



**Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge  
Sunday May 8, 2022  
Christian Family Sunday/Mother's Day  
Worship at Home**

**Email:** [northpelham.rockwaypc@gmail.com](mailto:northpelham.rockwaypc@gmail.com) **Website:** <https://northpelhamrockwaypresbyterian.ca>

Our sincere thanks to Rev. Martin Wehrmann  
for leading us in worship today.

**Call to Worship:**

Come, worship God and bow down before Him; kneel before the Lord our maker.  
For He is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Amen

While you may not be worshipping in your beautiful church building today – you are probably still in the region of Niagara – for the most part. This region, as all of North America, was settled by Aboriginal people many hundreds, if not thousands of years before European settlers came. Our history together has not always been friendly – indeed, it has brought many tears to the people that often welcomed our ancestors! May God forgive us. May our aboriginal neighbours forgive us. May God enable us to live together and *together*, make this the best nation in the world. Amen  
Peace be to all!

**Hymn:**     **Bless all who trust**                                 **#89**

**Opening Prayer of Adoration and Confession:**

True and faithful God: we praise Your Name in this time of worship. We lift up your providing goodness on this day when some families celebrate Mothers' Day; when some remember the mothers they have had and loved –  
God, the best mother might be the image that comes to mind when we think of You – The best kind of love comes to mind when we think of how You have led us through our life; always being there to talk with, always speaking kind and reassuring words to our heart when we are afraid – Sometimes we couldn't find You and we had to look for You – not because You went missing, God, but because we had lost You in this busy life of ours, *as a small child loses mom or dad in a big department store --*  
God: yes, we do sometimes lose You. We sometimes even *deliberately hide* from you because we're afraid of what You might do to us, or think of us ... We confess that our faith is sometimes more like a flickering candle than like a passionate, beautiful fire!  
God – our opening Word from Scripture speaks of You as our shepherd, and we are the 'sheep of Your hand.' – God: You have fully invested yourself in Your people in Jesus Your Son. Please pasture us safely, so that we will all, one day, come together in Your heavenly place! (pause for reflection)     Amen

**Hymn: Come sing, O church, in Joy!**

**# 757**

Let us take a few moments as we worship at home, to read the Selected Scriptures for today:

**Scripture Reading:**

Psalm 23

The beautiful shepherd psalm composed by David!

Acts 9:32-43

The Apostle Peter's first mission trip? We'll see.

Revelation 7:9-17

Who are all these people before the throne of God and the Lamb? God's holy messenger tells us wonderful news about them *and about us!*

**Message:**

**The Family of God**

**The Hymn:** The Family of God

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God – I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!

Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, For I'm part of the family, the family of God.

(If you know the melody, sing it a few times to yourself.)

Should you have The Hymnal, you'll find it as #282.)

**OUR MESSAGE FOR TODAY:** 'The family of God'. Jesus said he knows them... and they follow Jesus.'

Today is celebrated as Mothers' Day in many homes – but also as Christian Family Sunday in homes and churches -- *because* what the 'family' looks like has been rapidly evolving and changing this last century. I believe the Church intends to be more inclusive – *I believe it was necessary!* Maybe it wasn't noticed in your family – but since our world wars many young widows had to raise their children on their own because their husbands and boyfriends never came home from the war. Before modern medicine many widowed dads raised their kids alone, after their beloved wives died in childbirth. I knew such families in the West; farmers mostly. Go and visit a cemetery if you haven't done so. – I'm sure with world-wide epidemics like the flu of 1918 or COVID 19 and before modern medicine, many moms died early from a broken heart, having to bury their little ones before they reached their teens. I'll spare you my views on divorce and family separation. My Nancy worked in the day-care system for many years and saw the confusion it caused in some children. (pause)

I also saw these situations where I grew up in a blue collar community in Toronto as a child and when I worked as a tradesman, I eventually began to understand the relationship between poverty and poor health, and even early death. The Christian Family looks very different from country to country, often determined by governments and their favour and wealth! \*\* The Church seeks to unify people, even in its observance of Christian Family Sunday.

(pause for reflection)

Our Lord Jesus often used the example of workers to illustrate His lessons about himself as God's Son and about His loving Father. The image of the shepherd, as it is used in our psalm, is very ancient in Scripture. But Israel's *leaders* eventually became known as 'shepherds' of God's people. Our psalm today *changes* that image to refer to God. God, like a good shepherd, not only provides everything for his flock; he watches over it day and night, he watches over the bearing mothers and over the weakest lamb – and the sheep build a trusting, close relationship to him! God/ the shepherd cares for the sheep like a 'host' to whom a guest comes! The 'best' is only good enough for the guest. Protection and hospitality are key – and so even after a long day, the shepherd or the

host still does all that is needed to quench the thirst of the flock & to ensure its safety by himself laying across the opening to the sheep-fold, facing any possible enemy!

\*\* Wouldn't you want to be part of that shepherd's family?

Today we want to think about what it means to be part of the family of God – and let's think about who else should be part of that family – and thereby, try to 'visualize' our sisters and brothers in Christ. Who are they? What do they look like? ...

In our passage from Acts 9 we have the continuing story about Peter, probably in the first year after Jesus' death and resurrection. Remember Peter and John were locked in a jail or dungeon in Jerusalem because the authorities wouldn't tolerate their preaching about Jesus! After his miraculous, divine release (Acts 4) and 5:17f.) Peter and the first apostles continued to preach about their new faith in Jesus. Thereby, they became 'marked men', so to speak! Peter seems to have wandered north, up to the Mediterranean, perhaps to avoid persecution. Our story is about illness and death that was constant in that time. Aneas was cured of his paralysis by the name of Jesus, despite his 8 years of being restricted to his bed. Then, in a nearby town, at Joppa, there was another good person, Tabitha, on *her* deathbed. – Probably, because of her kindnesses and gentleness her friends and community especially grieved her passing! They called for Peter, about whom they had heard great things about the power of Jesus in him! And, Peter came, and Peter helped! He not only healed her, but his act of kindness and concern in coming to them in this darkest hour, opened the eyes of many to believe in Jesus!! \* More and more persons of Gentile background came to faith in Jesus!

**Peter struggled though.** These were not Jewish people he helped. We don't even know whether Eneas believed – **but Peter helped them! In the name of Jesus** Peter even *raised* dead Tabitha – as we had heard only Jesus could do so; Jesus the Son of God. And Peter could heal as the great prophets of Israel could heal, like Elisha, and 'save' those whom God loved – as queen Esther had saved her people through God's inspiration! \*\* Despite messages about with whom God's people could associate in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah – and that was Peter's worry – God clearly *no longer* drew those 'lines of separation' about God's holy family! The mission to the Gentile had begun!

And what a success it was! – No, it didn't run 'smooth', as we might wish to be able to say! And no, even Peter & Paul – the two great missionaries mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (the Book of Acts) – lost their lives as Apostles and witness of our faith! And yet, look at our message in the Book of Revelation! Yes, it's a writing about the persecuted Church then. But John the 'seer' had a vision through which God comforted His faithful servant; himself in a prison-colony on the island of Patmos. God has a message for him: that thousands upon thousands; so many that they could not be counted, had come to faith in Jesus and had been cleansed of their sins in the blood of Jesus!

\*\* No, the Church and the message of Jesus had not failed!!

\*\* John's vision must have been a great encouragement to the Church of that day! It comforted John! It will encourage us who believe in and accept the sacrifice of Jesus for ourselves.

\*\* Future generations will still come to faith – as Jesus' parting prayer with his disciples reveals near the end of John's Gospel! \*\* Don't be discouraged. Only believe!

Humanity wants to separate us – as we see in the current wars all over this earth!

Humanity claims we are different – *and so we are*; made in God's image, and yet uniquely different.

But God's heart is 'gigantic'! God's love knows no bounds. **All** whom God loves are God's family. Only when we see God will we fully see this love for what it is. Only then can we see our sisters and brothers in the perfect light that God shines on us all.

Today, on Christian Family Sunday or on Mother's day, think on these closing words from

Scripture: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? *Even these may forget*, yet **I will not forget you**. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; ...” \* God is like that struggling mother; struggling with children that no longer love her, but her love never falters!

If you read on in Isaiah 49 you will be amazed at how 'appropriate' those old prophecies are even today: \* to distinguish the 'haters' from those who love God & serve God – and are pastured by God; the supreme shepherd!!

\*That is the debate in the Gospel for today also, not included in this service. Read John 10:22-30 yourself as homework. While it isn't my intention to 'divide or separate' anyone; believer or not – may God help us *all* be on 'the Lord's side' – and to accept one another as such ie. as God's flock or special creation! Jesus said: “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.” Amen

Some of the **other hymns for today** that I suggest to add to your worship are: What a friend we have in Jesus or Faith of our Fathers [and mothers].

Hymn #373 in the same Hymnal mentioned above and in our churches, has especially appropriate words for us today – even if you can't sing, it's simplicity touches the faithful soul: I can hear my Saviour calling, I can hear my Saviour calling, I can hear my Saviour calling, “Take thy cross and follow, follow Me”.

I'll go with Him through the judgment (repeat, repeat, ) I'll go with Him, with Him all the way. He will give me grace and glory, (repeat, repeat) and go with me, with me all the way.

**Hymn: Take my life and let it be #637**

### **Our Offerings:**

### **Prayer of Dedication**

### **Prayer of the People:**

#### The Lord's prayer

Please say it any way you have learned it. Should you not know it off by heart, look at Matthew's Gospel, in chapter 6 verses 9-13 and add the familiar ending: “For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever, (and ever). Amen”

We continue in prayer: Our heavenly Father; heavenly Creator who bore your world and us – like a loving mother too – hear our prayers.

God, we are so very grateful for our church and for all your people who constantly encourage us; who call on us and worry about us – You know our own, special needs ...

We thank you for the heart You have put into your people. We indeed see ourselves as Your flock. God, the world is in a terrible state right now. People in Ukraine, in Afghanistan, in Syria and all over – are suffering war and hunger because of drought and climate change and because of abuse and because of the greed of some others –

Even in our wonderful country thousands will go without food and shelter and without the celebration some will enjoy today.

Lord God of compassion and mercy. Help all. And shine Your Light of Divine Love into our hearts, to want to help & heal and to share Your Good News with others. Give us the words to pray for them. Turn off the prejudices we might have inherited or the pain we have suffered from others – to once again, trust ourselves to that foreigner, to that stranger – for when You came – even in the person of Jesus, a poor carpenter & preacher, no one knew him, until His death! We thank You God, for Your Spirit who has opened our eyes to You now & for opening our hearts a little bit

more in this worship time. Amen

**Hymn: O God of Bethel, by whose hand #654**

**Benediction**

The Lord God loves you also. Praise the Lord. Amen

**We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional territory of the  
Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe**

**Announcements:**

**Next Sunday worship will be at North Pelham at 10:00 am with Rev. Elliston Bridger**

**Tues May 10: The WMS will meet at 10:00 AM at North Pelham  
Mission outreach this month is facial tissues for Pelham Cares.**

**Wednesday May 11: Session Meeting at North Pelham**

**7:00 pm Rockway**

**7:30 pm – North Pelham**

**Upcoming Sales : May 21 – Rockway Yard Sale (see flyer)**

**May 28 – NP Plant and Bake Sale**

**Please keep both these sales in mind when spring cleaning or working in your gardens -  
good saleable items and plants and baking needed.**

**Moment for Mission – Sunday May 8th**

**Presbyterians Sharing is transforming lives in Central America and Mexico. Based in Guatemala, General Coordinator Judith Castañeda and the staff of the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America (CEDEPCA) are empowering women and girls through their ministry of accompaniment. Women learn how to take on leadership roles in churches and their communities through faith-based activities about their personal and legal rights, and the importance of formal education. After completing CEDEPCA's Healthy Relationships course, one woman said, "I feel like a different woman. Before, I used to live locked in my home with a domestic routine, but now I have new friends, we do creative things."**

