



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Palm / Passion Sunday, April 13, 2025
Worship at Home

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

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

L: Jesus enters Jerusalem as a humble king, riding on a donkey.

P: The disciples proclaim the one who comes in the name of the Lord,

L: but the powers that be see a troublemaker, challenging their authority.

P: The prophetic traditions envision the peaceable kingdom,

L: but the empire sees a disturber of the peace, so death awaits him.

P: Give thanks to God who overcomes all the powers of death!

Hymn 214 All glory, laud and honour

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord's Prayer

Here we are, O God.

Here we are with all our strength—and all our weakness. Here we are with all our enthusiasm and energy, as well as stress, overwhelm, and exhaustion. Here we are with all our faith and confidence. Here we are with all our doubts and questions. Here we are with all our conviction and love. And here we are with all our failure to be who we want to be—and who we know we should be.

Hear us now, in the silence, as we make our confession to you. (pause)

You know us when we are at our best. You know us when we are at our worst. And you know us in every place in between, O God. You love us. You forgive us. You see in us beauty, grace, and transcendent possibility.

Help us to see ourselves as you see us and to live into that vision, O God. And help us to see others the same way, especially those we so easily judge or dismiss. We pray all this in the name of Jesus, the same Jesus 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 218**Hosanna, loud hosanna****Prayer for Understanding**

God of grace,

as we listen to Your Word, open our hearts to the power of the cross—not as a symbol of strength in the world’s eyes, but as the way of love, humility, and salvation. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 31: 9-16

1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Luke 23: 33-43

SERMON**The Greatest Love You Can Have**

We all experience power dynamics in our lives, whether we’re aware of them or not. When we speak to someone, go to school, or play a game, we are entering a situation where power dynamics exist. When someone talks over us, they are using power. When someone steps aside for us, they are giving us power. Wherever people interact, power is present – often quietly, but always there. Power is always part of human interaction, even when we don’t notice it. The world is driven by people or groups of people seeking to gain power.

People have always admired and pursued power and have been captivated and taken by it. This has not changed in our human history, and is as true today as it ever was. We have great respect for people who are famous, wealthy, or strong; for those who overcome obstacles to win; who defeat competitors or enemies; and who triumph over all weaknesses. Most of us are deeply attracted by such power.

Why exactly do we seek power? From individuals to nations, we seek power to ensure our own safety, and we do so out of a sense of fear. It is because of fear that we seek and love power. The fear in our human existence makes us crave and respect power even as we fear those with power and what they can do to us if we don’t fall into line and conform.

We Christians have even interpreted and understood the meaning of the cross in terms of the concepts of power and fear. Christians in the mainline churches often interpret the meaning of the cross as an indication of power, control, respect, success, and ultimate triumph and victory.

Ironically, we have not responded to the real meaning of the cross. Instead, we have tried to hide the cross under the resurrection and incorporate it into a greater drama where defeat is upstaged by an even greater victory over the powers of evil, death and hell. This is what most of our history in Christendom has done with the symbol of the cross. The emperor Constantine conquered enemy armies under the banner of the cross. Christianity, under the cross, then became the triumphant and exclusively dominant religion of the empire.

Yet the question of the spiritual meaning of the cross still lingers after the dust settles some 2000 years later. Was the cross just something to be overcome by a greater resurrection? Or is the resurrection a vindication of a victory that is rooted and achieved in the cross?

Today's readings offer us guidance and insight so that we may discover the authentic meaning and message of the cross. First, the apostle Paul speaks of the challenge the Corinthians are facing. Many of them want to be somebody in their world. The world measures people by power, and this is making the Corinthians fight with each other, put one other down, and compete with one other.

Paul says: "You're all picking sides, going around saying, 'I'm on Paul's side,' or 'I'm for Apollos,' or 'Peter is my man,' or 'I'm in the Messiah group.'" Later in the first chapter, Paul says, "Now remember what you were, my friends, when God called you. From the human point of view, few of you were wise or powerful or of high social standing." (v.26)

At the same time, he also says this: "God chose what the world looks down on and despises and thinks is nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. This means that no one can boast in God's presence. ... God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus" (vv. 28-30). And finally, he says this: "For the message about Christ's death on the cross is nonsense to those who are being lost; but for us who are being saved it is God's power." So, if power in the world is not true power in God's view, how is the cross true power, and how can it save us?

The account of the crucifixion in today's gospel of Luke answers this question. The cross is a token of defeat, vulnerability, weakness, humiliation, and failure. Jesus is being crucified. What a pathetic, mutilated, emaciated specimen of flesh he is. How vulnerable, weak, and hopeless he is on the cross. To add to his public humiliation of being stripped, naked, and pinned to a cross for the whole world to see, he is crowned with thorns, and the sign over his head reads: "Here is the king of the Jews."

We need to notice how Jesus responds to the violence of those who are fearful yet have religious, political, and social power over his last moments. He forgives them. He forgives even his condemners and mockers. Jesus's final act is to forgive, to love, and to love even an undeserving thief so that he may welcome him into paradise.

This is the foolishness of the cross to human eyes, especially measured by the standards of power. But it is also the truly spiritual power of God to save us. It is a totally different power.

The real power of God's love that looks weak and foolish to those who seek power was exemplified through Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, a worldwide organization for people who suffer from developmental disabilities. What is significant is how they learn how to love from one another. By giving themselves to each other, they discover what it means to be truly human. According to Vanier and the experience of many, being among people with such apparent weaknesses is an invitation to get in touch with our own vulnerabilities and deficiencies. It is to discover that love is the greatest gift of all, the greatest kind of power, the source of the greatest fullness and peace.

The cross symbolizes the weakness and vulnerability of being truthful about what we do to each other and to this earth. At the same time, it also represents our own human weakness and need. Christ forgives, accepts and loves us, even if it costs him his very life. That kind of weakness is

true power. We need that kind of weakness in our relationships because it is true to life, true to us and true for each other. Out of that vulnerable sharing, freedom to be, and risky trust in each other, we develop the kind of strength to be true human beings. We need to be like seven-day-old babies, even, human beings with the heartiness and richness of spirit to absorb some of the shocks, surprises, and stresses that come with the uncertainty, insecurity, and unruliness that is life.

The cross does not ask us to hide our weakness but to meet God there—in our brokenness, honesty, and love. Jesus meets us with forgiveness, even when the world calls us failures. This is true power: love that refuses to dominate yet quietly transforms everything.

May we embrace this grace and find in it the courage to live as people who are both gentle and unshakably strong—people who bear the image of Jesus, not in triumph, but in tender, liberating love. Amen.

Hymn 231 When I survey the wondrous cross

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Thank you, God, for calling us and showing us your love. You help us see the people around us, care for them, and share. We give these gifts to you with joy. Use them to show your love in the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Gracious God,
we thank You for meeting us in this time of worship—in our singing and silence, in Scripture and in stillness, in challenge and in comfort.

We thank You for the mystery of the cross, where weakness becomes strength, and where love overcomes fear. You do not ask us to be perfect or powerful, but to be open—to love, to forgive, and to follow.

Thank You for the gift of Jesus, who shows us that true power is found in compassion, in mercy, and in giving ourselves for others. Send us out now, not to conquer, but to care—not to judge, but to serve.

We also pray with compassion for our world, O God: For all who grieve the loss and suffering in Myanmar and Thailand due to the destructively massive earthquake, we pray, O God. For all who are devastated by bombs and fighting in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and elsewhere, we pray, O God. For the hungry, the poor, and the sick in places with few resources to meet great needs, we pray, O God. For organizations and people working on the ground—doing what they can in danger and restriction—we pray, O God.

And now, we lift up in silence the situations and people close to us—those in our church family and among our friends in Rockway and North Pelham who are on our hearts today, especially those who are suffering in body, mind, or spirit. (pause)

We pray for healing, O God—however healing may come—and healing even in the midst of grief. We pray for empathy that becomes compassion—so that our hearts may be moved toward others, and transformed in the process. We pray for peace, O God—a peace that reaches deep into our hearts, bringing grace and gentleness to how we see and treat one another.

May we walk gently and boldly, carrying the hope of the cross into a world that longs for healing. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Hymn 239

O sacred head, sore wounded

BENEDICTION

May the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the strength of the Spirit go with you—to walk in love and live in the power of the cross. Amen.

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace

Postlude

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***Worship on Sunday, April 20, at North Pelham**

***Maundy Thursday Communion – April 17:** A Maundy Thursday Communion Service will be held at Kirk on the Hill in Fonthill on April 17 at 7:00 PM. All are invited to attend.

Good Friday Walk & Service – April 18: Join us for a meaningful Good Friday as we reflect on the Seven Last Words of Jesus on the Cross: 10:00 AM – Walk at North Pelham (meet at the church); 11:00 AM – Worship Service; and Fellowship to follow – Pizza and vegetables will be provided. Please bring a dessert to share! All are welcome—walk, worship, and fellowship with us!

***Easter Breakfast & Service – April 20:** Join us for Easter Sunday at North Pelham! We'll begin with a delicious Eggs Benedict breakfast at 9:00 AM (Freewill offering to benefit Rose City Kids, supporting children and youth in Welland). Our Easter Worship Service follows at 10:00 AM. All are welcome!

***Spring Tea & 150th PCC Celebration – May 3:** Celebrate 150 years of the Presbyterian Church in Canada at the Spring Blessings Tea on May 3, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., hosted by Central

Niagara congregations at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Welland. Enjoy worship with a joint choir, interactive Bible reflections through stained-glass art, kids' crafts, and fellowship over tea. Please bring: Donations for St. Andrew's Outreach (toiletries, hygiene items, reusable bags). Free will offering. All welcome.

***Wednesday Bible Study Update:** There will be no Wednesday Bible Study on April 16 (Holy Week). Classes will resume on April 23 at 10:00 a.m. at North Pelham, led by Diane McMillan.

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