



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
3rd Sunday after the Epiphany, January 19, 2025
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: “Like a young man taking a virgin as his bride, He who formed you will marry you. As a groom is delighted with his bride, so your God will delight in you.” (Isaiah 62:5)

P: We worship a God who is tender and loving, a God who seeks us out for intimate relationships.

L: We worship a God who turns water into wine, bringing abundance and joy to our lives.

P: Let us worship God together, with hearts open to His transforming love!

Hymn 457 **Now thank we all our God**

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord’s Prayer

Tender God,

We come before you as people who long to be our best. Yet, O God, we confess that too often, what we say, think, and do falls short of our best—and sometimes feels like the worst.

How is it, O God, that we are so easily caught, triggered, pushed, or pulled in ways that make us react in ways that hurt others, putting them down or pushing them away? How is it that we debase our humanity—created in your image and likeness? Hear us now, O God, as we bring our personal confessions to you in the silence of our hearts. (Pause)

Forgive us, O God, for how we treat those we love. Forgive us for how we treat those we find difficult to love. Forgive us for being so absorbed in our own lives that we leave little room in our hearts to prayerfully and tearfully consider the pain and suffering of the world around us.

Forgive us for living on this Earth as though it were merely a resource, rather than a sacred gift—a precious extension of our own humanity, entrusted to us to care for and treasure. Forgive us, too, for thinking of ourselves as unworthy or inadequate to be loved by you and by others.

Renew us, O God. May we embrace your call to us in this moment—to experience the renewal of our spirits as we worship to meet you in this hour and to leave this place ready to witness to your Spirit in the wider world. In Jesus’ name, who taught us to pray, 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 373 Jesus loves me, this I know

Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God,
 as we reflect on Your Word, open our hearts to embrace the truth of Your **transforming love**.
 Help us to see Your abundant grace at work in our lives and inspire us to share that love with
 others. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Psalm 36: 5-10; Isaiah 62:1-5

John: 2: 1-11

SERMON God's Transforming Love: From Water to Wine

My text this morning is from the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 2, verses 4 and 7: “Jesus said to his mother, ‘What concern is that to you and to me?’ And later, ‘Fill the jars with water.’”

How did you imagine God when you were a child? What images of God come to mind now?
 How did you describe God then? What kind of God do you believe in now?

As a child, I thought of God as someone completely different from me. I imagined God as a mighty protector, like a strong warrior who could shield me from harm. I felt small and weak, but God was powerful and invincible. I also thought God judged and punished people based on their actions, much like my parents did when I misbehaved. My childhood image of God reflected the human relationships I experienced: protective and strong, yet also a judge. Over time, I realized these ideas were incomplete and even misleading. Jesus, through his teachings and actions, showed us a very different image of God—one rooted in love, grace, and compassion.

The Bible presents many images of God, but for Christians, Jesus is the clearest and most complete picture of who God is. As we celebrated Christmas, the birth of Jesus reminded us that God became one of us—fully human yet fully divine. Jesus experienced anger, sadness, and even physical suffering, just as we do. Through his life, we see that God is not distant or unapproachable. Instead, God understands our struggles and walks with us through them.

The prophet Isaiah describes God as Israel's bridegroom, promising to restore a broken relationship. Israel had suffered under foreign invaders who destroyed homes, killed loved ones, and took many into exile. Isaiah's words offered hope, reminding Israel that God's love for them was steadfast. This love wasn't abstract but deeply personal, much like the love between a bride and groom.

In our Gospel reading, we see this love in action at the wedding in Cana. Jesus' mother informs him that the wine has run out, a situation that would have caused great embarrassment for the hosts. At first, Jesus responds, "What concern is that to you and to me?" Yet, he doesn't stop there. He instructs the servants to fill the jars with water, and the water is miraculously turned into wine. This first miracle of Jesus reveals something profound about God: God cares about the details of our lives, even the seemingly small or insignificant ones.

Jesus' interaction with his mother also shows us something important about human relationships. Mary trusts Jesus to handle the situation, and Jesus responds with compassion and action. This is an example of how love works in our relationships with one another. Love is not about grand gestures alone but also about meeting the needs of others in everyday moments.

As we journey through life, we are invited to reflect God's love in our relationships. Just as Jesus turned water into wine, we are called to transform ordinary moments into opportunities for kindness, generosity, and compassion. When we do this, we become instruments of God's grace in the world.

Isaiah's vision of God as a bridegroom reminds us that God desires a deep, personal relationship with each of us. This relationship is not about fear or judgment but about love and trust. God rejoices over us, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. This imagery speaks to the joy and intimacy that God longs to share with us.

In Jesus, we see that God's love is not confined to specific places or people. It is universal, extending to everyone regardless of their background or circumstances. Jesus' miracles, teachings, and interactions with people from all walks of life demonstrate this inclusive love. He heals the sick, welcomes the outcasts, and forgives sinners, showing us that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Our Gospel story also reminds us that God works through ordinary people and situations. The servants at the wedding played a crucial role in the miracle. They followed Jesus' instructions, even though they didn't fully understand what he was doing. Similarly, we are called to trust God and act in faith, even when we don't see the whole picture. Through our obedience and faithfulness, God can bring about transformation in our lives and the lives of others.

The wedding at Cana also points to the abundance of God's blessings. The wine that Jesus provided was not only plentiful but also of the highest quality. This abundance reflects the generosity of God's love. God doesn't just meet our needs; God exceeds them, offering us life in all its fullness. As we experience this love, we are called to share it with others, creating a ripple effect of grace and generosity.

Through Jesus' life, we see that God is not far away or unapproachable but deeply involved in our daily lives. God celebrates our joys, shares in our struggles, and offers unwavering love in every moment. This is Emmanuel—"God with us"—a God who walks alongside us, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary.

To worship God is to participate in this divine love. When we gather for worship, pray, and serve others, we reflect the image of God in our lives. Worship is not just about singing hymns or listening to sermons; it is about being transformed by God's love and allowing that love to shape how we live and interact with others. It is in these acts of love and service that we become more fully human, more fully the people God created us to be.

However, living in God's love requires us to let go of attitudes and behaviors that distort the divine image within us. Selfishness, envy, bitterness, and judgmentalism have no place in the kingdom of God. Instead, we are called to embody qualities like humility, kindness, and forgiveness. These virtues are not just moral ideals; they are reflections of God's character.

As we navigate our relationships and responsibilities, we can find inspiration in Jesus' example. He navigated the complexities of human relationships with grace and compassion, always seeking to do God's will. Whether he was celebrating at a wedding, comforting the grieving, or challenging injustice, Jesus demonstrated what it means to live a life rooted in love.

Our faith journey is not one we undertake alone. God works through community, bringing people into our lives to support and encourage us. At the same time, God calls us to be that support for others. In our families, workplaces, schools, and communities, we have opportunities to reflect God's love and make a difference in the lives of those around us.

God's love is also revealed in creation, in the beauty of nature, music, art, and poetry. These gifts remind us of the wonder and mystery of God. They invite us to pause, reflect, and give thanks for the blessings in our lives. As we cultivate gratitude, we become more attuned to God's presence and more open to the ways God is at work in us and the world.

Ultimately, our relationship with God shapes how we see ourselves and others. When we understand that we are loved unconditionally by God, we can begin to see others through the lens of that same love. This perspective transforms our interactions, fostering compassion, understanding, and reconciliation.

The story of the wedding at Cana invites us to trust in God's abundance, to embrace God's love, and to share that love with the world. May we, like the servants who filled the jars with water, act in faith and be open to the miraculous ways God works in and through us. And may we, like Mary, trust in God's ability to provide and transform, even in the most unexpected circumstances.

As we go forth, let us remember that God's love is the foundation of our lives and the source of our hope. This love calls us to be agents of change, bearers of light, and witnesses to the transformative power of grace. In all that we do, may we reflect the heart of God and bring glory to God's name. Amen.

Hymn 746 What a friend we have in Jesus

Invitation to the offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, we bring these gifts as a reflection of Your transforming love in our lives. Bless and use them to bring hope, joy, and renewal to others, as You have abundantly blessed us. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Gracious and loving God,

We come before You with hearts full of gratitude for Your steadfast love and grace, poured out abundantly into our lives. Thank You for the gift of Jesus Christ, who reveals Your transforming love, showing us how to live with compassion, generosity, and kindness. We give thanks for Your presence in our lives, a constant source of hope and strength, and for the ways You call us to reflect Your love in the world around us.

Lord, we lift up to You, the families who are walking through the valley of grief. We ask for Your tender mercy to surround James Eybel, Luana Ray, Kathy Keenan, and Holly as they mourn the loss of their beloved family members. In their sorrow, may they experience Your comforting presence and find strength in Your boundless love. Wrap them in Your arms of grace and bring them peace that passes all understanding.

We also remember all those in our world who suffer from loss, pain, or hardship. May Your love be a balm to their wounds, and may Your Spirit guide us to be agents of healing, justice, and compassion. Help us to reflect Your light in the darkness, and to offer hope to those who need it most.

And now, in the silence of our hearts, we lift up to You our personal prayers for those we love, for those who are in need of Your grace, mercy, and help. (pause)

We trust that You hear every word spoken and unspoken and that You are with us, guiding us and loving us through all things. We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Comforter. Amen.

Hymn 371 Love divine, all loves excelling

BENEDICTION

May the transforming love of God the Creator fill your hearts with joy, the grace of Jesus Christ inspire you to share abundantly, and the power of the Holy Spirit guide you to reflect God's light in the world. Amen.

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace

Postlude

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***Worship on Sunday, January 26, at North Pelham**

***In Loving Memory of Valerie Ray:** Valerie's burial service was held on January 16 at North Pelham Cemetery. Please keep her bereaved family, especially James Eybel and Luana Ray, in your prayers as they grieve the loss of their beloved Valerie. May they find comfort and strength in God's love.

***Quilting** Tuesdays at North Pelham at 9:00 am

***Wednesday Bible Study** meets at 10:00 am at North Pelham

***Outreach - Thursday Walking:** Join our Wellness Walk & Coffee Chat! Meet at Canada Games Park at 9:30 a.m. for the walk, followed by a joyful coffee chat at Rockway at 10:45 a.m.

***Out of the Cold Meal Service:** Rockway will serve hot meals to those in need at Knox Presbyterian Church, St. Catharines, on February 14 at 6:00 pm as part of the Out of the Cold program.

***Annual Congregational Meetings for 2025:** Rockway's Annual Congregational Meeting will be on March 2, and North Pelham's on March 9, both following the service.

***Connect with your Minister Jacob** at jacoblee0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797 for spiritual support, discussions, or getting acquainted.

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