



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
1st Sunday in Lent, March 9, 2025
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP (provided by Presbyterian World Service and Development)

L: In the wilderness, Jesus was tempted to abandon God

P: for the false hopes of indulgence, arrogance and certainty.

L: During our Lenten journey, we recognize we too are tempted

P: to turn aside from seeking only God and God's ways.

L: As we worship, may we celebrate all the bounty of God's grace

P: and always return with mindfulness and gratitude to God.

Hymn 651 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord's Prayer

We approach you in prayer, O God, as creatures of desire. We want things; we need things, not just food, clothing, and shelter, but love, understanding, friendship, and community. We seek recognition, encouragement, and support in times of struggle and joy in times of success.

Yet, despite the many good things we receive, we often feel restless, dissatisfied, or unfulfilled. Why do we sometimes struggle with imbalance—between what we want and what we have? Why do despair, anger, resentment, envy, and jealousy take hold of our hearts and refuse to let go?

In this moment of silence, we name before you the things that pull us away from your peace.
 (silence)

Loving God, as we bring these burdens before you, we trust that your Spirit is at work within us—separating who we truly are from the things that weigh us down. Wash through us, cleanse us, renew us, and restore our sense of identity in you.

Give us faith. Give us hope. Give us greater love.

We offer this prayer 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

God of truth and wisdom, open our hearts and minds to your Word. Shape our desires to seek what is good, what is true, and what is of You. By your Spirit, guide us away from temptation and toward the fullness of life in Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES Responsive Psalm 32; Genesis 3: 1-7; Matthew 4: 1-11

SERMON The Desire That Leads to Life

Desire is the human emotion of longing for a person, object, or outcome. British philosopher, Bertrand Russell once said that “All human activity is prompted by desire.” When we desire something or someone, our sense of longing is excited by the thought of that item or person. And we seek to take actions to obtain our goal.

What do we actually need to live? Our necessities for daily life are few and simple, such as food, water, air, shelter, and clothes. But our wants are many, maybe even endless: a happy family, safety, convenience, success, better health, fun, affection... We humans are made as creatures of desire. Desire is the key to a meaningful, successful, and satisfactory life. But desire also makes us vulnerable. Just as we are vulnerable physically, based on the quantity and quality of food and drink available to us, we are vulnerable spiritually, based on whether our desires are fulfilled or not. We need fulfillment. Yet we can be taken advantage of, manipulated, exploited and deceived because of our needs. When it comes to the spiritual area, such deception happens through our thoughts as much as our emotions. We get confused about what we want and sometimes fail to experience satisfaction even when we get what we think we want. The bible summarizes that situation with the word “Sin.”

The bad side of desire leads to harm and hurt for others and eventually damage to ourselves. It causes us to miss the mark. We get so distorted in our desires that we see others as competitors, threatening what we want. And when we experience frustration in our desires, we are left angry, defeated, envious, miserable, and we blame others, ourselves, life, and God.

In today’s gospel reading, the human Jesus offers a solution to the problems of desire. He himself begins his public ministry with strong desires and tries to figure out the next steps in his vocation. Yet there are dangers in his desire in the form of temptations.

There are three basic temptations of the human Jesus to which we humans are also vulnerable. The first temptation is bread in the form of food. Bread signifies the basic sustenance we need in order to live every day. Jesus is enticed by the devil at a time when he is particularly vulnerable, having been in the desert a long time without eating. Most of us feel insecure about what we

have, and are afraid of scarcity. We try to get what we can and push other people out of the way. We see others not as fellow companions on the journey but as competitors for scarce resources. In Jesus' case, he is tempted to use his power to secure what he needs for himself. According to the story, the devil knows that Jesus has the ability to turn even stones into bread.

Yet Jesus is in the wilderness to learn something we all need to learn in order to live life in the way God intends us to do. At the end of the day, we have to trust that we will get what we need and that it will be enough. And further, we have to trust that if we do the right thing and care for others and not just ourselves, even if it seems there is not enough, we will be satisfied in a way that is more fulfilling than if we had all the bread and security in the world.

Based on such faith, Jesus rejects the devil, saying instead that: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (v.4)

In the story of Adam and Eve, who represent all humanity, the pair choose their own desires rather than faith in God. But they become more anxious and afraid instead of more secure. This is symbolized by their awareness of being naked. Focusing on our own self-centered desire only shows them (and us) how powerless we are to control the things that make for earthly security.

The second temptation of Jesus is about security also, and about being in control. Jesus has resources few of us have. He is seduced by the devil to use them to demonstrate that nothing bad can happen to him. Jesus can choose not to rock the boat or challenge the systems in place. Divine protection can mean getting the security he needs around him. It's the passion or obsession with feeling safe, secure, and protected, the obsessive need to be in control. Fear makes us passionate in all kinds of directions, and we focus on eliminating risks at all costs.

But Jesus rejects this direction firmly. He doesn't put God to the test to see whether he will be safe and secure. His life will not be about playing it safe. His holy desire will take him in a different direction that will include risk and courage. Jesus clearly knows that if everyone is concerned with their own safety, security, and bread and butter, the kingdom of God that is in heaven cannot be established in this world. A willingness to give, sacrifice, and share, and suffer for a greater good are essential components if people are to build God's kingdom within their hearts

The final temptation of Jesus has to do with fame, popularity, wealth, and recognition of his greatness. All of that is offered by the devil's voice, which is, in fact, his desire within him. We are told that Jesus has amazing charismatic and healing ability. He can gain the world and people will follow him. But Jesus has a divine mission to do with God's love for the sake of the kingdom of God. The love Jesus proclaims is about sacrifice, commitment, and compassion towards others and this earth where we live. We are made in love, for love, and by love. The desire to love needs to be our deepest passion and desire. Thus if we get so caught up with our distractions, addictions, self-absorption, and neediness, we will try to fulfill our desires in all the wrong ways. We will not discover abundance, freedom, and peace from the things we think we desire.

Therefore, Jesus rejects this fascinating temptation, saying, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” He chooses to worship God and God alone, not the false gods dancing all around him. False gods dance around us too. They promise us the world but only give us further dissatisfaction. They isolate us from others and create mistrust and competitiveness rather than genuine friendship and mutual concern.

What Jesus reveals to us through his own deep temptations is who we are as human beings. He gives us a navigating voice to shape our goals and stimulate our desires. We Christians believe that God has imparted to us part of God’s life for the sake of faith, hope, and love. We are called by God and Jesus to discern at every stage of our lives how these spiritual values of faith, hope, and love need to be worked out in the details of our lives.

As individuals we have our own set of circumstances and limitations to contend with, our own relationships, some of which we have chosen and others we have not. We have our own abilities, talents, and gifts. We have not yet discovered some of them; others, we have had to learn to let go. Can we pray that God will help us find clarity and motivation for authentic faith and a life-giving, life-healing, and life-nourishing love that comes from God instead of praying for more stuff, more security, better protection, more money, and more recognition?

God has blessed us with everything we need. And while there are material things people need to feel safe, secure, and fulfilled, it is in our spirits where a more abiding fullness is experienced. We have everything we need for all the spiritual fullness and peace we need.

May we find sufficiency and wholeness in our desires, and discover we have everything we need if only we can see it. And may we begin to discover greater fulfillment through all our relationships, commitments, and choices, by letting go of our self-centered desires; and increasing our faith, hope, and love to experience the abundant life that is in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

Hymn 637

Take my life, and let it be consecrated

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God,

all that we have comes from You. May these gifts reflect our trust in Your provision and our desire to serve Your kingdom of love. Bless them, that they may bring hope, love, and renewal to those in need. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Tender God, Maker of all that is good, beautiful, and true,

we offer You our deepest thanksgiving. Whoever we are, whatever our situation—no matter how difficult, troubling, or uncertain life may seem—we know that we cannot rise from despair unless we first give thanks to You, the One who alone brings life from death.

O God, You are the ground of our hope and the source of our transformation. You shape our hearts, turning us from self-seeking desires toward the holy desires of Your love—a love that gives, heals, and nourishes life in us and in others.

You call us to rise above pettiness, selfishness, envy, and resentment—to let go of desires that cloud our thoughts, distort our intentions, and lead us away from Your will. You have designed thanksgiving as a source of deep healing. In gratitude, we shift our focus from what we lack to the many ways You sustain us with grace and purpose.

And so, in the presence of Your Spirit, we offer our personal thanksgivings in a moment of silence... (Pause)

Now, O God, we turn our hearts outward, lifting the world's needs before You. This world is held in Your heart, and You call us to hold it in ours as well. There is much instability in our world right now, O God, especially as a new administration in the U.S. is shaking up alliances, trade, and security throughout the world. We think of all those impacted on the ground, especially Palestinians, Ukrainians, and migrants in search of protection and a new home.

We pray for those in places of poverty and need. What does hope mean when people lack food, clothing, and shelter? May You make possible what seems impossible, O God. (Pause)

We pray for those living in conflict and fear. What does trust mean when war and unrest leave people without safety? May You make possible what seems impossible, O God. (Pause)

We pray for those who have lost loved ones to violence, accident, or illness. What does trust mean when grief weighs heavy upon us? May You make possible what seems impossible, O God. (Pause)

We pray for those struggling with physical and spiritual challenges. What do trust and hope mean when we face pain, loneliness, and uncertainty? May You make possible what seems impossible, O God. (Pause)

There is much suffering in this world, O God, but also great opportunity for compassion, care, and justice. May we be moved to act as Your hands and feet in a broken world.

We also lift up our own lives and communities before You, O God. We pray for those facing health challenges—our families, friends, and ourselves. We pray for financial burdens, for children and grandchildren as they grow, for the elderly in their final years, and for all who seek meaning in their work or retirement. We name before You now the personal concerns we carry in our hearts... (silence)

For consolation and comfort, we pray. For healing, discernment, and a way through darkness to light, we pray. For resilience and compassion, we pray. For deep and abiding peace, we pray. We offer all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 671**I heard the voice of Jesus say****BENEDICTION**

May the eternal blessing of God, the peace of the Risen Jesus, and the fellowship we share in the Holy Spirit, be with us all this day and forevermore. 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, March 16, at Rockway**

***North Pelham's 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting** will be held today, March 9, immediately after the worship service. This is a time to review the past year and prepare for this year.

***Alarm System Update:** Rockway will hold tutorials on the new alarm system after the service on March 16 and March 30. The alarm system will be activated after March 30. Please get your new code from Bonnie Roland.

***Presbytery Mid-Week Lenten Worship Services 2025:** Join us for a time of prayer, worship, and fellowship as we journey through Lent with our Presbyterian churches. Services will be held on March 20 at North Pelham and April 3 at Hope Church in Welland at 2:00 PM, with a special Maundy Thursday Communion on April 17 at 7:00 PM. For full details, please see the Lenten Service flyer.

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

***Wednesday Bible Study led by Diane McMillan** 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.

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