



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday August 14, 2022
Worship at Home

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

Our sincere thanks to **Reverend Pearl**
for leading us in worship today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

L. O God, our Shepherd,

P. gather us together and lead us like a flock.

L. O God, our Gardener,

P. plant us like a vineyard so that we produce good fruit.

L. O God, our Merciful Judge,

P. we call upon your name in prayer and praise.

L. We bow before you, O God

P. And offer our worship with glad and humble hearts.

Let us worship God.

HYMN : Oh hear our cry, O Lord 49

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Almighty God, God of majesty and mystery, we gather today in the presence of that great cloud of witnesses who have worshipped you in song and service for centuries. Our praise joins theirs as we fix our eyes on Jesus and wait for your Spirit to guide us. We praise you for your great love and mercy, revealed in Christ, at work in us through the Spirit. Holy one we offer you all glory and honour in our worship, seeking to renew our faith and commitment to serve you in the world that belongs to you.

Attentive God, you care for us like a gardener tending the beautiful plants, blessing us with what we need to be fruitful. Yet we confess we fail to live up to your hopes for us. Instead of love and kindness, we produce anger and resentment. Instead of generosity, we produce greed and jealousy. Forgive us, O God. In your mercy renew in us the fruit of your Spirit through the grace of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON. Hear the good news ! Although we have not always been faithful to God, God remains faithful to us. In Jesus Christ, God offers us forgiveness. Through the gift of the Spirit, God renews us to live faithfully in Jesus' name. Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN OF GOD MOMENT

Sacrament of baptism : Heidi Violet Molnar Skelding, daughter of Alpar Molnar and Rachel Skelding, granddaughter of Rev. Pearl .

HYMN : Jesus, friend so kind and gentle 519

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

Spirit of God, open our minds and hearts to receive God's wisdom in the Scriptures. Show us how to live out that wisdom today and tomorrow, as we follow Jesus, who is for us God's Living Word. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES R.R. Psalm 80: 1-2; 8-19

O.T. Isaiah 7: 1-7

N.T. Luke 12: 49-56

SERMON: Interpreting the times

My heart is so full of joy for what just happened here at the beginning of the service and then there are the read passages for today to contend with.

This is so typical to every human life, that we go through peaks and valleys.

When you suddenly loose a loved one you think that the darkness that covers you covers the whole world, yet for the rest of the universe life goes on as if nothing happened.

When you celebrate the birth and baptism of a new life for you it is a great joy but the rest of the world goes on like nothing happened. That's why God sends us messages to remind us that something remains constant no matter what is happening in an around us. That is God's love and kindness, faithfulness and grace. We are reminded of that through the stories we've heard today.

R.R. The R.R. and O.T. stories are revolving around vineyards. For us in the Niagara region that is something we can see on a daily basis.

My first encounter with vineyards was at my grandfather's place. He was an excellent gardener and vine grower. He showed me all about plants and flowers and also the grapevines. My sadness came when I could never taste any of those promising grapes since I have to go back home to go to school. Imagine my delight when one year I was allowed to be there for the harvest and really ate my fill tasting the best fruits while picking them.

Then 15 years ago when I relocated to the Niagara region I learned about growing grapes here. I have several pictures of the grapevines laden by fruits so abundantly I've never seen before. I even

climbed up on a harvester to have a unique experience. What I am still missing is tasting the fruits. I understand why but still.

In Biblical times the Israelites could relate to and understand the stories about growing grapes because they had that on their doorsteps. When God promised them a vineyard they knew that they will be in one place for a long time, and live in prosperity, blessed by God. Why ? Because grapes do not yield fruit fast and readily, they need years to mature.

In our R.R. We have reference to the salvation history of the Israelites. They lived in slavery in Egypt from where God brought them out. It took 40 years of wandering before they could plant vineyards for the first time on the soil of the land flowing with milk and honey. During their wandering in the desert they grumbled, complained, turned away from God many many times. They even built a golden calf to worship that. So no wonder they are pleading with God to restore them. In the whole psalm this sentence is repeated 3 times as a refrain in verses 3,7,19.

“ Restore us , O Lord God Almighty, make your face shine upon us, that we maybe saved. “

There is clear reference to the vine in verses 8,9.

“You brought a vine out of Egypt, you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.”

When I resided in North Pelham my way to St. Catharines took me in front of Henry of Pelham properties. I watched how over the years they were preparing land for new vineyards and how they grew. The verses from the psalm reminded me of that.

O.T. In the book of Isaiah we see a detailed description of how a vineyard is built: fertile hillside, land cleared of stones, the choices plants being used, watchtower is built, wine press installed. The whole operation was planned carefully. End result : bad fruits !

I am sure we all have similar stories to tell. You plan something with a great deal of care and preparation and it turns out to be a failure.

Who was the planter in our read passage ? God himself ! Listen to verse 7 where all is explained : “ The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel and the people of Judah are the garden of His delight. He looked for justice but saw bloodshed, for righteousness but heard cries of distress.”

Did this happen only in Isaiah's time or it is happening today as well ? We have to listen to the 6 o clock news and it sounds exactly the same as in Isaiah's time : instead of justice we have bloodshed, instead of righteousness cries of distress. From tiny Israel now it spread all over the world. How sad !

N.T. From Luke's gospel we have only two short verses coming to us today, but they also carry a lot of relevance for us.

When your livelihood is farming you are looking at the sky very often because lots depends on what the clouds bring. Jesus said : When you see a cloud rising in the West immediately you say : it is going to rain, and it does. What would it take for us to interpret the signs of the times today ? Not only to interpret, because that is the easiest part but to do something about it. Our environment can hardly handle any more damage so it is up to us to do something about it. What legacy are we giving to the next generation ? Would our grandchildren enjoy green forests, clean water, will they hear birds singing, see wild flowers blooming ? I know, I know it is not that dire yet but there is a certain urgency and actions needed on our part.

“ Why do you not know how to interpret the present time ? !” Often our Lord expresses exasperation. So many people seem blind to what is going on around them. The Lord offers a vision of society and a way of personal life that can transform lives; yet so few listen, so few respond. As with all indications of Christ's humanity, it allows us to share with him our own moments of frustration and despair. So ask yourselves : When was the last time I turned to God in prayer ? When was the last time I opened my heart trusting that He is listening ? If it was this morning , then keep on doing it every day. If it was a long time ago than it is high time to begin again. Let us pray.

How good it is to be here today , dear God. Listen to our prayers. Amen.

HYMN : Great is thy faithfulness

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INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Faithful God, bless the gifts we offer for you today. Use them to plant seeds of faith, hope and love in the world, so that your goodness will grow among your people, and your name be honoured for Christ's sake. Amen.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

God of all knowledge, before whom nations rise and pass away, we bow down in awe of your infinite wisdom. You discern our inmost thoughts, sensing our needs. You are the quickening fire judgment that renders us liable for our deeds and misdeeds. Yours is the reconciling Spirit of atonement, which can lift us from the depths of sin and failure. You set us aright, so that we may walk henceforth in your mercy. For all this and more we give you thanks.

God of compassion, we pray for those whose spirits are crushed by the weight of their afflictions. They cry in their anguish that there can be no God. Draw near to them during their time of trial, and deliver them from the abyss of despair. Help us be for them a source of encouragement and

support, so that they may once more trust your promises. Let us hear in their cries our own call to be by their side.

God of justice, we pray for the doers of evil whose arms smite the weak and the powerful alike. They make no distinctions in their quest for power. When they are called to account before your throne, may Christ intercede on their behalf. Keep us from casting them aside as worthy only of punishment. Teach us our dependence with them on your mercy. Help us, O God, to pray for both the oppressed and the oppressors, to the end that all may one day be included in your gift of redemption. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN : How firm a foundation

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BENEDICTION

Go Now In Peace

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

Next Sunday worship will be at Rockway at 10:00 am with Rev. Pearl Vasarhelyi

Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ and with his church. Through it we share in the death and resurrection of Christ and are commissioned to his service.

In Baptism, water is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The water signifies the washing away of sin, the start of new life in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

By the power of the Holy Spirit God acts through Baptism. It is the sacrament not of what we do but of what God has done for us in Christ. God's grace and our response to it are not tied to the moment of Baptism, but continue and deepen throughout life. It is a sacrament meant for those who profess their faith and for their children. Together we are the family of God.

Baptism is also an act of discipleship that requires commitment and looks towards growth in Christ. Those baptized in infancy are called in later years to make personal profession of Christ. What is born may die. What is grafted may wither. Congregations and those baptized must strive to nurture life in Christ.

Baptism assures us that we belong to God. In life and in death our greatest comfort is that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.