



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Reign of Christ Sunday, November 24, 2024
Worship at Home

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CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Jesus says, “My kingdom is not from this world... I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:36-37)

P: We come to be the people of Christ’s kingdom.

L: The King of kings calls us to follow God’s kingdom grounded in love and compassion.

P: We have come to be God’s people, doing God’s will in the world God loves.

P: Let us worship God together in truth and in spirit!

Hymn 350 **To God be the glory**

Prayers of Approach and Confession

How awesome it is to be here, O God,
breathing deeply, our hearts beating, our spirits reaching out to You. Quiet our busy minds, calm our restless bodies, and open our senses to Your presence among us. Awaken within us the spiritual awareness to discern Your will and feel Your love.

How awesome it is to be here in this moment,
listening for Your voice, seeking the truth of Your Kingdom and will, revealed to us through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Eternal God, You call us to love: to love You, to love our neighbors, and to love ourselves. Jesus taught that true power lies in humble service and that Your reign is one of peace, compassion, and hope. We come to You today with all that we carry.

Some of us are weary, burdened by stress, overwhelmed by responsibilities, and fearful of what lies ahead. We especially lift up students navigating reports, exams, and the pressures of learning. Strengthen them, O God, and remind them they are never alone in their journey.

Others are on the threshold of new opportunities, but we are hesitant, afraid of failing those who trust in us or falling back into patterns we long to break.

Some of us come guarded, unsure of how to open our hearts fully. Yet we know confession means inviting You into our deepest places: our fears and wounds, our insecurities and hopes.

You know us completely, O God, and still, we choose to open ourselves to You, asking You to walk beside us and guide us on our journey. Hear us now in the silence as we lay our hearts before You...(pause)

Come and meet us, O God.

Meet us in our struggles: in illness, in strained relationships, in the uncertainty of our work, studies, health, or finances. Meet us in our fear and pain, and fill us with Your hope. Help us to trust in Your love, to rest in Your peace, and to follow You more faithfully. With open hearts and spirits, we now pray as Jesus taught us, 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 475

I am the church! You are the church!

Children of God Moment

Prayer for Understanding

Eternal God,

As we turn to Your Word, open our hearts and minds to the truth of Your kingdom, where love, justice, and compassion reign. Guide us by Your Spirit to hear, understand, and live according to Your will. May we boldly pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 132:1-12

The Gospel John 18: 33-37

Sermon

“Thy Kingdom Come”

This Sunday is Reign of Christ Sunday, the last of this church year. What kind of picture does the word “King” in today’s gospel text bring to mind for you today?

The context of the reading is that Pontius Pilate has been appointed governor of Judaea by the Roman Emperor Tiberius. As the representative of the Empire he rules as a bureaucrat to ensure satisfactory tax revenues are collected for Rome. Today’s reading takes place during the Jewish Passover. To avoid unrest among the many people visiting Jerusalem for Passover, Pilate’s garrison is on standby. Jesus, an itinerant preacher from Galilee, has been condemned and rejected by the Jewish religious court and handed over to Pilate on the trumped-up charge that he is claiming to be “king of the Jews.” Pilate is worried about the political overtones of this charge. Is Jesus on a collision course of challenging Caesar’s rule? The title on the cross over Jesus’ head, King of the Jews (Jn 19:19), suggests Pilate has a real fear of an insurrection.

The narrative begins in verse 33 with Pilate, a politician, asking, Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus’ responds: “My kingdom is not from here” (v.36). Jesus refuses to affirm himself in political terms. This means Jesus is not a political king. Jesus is not a builder of Utopia; he is not one who will change this world into a perfect human society. He does not offer any certainty that this world will be peaceful, kind, and loving. His mission is to change human hearts, in order to establish a peaceful, just, and caring society that cares for the vulnerable, the sick, the lonely, and the forgotten. Injustice, violence, suffering, and dishonesty are to be the target of his followers’ actions and efforts. To rid the whole world of poverty, prejudice, and hatred requires a caring and loving commitment to love God and all God’s children.

What might a Utopia look like? It would do away with suffering and illness; it would stamp out violence and dishonesty; it would cure poverty and starvation; it would rid the world of prejudice and enmity; it would require all people to be caring and loving. Now when Jesus denies that he is a king of this world, I believe he means that none of these conditions are a direct function of his kingship. So we should not look for him to be an almighty, mythical, absolute monarch.

Jesus gives no orders, gathers no taxes, and shows no interest in getting to know the rich and influential. He invites allegiance and obedience. He dispels the popular notion that he will be a political leader who will free the Jews from Roman rule and oppression. Jesus’ answer to Pilate thus shows that his kingdom is not political or social, it is instead spiritual and eternal. The love of God reigns in the kingdom of Jesus and Jesus clearly tells Pilate that, if his kingdom were a political one, his followers would be working to free him.

In verse 37, Pilate again says, “So, you are a king,” Jesus agrees and answers, “I came into the world to testify to the truth.” This answer redefines the words “messiah” and “king” to mean one who comes with a purpose from God to serve and give his life for others. Everyone who belongs to God listens to God’s voice and does God’s will in seeking justice and resisting evil.

In our human history, the world’s kingdoms, or empires, which are based on violence and manipulation, have come and gone and there have been many of them. There has been the Greek Empire; the Roman Empire; and the French Empire; there have been Spanish, Soviet, British, and Aztec Empires; there have been Chinese and Korean Dynasties; and there have been Japanese, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

The kingdom of Jesus, which is the reign of God in human hearts and minds, is rooted in God’s love, in non-violence, forgiveness, healing, mutual respect, trust, and peace. This kingdom of love is eternal because God created and is creating us and others by grace. When every human kingdom has collapsed and human history is finished, Christ’s kingdom will endure. As we journey on our pilgrim way, many voices compete for our allegiance. Whatever situations we find ourselves in, earthly authority does not have the last word for Christians. Our citizenship and allegiance challenge us to risk all for the sake of all others and to follow Jesus’ attitudes and behaviours in this world. Jesus came, John reminds us, to give us all eternal life. To become a part of what Paul calls a new humanity is to struggle against the trials of living together in a broken, sinful world.

The kingdom of Christ is to be deeply rooted in our hearts, minds, and behaviours. We are called to build Christ's kingdom in love, by love, and for love, and to embody the word of God in an unbelieving world. This kingdom of Jesus is a place, a mind, and a heart where we love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength, and where we love our neighbours as ourselves. This kingdom of Jesus involves working for justice, loving the unloved, forgiving the sinful, and making peace with those who hate us. Jesus asks us to commit ourselves to this truth, to recognize his kingship over us and over the world God loves.

We all have human egos to protect and satisfy, and it is through these that we tend to identify ourselves and discover meaning and value in life. We tend to trust in the power of money, knowledge, fame, and recognition from others. We tend to praise the power of beauty, youth, pleasure, and the things that others don't have. Perhaps we fear what it means to truly follow such a King in the kingdom of love. Like Pilate, many keep the peace and protect themselves without doing what they know is God's will for them and others. It is never easy to follow Jesus' lifestyle and mission. We need to constantly encourage one another and together build a world that is more just, peaceful, and loving than it is today.

Jesus, our good shepherd, leads us beside still waters and prepares a banquet for us in the presence of our enemies even as we walk through the valley of death and the difficult times of our daily lives.

May you and I continue to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Be assured that God continues to inspire, challenge, and guide us to put the truth in the Kingdom of Christ into practice in daily life so that the reign of God in love comes in family, church, community, and the whole world. Amen.

Hymn 274

Crown him with many crowns

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God,

You call us from every tribe, language, people, and nation to share in Your everlasting kingdom of love. Bless these gifts we offer, that they may extend Your blessing to others. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Eternal and loving God,

Thank you, O God, for the genuine love you pour into us, through your Son Jesus Christ, through the world around us, and through the people in our lives. The blessings are too numerous to count. We give you thanks for giving us reason and purpose to love, in order to establish your kingdom of love in our hearts, minds, and spirits, and in the world around us. Thank you for giving us the desire to bless others as we have been blessed.

Gracious God, You teach us your kingdom of love, where not only we, but everyone, is precious in your sight. Encourage us to care for one another, to pray for one another, to support one another, and to love one another.

May such love also pour out in our prayers for our world and its people whom you love. In this time, when our world spirals from crisis to crisis, filling us with fear and uncertainty, we recognize how deeply we need the bonds of love and communal connection. May love never become a casualty of fear, O God, and may faith and hope not fade in our uncertainty. Grant us strength in compassion and endurance in the face of challenges beyond our control. Remind us that we share our burdens with our fellow humans and all life on this fragile planet, Earth.

We hold in our hearts those in grief, loss, or pain. In the midst of injustices, wars, and suffering, we pray for peace. We lift up Palestinians, Jewish hostages, refugees, and all those caught in the crossfire of violence. May we see the equal worth of every life, friend or foe, through Your eyes of love.

O God, we lift before You those struggling financially, those facing health challenges, and those searching for purpose and direction. Many are burning out from caring too much, while others suffer from a lack of support. Open our hearts to see the humanity in one another, for we are all made in Your image.

May we grow in love, shedding hardness and numbness caused by life's difficulties. Make us resilient, compassionate, and courageous, shining Your light for others and nurturing our own inner light.

Finally, we lift up Fran Johnson as she settles into her new home in Beamsville. Surround her with your comfort, and may she feel the love and support of her church family through cards, visits, and prayers. We also pray for Roy, who is struggling with the difficulty of their separation. Lord, ease his frustration and grant him strength as he navigates this new chapter of living alone and finding ways to care for Fran from a distance.

We also lift up Catharine Tirpko, who has recently moved into a nursing home. Lord, comfort her as she adjusts to this change, and bring healing to her body as she faces illness in this new place. May she feel your presence and the warmth of your love during this difficult time. We pray for both Fran and Roy, and for Catharine, asking for your peace to fill their hearts and your strength to sustain them through these challenges.

We now bring our prayers of concern for those in our families and church families who are facing difficult times, times of pain and grief, and we name those known to us in the silence of our hearts. (pause)

We pray for healing, new life, and peace grounded in Your loving embrace, trusting in Your infinite love and grace. We ask all this in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to love. Amen.

BENEDICTION

May the love of God the Creator, who calls us to embody the kingdom of love, the grace of Jesus Christ, the King, who leads us in truth and justice, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to build a world of peace and compassion, be with you now and always.

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, December 1, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

***Prayers and Support for Fran Johnson:** Fran Johnson has moved to Long-Term Care at 5050 Hillside Dr, Room 504N, Beamsville, ON L3J 2A7. She would welcome your prayers, cards, and visits.

***Mitten Tree Donations for Community Care:** The Mitten Tree is set up at Rockway and will be available again on December 8 to collect mittens, hats, scarves, socks, and other warm items for Community Care of West Niagara. Donations can also be brought to North Pelham on December 1 to be delivered to Rockway. Thank you for sharing warmth this season!

***Holy Communion and Christmas Brunch:** We will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion on December 8, followed by a festive Christmas Brunch. Everyone is invited!

***Christmas Solace Service:** If you're feeling the weight of loss, stress, or uncertainty this Christmas, we invite you to join us for a time of quiet reflection and hope. Please come to our Christmas Solace Service on Wednesday, December 18, at 2:00 pm at North Pelham. Together, we'll share music, prayers, and words of comfort, seeking light and peace in difficult times. You are not alone.

***Christmas Eve Candlelight Service:** Join us for a special Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on December 24 at 4:00 pm at Rockway, where we will celebrate the birth of Christ and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We look forward to sharing this beautiful evening with you!

***Wednesday Bible Study:** Diane McMillan leads this group at NP every Wednesday at 10 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 him at jacoble0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797.**