



**Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge**  
**16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, September 8, 2024**  
**Worship at Home**

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**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**L:** Today, we gather as God's beloved community.

**P: We come to celebrate the value of every person in God's eyes.**

**L:** Proverbs reminds us, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches" (Proverbs 22:1).  
 God values our hearts more than our wealth.

**P: We seek to live out God's love through our actions.**

**L:** James challenges us: "Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:17). Let our faith  
 be alive in deeds of compassion.

**P: We build our lives on the foundation of Jesus' teachings (Mark 7:24).**

**L:** Let us worship God, embracing His call to love and justice.

**P: Let us worship together!**

Hymn 307

**God of the sparrow, God of the whale**

**Prayers of Approach and Confession**

Compassionate Christ,

We come before you as people filled with both joy and disappointment. We come with the energy to praise you and the need to express our lament. We come with a sense of purpose in who we are and what we do, but we also come as those who have lost our way, lost our passion for the gift of life, and lost our connection with you, with others, and even with ourselves.

We confess that we have not fully trusted in your love and have allowed fear to guide us. We have remained silent when we should have spoken and unresponsive in the face of injustice. We have failed to show the grace that you have so freely shown us. Hear us now as we bring our confession before you. (pause)

Gracious and forgiving God,

Through the ages, you have transformed sickness into health and death into life. Forgive us, and empower us to serve you by serving your world with compassion, courage, and generous spirits. Open our hearts to the power of your presence and your life within us, and make us people ready to proclaim your promises to the whole world through Jesus Christ, our healer. This we pray 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 625                      **Seek ye first**

### **Prayer for Understanding**

Gracious God,

As we hear your Word, open our hearts to your truth. Guide us to see the worth in every person and follow Christ’s way of compassion and justice. Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE PASSAGES**

**Responsive Psalm 125**

**Proverbs 22: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23; James 2: 1-5, 14-17; Mark 7: 24-37**

### **SERMON**

**Living Out God’s Love in a Divided Society**

All people are God’s precious children. We are all created in God’s love, by God’s love, and for God’s love. In particular, we Christians, as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ who showed us how to live together with others, are called to follow Jesus’ compassionate way of life. But do we really seek to build a society where all people feel precious, important, and valuable, whoever they are, rich or poor?

There is a harmful, serious sickness in the socio-economic system of capitalism, consumerism, and individualism in which we live. I want to argue that we are faithful disciples of money whether we think we are or not. Even though capitalism contributes to the prosperity of a society like Canada, it also produces those who feel abandoned, isolated, and lonely.

We feel we will have the freedom to live abundantly if only we have enough money because we can buy anything with money. With money, we feel free, independent, and autonomous. We are treated as valued persons. But if we don’t have money, there is no freedom, and we are not treated as welcome and important persons. The banks are very generous to those with a lot of money, but they don’t treat poor people in the same way. Poor people cannot borrow even ten dollars from the bank, even if they have loving and caring hearts. It is the reality in our society that money is much more powerful than God’s love and heart in people.

In a word, money leads to people being treated in unequal and inhuman ways. Money is an essential tool for buying products and services for everyday life. Think about your life in the supermarket, the car dealer, the grocery store, the gas station, the coffee shop, and the restaurant. We don’t talk about who we are in stores. We don’t try to form individual relationships in stores. We talk money and give and take goods and services. We get what we want with money. We mainly give and take products and money. We rarely talk with our hearts and build individual relationships. People in stores welcome those who have money as valuable customers. But those who don’t have money are not welcomed by people in the stores even though they have God’s

heart to care for and respect others as precious. Individual relationships do not happen in the world where money rules. Money breaks our relationships and makes us indifferent to one another.

Money has become like a god in our world, giving those who have it power and control over their lives and others. We live in a world where money is a fetish. Sadly, money has become more than a tool; it controls our lives and even our hearts, shaping how we treat one another. It treats us as precious and valuable if we have enough. Conversely, we are treated as unimportant, inferior, or worthless if we don't. Even when money seems to control everything around us, we can find hope in Christ's love, which values every person equally, no matter their wealth.

While money can buy almost anything, including influence over people, love operates differently. It cannot be bought or sold, but it is essential for building the kind of world God desires for us. The serious problem with this social sickness is that we don't form, build, and increase our individual relationships, and we feel isolated and lonely. What kind of healing ministry does Jesus Christ ask of us as the church in order to deal with this social sickness? As the church, we are called to explore new ministries to heal the sickness in our society that goes beyond feeding poor people because the system of capitalism, consumerism, and individualism produces people who are poor, abandoned, and isolated people.

In today's gospel reading, a foreign Gentile woman is desperate and comes to beg Jesus to heal her daughter. This outsider has not kept the Jewish law, but she does not let being a foreigner keep her from approaching Jesus to plead for her daughter. Love impels her to do the unthinkable. Her enormous hope and faith enable her to ask Jesus to heal her daughter. She falls to her knees at Jesus' feet, desperate. Jesus reaches out to her human needs, and his compassion meets her faith. She doesn't know anything about his religion. Her trust is in Jesus' compassionate love, and her faith helps her daughter heal. She makes a desperate leap of faith into the arms of Jesus. Her daughter is saved. Your presence here this morning is a reminder of the seriousness, the resourcefulness, and the risk of loving Jesus. God's love and mercy reach beyond religious boundaries, classes, and clans.

In the second story, a community's faith contributes to the healing of a deaf-mute. In faith, they seek Jesus and stand in front of him in hope. Where do we place our hope as Rockway and North Pelham congregations and as a part of the Niagara Region? Do we confidently live and demonstrate to others that God is our refuge and strength? How willing are we to be audacious in bringing the kingdom of love to one another? The faith community of Rockway and North Pelham can bring actional love to a society and world where people are hungry for God's love because they are poor, isolated and lonely, having been abandoned by the system.

Our frustration, grief, and compassion reveal the depths of our spirituality. Together with Jesus and with one another, we can move from a harmful, inhumane mode to acts of faith where the transformation of the world God loves can take place. Let us pray and think practically, in faith, courage and wisdom, about how we, as the living body of Christ, can offer and build a creative ministry to heal the sickness in our society.

Change doesn't come from the majority, where people are rich and happy with their money. Rather, change for God's kingdom of love and care comes from a minority of outside and powerless people with limited resources. We, as a small church, can make a big difference. Our outreach ministries for needy people have proved and taught us how to live together and work in faith for God's glory and mission. We can plant a seed of hope and faith with other churches in the Presbytery and our denomination to help heal the social sickness of isolation and loneliness that results from capitalism and consumerism because Jesus Christ will be with us as we live and work together with the same mind as Jesus Christ.

When we embody acts of compassion, such as sharing our food and resources with poor people, as we heard Proverbs recommend today, and when we work for justice in our flawed economic and political structures, we hasten the day when all people will enjoy the earth's resources equally. Such actions prove our discipleship and living faith.

Our actions express faith. Many tend to judge others, not by their relationships in God's love and heart, but by their possessions and according to their status in the community. Skin colour, social skills, and even physical appearance are measures you and I use to judge other people. James cautions us to show no deference to the rich and famous. We must not ignore those of meagre, ordinary means. All people are to find a welcome in our gatherings here and in our homes, workplaces and community. Once we acknowledge that we are weak, empty, and vulnerable, God can fill us with gifts and God's presence. The touch of Christ can open our minds to love and respect every person, just as God loves and respects every person.

We are reminded that we will reap what we sow and that God will bless those who share their resources, lives, and experiences with others. May God challenge us as the church, inspire us, and lead us into a creative ministry to heal our money-focused society for the sake of God's glory and God's mission, where together with others we might all feel we are precious children of God, sharing God's love, joy, and peace. Amen.

Hymn 229

**Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love**

**Invitation to the Offering**

**Doxology**

**Prayer of Dedication**

Generous God,

We dedicate these gifts to you, asking that they be used to build a world where every person is valued, regardless of wealth or status. Help us serve compassionately, sharing your love and justice with those who feel isolated or forgotten. Amen.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People**

Great God,

You are the source of all life, the source of all we need to be nourished in spirit and in truth. You water us when we call on You, feed us when we seek You, and speak to us through the many things that happen in and around our lives. You communicate through others and through the

sounds, smells, tastes, sights, and sensations of the world around us. Thank You for all of it. May gratitude fill our hearts and overflow to those around us.

O God, may gratitude fill our hearts even as we face tough times right now—whether it's our health, the health of someone we care deeply about, a relationship in our lives, our financial situation, a lack of focus, clarity, or purpose, or perhaps loneliness. Whatever blocks our sense of gratitude, surprise us with a renewed capacity to experience the fullness You have dreamed for us. Open doors for us and help us remain open to Your guidance.

Out of such gratitude and fullness, we pray for the world You so love—a world You call us to love as well. We acknowledge the brokenness we see around us, where money and power divide us, leaving many feeling isolated, abandoned, and forgotten. We pray for healing in our society so that we may work together to build a world where all are treated with dignity, regardless of their wealth or status. Guide us as Your church to be a source of hope, a place where love is shared and where everyone feels welcomed and valued.

Ukraine and the Palestinian Territories are in the news, and there are other places in the world facing great suffering, injustice, hate, and a desire for revenge, where innocent people are caught in between. We need Your mercy, grace, comfort, and consolation, O God. We need hope in Your justice and a persistent fire in those on the front lines—a fire that believes love can prevail and opens pathways toward peace or, at the very least, a cessation of hostilities that allows people to rebuild their lives and mourn their losses in peace. May it be so, O God, and we will keep praying.

Finally, we pray for those struggling with significant changes in their personal lives and households—downsizing, moving, financial challenges, health conditions, caring for others, or needing care themselves. Help us rebuild relationships or, if necessary, let them go.

We now take a moment of silence to name before You specific situations and people we carry deep in our hearts. (pause)

We pray for healing, O God. We pray for peace, whatever the outcome may be. We pray for refreshment, renewal of purpose, and empowerment to rise up again—or to rise up in a new direction. We pray through the Spirit of Jesus, moving in and through us. Amen.

Hymn 490

**God of grace and God of glory**

### **BENEDICTION**

May the love of God the Father, who created each of us as precious in His sight, the grace of Jesus Christ, who shows us the way of compassion and justice, and the power of the Holy Spirit, who leads us to heal and serve a world in need, be with you now and always, as you go forth to share God's love with all. 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 15, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

**\*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.

**\*Joint Session Meeting:** The joint session meeting of Rockway and North Pelham will be held on September 11 at 7:00 p.m. at Rockway. Rockway's session will meet at 6:30 p.m. the same day.

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

### Bible Studies!

- **Wednesday Bible Study:** Diane McMillan leads the study, which is currently on summer break but will resume on September 11 at 10:00 AM at North Pelham.
- **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.

**\*Interim Moderator Update:** Rev. Jacob's term as interim moderator for The Gathering Place in Port Colborne and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Welland will conclude on September 1. Beginning September 15, he will serve as interim moderator for Stamford Presbyterian Church in Niagara Falls until their new minister arrives.

**\*Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits. Reach Jacob at [jacoblee0501@gmail.com](mailto:jacoblee0501@gmail.com) or 289-213-2797.**