



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday November 3, 2024
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;

P: We will lift up joyous song and sing our praises.

L: Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it rejoice.

P: Let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord,

L: For God will come to judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

P: Let us join with all creation to praise the Lord!

Let us worship God.

Hymn # 328 – This is my Father's World

Prayers of Approach, Confession & The Lord's Prayer

God of the Northern Lights,

nothing outshines your magnitude and your glory.

You cast your light into this world of darkness

inviting us to see our lives awash with blessing.

We thank you for the crunch of dry and curled leaves underfoot,

for the naked outstretched branches reaching up in praise of their Creator,

for the furry chubby creatures preparing for their long nap.

You remind us that through the seasons

you bring us the renewal of life,

and the assurance that death is but a part of your plan

for rejuvenation and new beginnings.

God of the vast night sky,

you set before us a vision of rejuvenation and renewal,

yet we confess we stubbornly cling to the past.

We hold on to grudges and resentment.

We grumble about change even when we see the need for it.

We focus on loss and let new opportunities ordained by you

go unnoticed.

We resist making room for those who have faced discrimination in our community.

Forgive these old ways of thinking and acting.

Create in us hearts made new by your mercy and love.
We continue to pray in the words Jesus taught us:

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.

Assurance of Pardon

While the world judges in order to condemn,
God judges with justice, equity and mercy.
All things have been made new in Christ
and our sin is forgiven.
Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start.

Hymn # 500 Open my eyes Lord that I may see

Children of God Moment

Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God,
as we hear Your Word, open our hearts to Your truth. Teach us humility and guide us by Your wisdom so we may live in love and service. May Your Spirit lead us as we walk in Your ways. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

First Reading: Micah: 1: 1-5, 5: 2-5a, 6:6-8

The Gospel: Matthew 9: 1-13

SERMON Trending on the Earth

It was another hot day under the blistering sun,
when the booming voice of the merchant trader demanded:
“Who’s in charge here?”
This one was new to the game.
This guy with his load of expensive wares was a first-timer.
He was on his way from Damascus to Egypt
and he had just crossed into the port city of Capernaum.
Used to being in command, this merchant trader knows
there are always proper channels of authority to go through.
This is just part of his long day -
but the hustle comes first,
then the reward.
“Who’s the boss? Who’s in charge?” he yells,

“Which authority do I need to present myself to in order to move my business forward?”

My husband, Trevor and I spent most of the month of September in Ireland.

It was the first time we have ever been to that beautiful country.

At the end of our trip we tagged on 5 days to go to London, England to visit some friends.

Of course, that meant a lot of airports, security checks and customs to go through.

And you can be sure that every time we went through security, my husband was the one the guards pulled aside.

When we flew from Ireland to England we went to a new check point - one at which you could claim

your VAT tax, a return on any tax we spent on items over 100 Euros, like Aran sweaters, and Donegal tweed blankets.

We found the VAT counter in the Dublin Airport, and presented our carefully filled out paperwork including verified receipts.

A very officious woman, whose name tag read Theresa, scanned our documents closely.

Then she said, it says on your form that you are not leaving the European Union.

“Oh no,” we said, “We’re just flying to London to visit friends.”

“Then you are leaving”, she said in a gruff voice.

To our confused expressions she said one word: “Brexit!”

“Ohhhhh, yeah

We, Canadians read about that but the reality didn’t really register.’

With a swoop of her pen and the firm pound of her stamp

Theresa took our documents and sent us to catch our flight.

What we need to know still today, is: “Who is in charge?”

and what it is we need to present to the authorities?

In this situation - in the big picture -

the European Union was in charge but in the small picture,

the person processing us through, was a woman whose name tag says, “Theresa”.

It was another hot day under the blistering sun, in the trading village of Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilea when the booming voice of the merchant trader demanded: “Who’s in charge here?”

A man was sitting at one of the open custom’s stations that day and his name tag said, “Matthew”.

Of course, Matthew worked for the Roman Empire, collecting taxes for Herod Antipas

on goods carried through this trading port.

He did not work alone,

for in fact this was such a busy commercial route

that there were many men employed in the same profession.
Tax collectors came from good homes,
were educated to read and do math,
and often could speak more than one language.
Their work stations were lined up along the shore so that every docking merchant had to go
through them
in order to continue on their way,
and onto their next stop.
They were well dressed, they had comfortable lives
and they were in charge.
If you wanted to go on, you had to go through them.
If you couldn't pay, you couldn't pass.
One Biblical commentator wrote:
"The tax collector made a sizable living.
But part of his pay was the derision, disgust
and isolation of his community.
In rigid defiance, he plodded through the condemning faces,
the whispers, the threats and rage,
multiplying his wealth and the emptiness of his soul."
Not far off in the same village was a beautiful big temple,
build so securely and ornately
that to this day one can walk through its stone foundation
and under its columns.
There was a young man there, barely more than a boy,
whose legs did not work.
Those legs could not carry him to school or to work,
or out onto a dance floor.
His potential to live a productive, happy and whole life
was drastically reduced by his paralysis.
We are not told how it happened
or at what age it happened.
All we know is that this young man had friends
who put a lot of effort into going
to that fancy ornate temple ... to see Jesus.
Now everyone knew who the bosses of the temple were.
In fact, the whole hierarchy was on display,
wearing the proper robes, and hats, and tassels.
And they all stood in the right places,
never in the wrong places -
so as not to besmirch their pure and holy essence.
This is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew
that Jesus comes into direct confrontation with the hierarchy;
the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.
They are, after all, the experts on the scrolls and the Torah.

But these young men have walked their friend on the stretcher
right past the flowy robes and big hats and headed straight to Jesus.
Everyone knew Jesus in Capernaum by the way.
Jesus grew up in this town.
They took their friend boldly to Jesus who said;
“Take heart son; your sins are forgiven.
Get up, take your mat and go home.”
Now be careful here.
Try not to stare too long and hard
at what fancy chiropractic moves
Jesus made on this young guy’s back and legs.
If that is where we are focused we have just missed
all the important parts of this story.
Are we listening to what is happening at that moment?
The people who thought they were in charge of all things holy,
just watched Jesus forgive the young man’s sin!
By the way, every single ailment, disease or life challenge
was unquestionably linked to sin in those times.
They hadn’t figured out by looking under microscopes
and into petri dishes that chemicals leaching into clean lakes,
and gasoline exhaust belching into clear skies,
and deforestation, and global warming, and irresponsible wastage of water,
are at the root of so many illness.....
.....not sin..... right?
Essentially these young men walked right on by the proper, infrastructure of order, control and
authority. They did not stop at the proper booth
and pay the proper levy and get the proper stamp!
How dare they not follow the rules!!
If you wanted to go on, you had to go through the system.
If you couldn’t pay, you couldn’t pass.
Did we hear what Jesus said?
“Get up, take your mat and go home”.
“Then the man got up, and went home.”
As Jesus went on from there he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at a tax collector’s booth.
“Follow me,” he told him
And Matthew got up and followed him.
For that, those in positions of worldly authority declared;
“This fellow is blaspheming!”
Blasphemy in Hebrew is not an easy word to translate.
In one way it means to assume one is on an elevated level above humankind,
being like, God or making oneself out as God.
This is what the religious elite were accusing Jesus of
in our scripture today.
It was also the final verdict for him in the courts of Pontius Pilate;

Blasphemy.

But there is another deeper meaning

to the Biblical word for blasphemy and that is neglecting God, not caring about God, actions of a heart that do not love God.

The system, the human-made system did not love that paralysed young man.

If he wanted to go on, he had to go through the system.

If he couldn't pay for his sins, he couldn't pass beyond them.

But Jesus saw the faith and hope in the eyes of that young man and his friends.

The Pharisees saw the failures.

Jesus saw the need and said, "Get up".

Matthew was also stuck, paralysed in a system, that hurt others and left him empty inside.

Herod Antipas and the Roman overloads saw a way to get rich, and get more power.

Jesus saw Matthew's need and said, "Get up and follow me".

And he did.

In the courts of the ruling established religious authority Jesus was accused of blasphemy:
the action of a heart that does not love God.

In the courts of the established national authority Jesus was convicted of blasphemy:
the action of a heart that does not love God.

And yet: "Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world
and go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end." John 13:1

The last authority on earth to go through was death, and Jesus went there for the love of God
and the love of God's people.

To go on for us, meant that Jesus had to go through death.

Jesus paid the price for us.

So, Who's in charge here?

Who's in charge of our hearts?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

Born of the Virgin Mary

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died and was buried;

He descended to the dead.

On the third day

he rose again.

We are not, none of us, the authority,
God is.

We are not the gatekeepers, the accusers, the whistleblowers,
the judges, the bosses, the deserving.

"Look!" said Micah,

The Lord is coming from his dwelling place;

He comes down and treads on the ... earth."

We are the ones though, who may choose the actions of our hearts in ways that love God and love others .

“He has shown you, O Mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly,

To love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God. Amen

Hymn #706 Come let us sing

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Steadfast God,

we enjoy your loving kindness day by day.

We offer our gifts in gratitude for what we have received from your love.

Bless our gifts and our time so that your goodness will touch many lives in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

God of our past and our future,

God of healing and hope,

We come before you with grateful hearts

trusting that you walk with us

through all the times of our lives.

We give you thanks for all the benefits we share

in a nation with many resources and many opportunities.

Yet we remember before you those who do not have enough
and cannot see their way forward.

We remember before you those living with hunger

and communities struggling with the impact of fire and storm,

earthquake and famine. ...

Creator of the Cosmos,

soften the ground of our being

and attune our consciousness to your divine energies for truth,
compassion and justice in the world.

May our partnerships from east to west and north and south

deepen as we advocate for justice and move toward a future

where human rights and environmental care

shape all our relationships.

Lord we pray now for relief from the anguish and shock and unimaginable grief
of the many individuals caught up in war right now.

The news reports are heart breaking for us who feel helpless.

We pray for these atrocities to stop.
We pray for terrorism to stop.
We pray for bombs to stop.
We pray for peace to be restored so children can be children
and grandparents can be grandparents.
Help us trust in your grace for today and tomorrow.
We pray for the work of healing and reconciliation
engaging indigenous communities with other citizens in this land.
Open hearts in mutual understanding and provide opportunities for us to show we care.
We pray for those who have come to Canada,
fleeing violence and deprivation in their homelands.
Provide comfort and support through the generosity of neighbours
and protect newcomers from misunderstanding and discrimination.
God of time beyond our imagining,
We give you thanks for all we learn through scientific investigation
that stretches us to reimagine your creation in its vast mystery and beauty.
Thank you for increasing insight in medical science
and the possibilities it adds to your gifts of hope and healing.
We pray for all those who work in health care in this stressful time,
for patients waiting for treatment
and for those whose conditions find no relief.
Bless them with your Spirit of courage and comfort.
In silence, we remember before you those for whom we have special concern this day: (silence)
God of healing and hope,
Jesus walks with us day by day to see us through every challenge,
and so we pray in his name, Amen

Hymn # 699 All the way my Saviour leads me

BENEDICTION

May the grace of Christ be with you,
the love of God surround you,
and the Holy Spirit walk with you,
now and forever.

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace

Postlude

<p>We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional Territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe</p>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We welcome Rev. Anita Van Nest and thank her for leading us in worship

Next Sunday Service, November 10, at 10:00 am at Rockway

***Thanks to the pop-up choir who sang on Anniversary Sunday! We are going to have another one for the Christmas benefit concert on November 23rd. All are invited to come to 3 practices to prepare for this on the following dates at North Pelham church. Thursday November 7th, Thursday November 14th and Friday November 22nd. All practices will be at 7:00 and will run for about 1 hour. Please let Jessica know if you wish to participate or have any further questions.**

***The RPCW will meet on Wednesday, November 6, at 1:30 PM at the church**

***Joint Session Meeting:** The Session meeting for Rockway and North Pelham will be held on November 13 at Rockway, starting at 7:00 PM.

***Willing Workers Bazaar** - Saturday November 16 from 10 am – 1 pm. This is also pick up day anyone who ordered meat pies.

***Presbytery Meeting:** The Presbytery meeting will be held on November 20 at Scottlea Presbyterian Church, starting at 7:00 PM.

***Christmas Joy Benefit Concert, Saturday, November 23 | 2:00 PM, First Presbyterian Church, North Pelham:** Join us for an afternoon of festive Christmas carols! A free-will offering will support the Open Arms Mission of Welland, helping those in need. Come and share the joy of the season through music and

***Wednesday Bible Study:** Diane McMillan leads this group at North Pelham every Wednesday at 10:00 AM.

***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 jacoble0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797.**