, there will be no in person worship. Rev Martin Wehrmann will be providing the Worship at Home Resource.
- Session Meeting – Wednesday January 12 @ North Pelham
 - Rockway Session will meet at 7:00 pm
 - North Pelham Session will join at 7:30 pm
 - The meeting will be held in the sanctuary to ensure proper distancing
- Annual Reports - although we do not have any dates set for Annual Meetings, please be thinking about the annual reports. They will still need to be prepared and distributed to the congregations. Dates and deadlines will follow.
- It is our hope to be able to join together for in person worship on Sunday January 23rd - thanks to everyone for your patience while we navigate yet another challenging time

Moment for Mission – Sunday January 9, 2022

We are God's people, called to serve God with our many gifts. We belong to a denomination that is connected by faith, governance, history and mission. **Presbyterians Sharing is one of the ways that Presbyterians across Canada work together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love and hope in our communities, in Canada and around the world.** Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing help build strong congregations, serve vulnerable people, walk with Indigenous people, seek justice and share God's love. When we work together, we can accomplish so much more than we ever could on our own.



