



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
17th Sunday after Pentecost, September 15, 2024
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Come, let us worship the Lord, who calls us to follow Him.

P: **We come, ready to follow Christ, setting our minds on the things of God.**

L: Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29)

P: **We confess that Jesus is the Messiah, the One who leads us in the way of love.**

L: "If anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me." (Mark 8:34)

P: **We will follow Christ, trusting in His life path, even through suffering. Let us worship God, who leads us in the way of wisdom and truth.**

Hymn 290

Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Prayers of Approach and Confession

God of life, within us and among us,

We come before You this morning as Your people, seeking Your wisdom and guidance for our lives. Open our hearts to Your words of life, love, and truth. In this time of worship, help us to more fully understand who Jesus is and what it truly means to follow in His way.

God of wisdom,

We confess that we often fail to listen or apply Your words to our daily lives. Though Your spiritual law is spoken, we rarely pay attention. You call us to declare who Jesus is for us, yet we struggle to find the right words. Our tongues move before our minds are fully engaged. We long to be a people faithful to Your Word, guided by Your wisdom, but we are so easily distracted by the noise that surrounds us. Hear us now, O God, in this moment of silence, as we open our hearts and spirits to You. (pause)

Forgive us for what we have done against Your will. Forgive us when we fail to hear Your wisdom in all the ways You speak to us. Lead us back to the path of wisdom and life so that we may live as Your faithful disciples, focusing not on human things but on the things of God. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray together, saying...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

"Our Father who art 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, forever.” Amen.

Hymn 570 **I have decided to follow Jesus**

Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God,

Open our hearts and minds to Your Word today. As we seek to understand who Jesus truly is, may Your Spirit guide us into wisdom and truth. Lead us to embrace the way of the cross, that we may follow Him faithfully in love and service. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm
Old Testament
The Gospel

Psalm 19
Proverbs 1: 20-33
Mark 8: 27-38

SERMON

Setting Our Minds on God’s Ways

In Mark 8:27, Jesus asked his disciples a profound question: “Who do people say that I am?” And then he made it personal: “Who do you say that I am?”

This morning, I want to ask you the same question. Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am? People often have very different, sometimes strange, ideas about who a minister is. Some may think a minister has miraculous powers, that they can walk on water or have the answers to every problem. Others see a minister as a prophet, a healer, or someone who has to be perfect in every role—whether as a pastor, parent, spouse, or leader.

But today, I want to return to a deeper question: Who do you say Jesus is?

When Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” they gave various answers: “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” But none of these answers were correct. So, Jesus made it personal, just as he does with us today: “Who do you say that I am?”

This question is central to our faith, and Christians have grappled with it for centuries. How we answer this question shapes how we live, how we believe, and how we understand our relationship with God. Some see Jesus as different from us—high and holy, distant, and powerful. Others see him as one of us—close, relatable, and understanding of our struggles. Both views have merit, but there is more.

So, who do you say Jesus is?

Like Peter, many of us would say that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the chosen one of God. And we would be right. This is the great revelation of Mark’s Gospel—Jesus is the anointed one, sent to save the world. But the story doesn’t end there, and Jesus doesn’t fit into the neat boxes we sometimes create for him.

When Peter proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah, he likely imagined a powerful, victorious leader who would rescue Israel from suffering and oppression. But Jesus immediately began to teach that being the Messiah meant suffering, rejection, and even death. This was not the kind of Messiah Peter expected, and he struggled to accept it. In fact, Peter was so disturbed by this that he took Jesus aside to correct him. But Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God does, but as humans do.”

This is a powerful moment for all of us. Jesus challenges Peter—and challenges us—not to place human expectations on divine purposes. He was showing Peter that his role as the Messiah was not about power or prestige, but about sacrifice, love, and suffering.

Even today, the idea of a suffering Messiah is difficult for many to accept. We want a glorious, victorious Savior who will take away all of our problems, heal all of our pain, and usher in an era of peace and prosperity. And yes, Jesus is a Savior who heals and brings peace. But he does so through a path we often do not expect—a path marked by suffering, humility, and self-denial.

In the Old Testament reading from Proverbs, we hear Wisdom calling out in the streets, asking, “How long will you continue on your current path? How long will you refuse my counsel?” Wisdom is challenging us, just as Jesus does, to turn away from the easy paths of comfort, success, and self-interest, and to embrace a life shaped by God’s purposes, not our own.

Jesus makes it clear to his disciples that following him means walking a similar path. “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.” This isn’t an easy call. It requires us to set aside our desire for comfort, control, and safety, and to embrace the way of the cross—a way that may involve suffering, but also leads to life, transformation, and hope.

Suffering is a reality in our world. There is no place where accidents do not happen, where cancer does not strike, where we do not lose loved ones, or where we do not experience the difficulties of aging. Violence plagues our cities, relationships are broken, and injustice often prevails. In this world of birth, sickness, old age, and death, we are called to live as followers of Christ—not avoiding the reality of suffering, but entering into it with faith and hope.

Jesus never promised us a life free from hardship. In fact, he promised quite the opposite. “In this world, you will have trouble,” he said. But he also offered a profound promise: “Take heart! I have overcome the world.”

When we take up our cross and follow Jesus, we are not embracing suffering for its own sake. We are embracing a life of love, service, and trust in God—a life where, even in the midst of hardship, we find meaning, purpose, and the presence of God with us. Jesus did not avoid suffering, and neither can we. But in our suffering, we are never alone. We have a Savior who understands our pain and who walks with us through every trial.

This call to take up the cross is also a call to radical love. Jesus' life was one of selfless love, where he cared for the poor, healed the sick, and embraced the outcast. He did not seek to save himself or preserve his own comfort. Instead, he gave everything for the sake of others.

As his followers, we are called to the same kind of love—a love that costs something, a love that might lead us into difficult places. But it is a love that transforms the world. Following Jesus won't come naturally in a world that values capitalism, consumerism, and individualism. These forces encourage us to put ourselves first, to seek our own advantage, and to avoid suffering at all costs. But Jesus offers a different way—a way that values the things of God, that seeks justice, peace, and love above all else.

The good news is that following this path leads not to despair, but to resurrection. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, so too do we experience new life when we follow him. Our suffering is not the end of the story. The cross leads to life. The path of self-denial leads to the fullness of God's kingdom—a kingdom where love reigns, where justice prevails, and where all things are made new.

As we live in this broken world, experiencing joy, sorrow, health, and sickness, we do so knowing that God is with us every step of the way. And as we take up our cross and follow Jesus, we discover that we are not alone. We are held in the strong arms of a Savior who loves us beyond measure.

So, who do you say that Jesus is? Is he the Messiah who takes away all of your problems? Or is he the Messiah who walks with you through the valleys, who asks you to join him in loving the world, even when it costs you something?

May we answer with Peter: "You are the Messiah." But may we also embrace the full meaning of what that title entails—a Messiah who calls us to love, to serve, to suffer, and to hope.

As we go from this place today, may we set our minds not on human things, but on the things of God. And may we find, even in the midst of suffering, the joy and peace of knowing that we are following in the footsteps of the One who loves us more than we can imagine. Amen.

Hymn 256 (R) **The Old Rugged Cross**

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Loving God,

As we offer these gifts, may we reflect the love and sacrifice of Jesus, who calls us to follow Him in service and compassion. Use these offerings to extend Your grace and truth, bringing hope to those in need and drawing us closer to Your purpose. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Gracious and loving God,

We give You thanks for the gift of Jesus Christ, our Messiah, who reveals to us the way of sacrifice, love, and healing. We are grateful for the grace that calls us to follow Him, even when the path is challenging. Thank You for walking with us through our joys and sorrows, and for Your steadfast presence in our lives.

God, Giver of all life, You have given us life eternal. You sustain us through the bounty of the earth. You have given us the Holy Spirit as a comforter in our time of sorrow. You have provided for every one of our needs. We thank You for all Your blessings.

Today, we lift our hearts in prayer for a world in need of Your love and peace. We pray for those suffering in places of conflict, violence, and injustice. As Jesus taught us to carry the cross, may we stand in solidarity with the oppressed, the hungry, and the forgotten. Bring hope to those who despair and healing to the nations in turmoil. Guide our leaders and inspire us all to work for justice and compassion in every corner of the world.

We also remember those in our congregations who are struggling with illness, weakness in mind and spirit, and personal suffering. Surround them with Your healing presence. For those who feel burdened by physical pain, emotional hardship, or spiritual doubt, grant them comfort and strength. May they know the peace of Christ, who walks with us in our suffering and lifts us up with His love.

In particular, we pray for Fran Johnson, Rosemarie Lampman, Catherine Tirpko, and Mieke Mander, as well as all who are enduring difficulties in silence. Hold them close, Lord, and remind them that they are never alone. We trust in Your promise that even in our darkest moments, You are with us, bringing hope, renewal, and life.

And we also take a moment, O God, to name, in silence, before you, the people and situations we hold close in our hearts. (pause)

With tenderness and trust, we ask for Your healing touch in every need. Grant peace, regardless of the outcome, and renew our spirits. Empower us to rise with fresh purpose or to find new directions in our journey. We offer all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who taught us the way of love, sacrifice, and resurrection. Amen.

Hymn 642

O Master, let me walk with thee

BENEDICTION

May God, our Creator, who reveals His love through the way of the cross, bless you with the courage to embrace the path of sacrifice and compassion. May Jesus Christ, our Messiah, guide you in following His example of selfless love and service, and empower you to live out His call to be His faithful disciple. And may the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide, renew your spirit

and strengthen your faith, enabling you to rise with hope and purpose as you walk in the way of Jesus. Go forth in peace, knowing that you are held in the love of the triune God. Amen.

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace
Postlude

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***Next Sunday Service, September 22, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

***Next Sunday's Worship:** Rev. Jacob will lead worship at Stamford Presbyterian Church in Niagara Falls as Interim Moderator, declaring the church vacant due to their minister's resignation. Rev. Susanne Rescorl will lead worship for our congregations next Sunday.

***Exciting Elder Election and Ordination Ahead!:** Exciting news for Rockway Church! Following the service on September 29, we will hold a congregational vote for Janice Wiley as a new elder. If all goes smoothly, we will celebrate her ordination on Sunday, October 13. Please keep Janice in your prayers as we look forward to welcoming her into this vital role!

***Fall Barbecue Lunch Fellowship, October 6!** Join us for a joyful barbecue lunch at North Pelham on October 6, right after the service! Sign up on the sheet, and don't forget to bring your grass chair. Let's enjoy a wonderful time of fellowship together!

***Celebration of Holy Communion:** On October 6, we will gather to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Let us come together in faith to share in this sacred meal, remembering Christ's love and grace for us all.

***Thanksgiving Sunday Gratitude – October 13!** We'll celebrate Thanksgiving by giving thanks for God's abundant blessings! Let's express our gratitude by bringing life-giving and life-sustaining food into the church. After the service, the food will be donated to the Open Arms Mission of Welland, where God's blessings will be shared with those in need. Thank you for joining in this act of love and generosity!

***North Pelham's 196th Anniversary Celebration!** Join us on October 20 as we joyfully celebrate North Pelham's 196th Anniversary with guest speaker Rev. Pearl Vasarhelyi! As we thank God, we're launching a special mission project to support the Brock Chaplaincy. Donations collected during the service will help students in need, and contributions made through the church are eligible for a charitable tax deduction. Let's come together in prayer and gratitude, spreading love and support as we celebrate this special milestone. We look forward to celebrating with you!

***Refugee Committee Update:** The Refugee Committee in our Presbytery has had a busy summer supporting Belqis and her sons, Sajed and Hamed, as they adjust to life in Canada. The family has received help with English, healthcare, and daily needs thanks to dedicated volunteers. Belqis' husband, Mohammed, is awaiting the next steps in his immigration process from Pakistan. The Committee continues to work diligently to ensure all necessary support is in place. Please keep the Ibrahimi-Yousufi family and the Committee in your prayers as we continue this vital ministry.

***Presbytery Meeting:** The Presbytery meeting will be held on September 18 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Giles PC, St. Catharines.

Bible Studies!

- **Wednesday Bible Study:** Join us every Wednesday at 10:00 AM at North Pelham, led by Diane McMillan. Please note there will be no study on September 18. We look forward to seeing you on September 25!
- **Thursday Bible Study:** Due to Fran's hospitalization, Thursday Bible study is temporarily suspended as we keep her in our prayers and thoughts.

***Outreach - Thursday Walking:** Join us for the Wellness Walk and Coffee Chat! We gather at 9:30 a.m. at Canada Games Park to start our walk together. After the walk, we meet at Rockway for a joyful chat over hot and fresh coffee at 10:45 am.

***Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits. Reach Jacob at jacoblee0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797.**