



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
3rd Sunday after Easter, May 4, 2025
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Jesus told Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he answered, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” (John 21:15)

P: We come to worship so that we may grow in our love for Christ and in our calling to serve.

L: We come seeking the mercy of God, who restores us through forgiveness.

P: We come to be shaped by grace so that we might offer others second chances in our lives.

P: Let us worship God with open hearts and renewed purpose!

Hymn 467

Praise, my soul, the God who crowns you

PRAYERS OF APPROACH and CONFESSION

Here we are, O God.

You see us—just as we are. You see through us. You know what lives in our hearts. You see the highs within us—our hopes, our potential for faith, love, and joy. And you see the lows—our apathy, resentment, envy, competitiveness, and despair. You see how stress narrows our vision, making us self-absorbed and afraid.

In the silence now, O God, we confess what we have failed to do, and what we have done that has failed both you and ourselves. (*silent pause*)

Meet us in your fullness, your abundance, your glory, and grace. Shine through us. Purify us and cleanse us from the spiritual toxins that weigh us down and consume our peace. Renew us, and begin again within us. Fill us with your love, your generosity, and your endless forgiveness. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, 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 476

Amigos de Cristo / Friends of the Lord

Prayer for Understanding

God of grace,
open our hearts by your Spirit, that we may hear your Word with faith, receive your mercy with joy, and follow Christ with new purpose. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 30

Matthew 26: 31-35, 69-75; John 21: 1-19

SERMON

The God of Second Chances

As imperfect and flawed human beings, we all stumble. We make mistakes, fail, and do wrong things, small and large. The truth is we can become mature beings only through the real experiences of our everyday lives, and through the many complicated situations and environments we walk through. Second chances are necessary for us all. Yet we live in a highly competitive, materialistic age where second chances are rare.

Successful competition promises higher social status, greater financial power, and better eligibility for marriage. Opportunities are readily given to those who can compete successfully, but those who cannot, are often regarded as inferior or failures. Just one or two mistakes or failures can destroy hope, growth, and the possibility of abundant life.

So here is the question: how often do you give a second chance to someone who has disappointed you and failed to live up to your expectations, even if those expectations are higher than the ones you have for yourself? Let us ponder our scripture readings so that we may find spiritual insight and the teaching of Christ on the subject of second chances.

Today we focus on Peter. He is supposed to be the head disciple. His original name is Simon. He is given the name Peter because it means “rock.” He is supposed to be the rock for all the other disciples and for Jesus’ new movement. But Peter is not a rock at all in today’s readings. It is as if Peter is in a play with three scenes, behaving like an imperfect and flawed being, just like all of us.

In the first scene, Jesus is telling the disciples of the difficult times that lie ahead. He will be arrested and executed, and this will test them all also. Jesus even predicts that they will abandon him and run away. But Peter will not stand for such talk. He speaks up and declares to Jesus: “I will never leave you, even if all the rest do!” Jesus replies that before the night is over, Peter will have deserted him repeatedly.

In the second scene, armed guards and a large crowd ready for violence have come to get Jesus. Peter and the others panic and run away. Jesus is grabbed, beaten, and bound up. He is taken to the High Priest’s mansion for initial questioning before being handed over to the Romans. Peter hasn’t run away too far, though. He approaches the mansion and mingles with the curious onlookers and soldiers outside. They are all awaiting news of what is happening inside.

Then he is recognized. “You, too, were with Jesus of Galilee!” one of the High Priest’s servant women cries out. Peter is found out. Fear seizes him. He panics and denies that he knows Jesus

or has anything to do with Jesus. Then another servant woman starts telling the others: “He was with Jesus of Nazareth!” Peter grows even more panicked and denies even more strongly that he has anything to do with Jesus. Finally, a group of men approach Peter, saying: “Of course you are one of them...the way you speak gives you away!” Peter immediately swears: “I am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not! I do not know that man!” And then the rooster crows. The night is gone. Morning has come. What had Jesus predicted? Peter suddenly remembers. He can hold himself together no longer. He runs out of the courtyard in shame, weeping bitterly.

Jesus is tried and found guilty of blasphemy for claiming to be the Messiah of God, and for leading people astray. He is found guilty of treason for supposedly claiming to be a rival to the emperor. He is executed in the most brutal and publicly shameful way Rome knows, in order to make an example of him. The disciples indeed scatter and then gather in various tiny unkempt houses. They are dealing with their failure, their grief, their bewilderment and loss. They are in deep crisis.

Then something totally unexpected happens, and this is Peter’s third and final scene in this particular play. The original group of disciples have gone back to their family business of fishing. One morning, when they are not having much success at catching anything, a man on the shore calls out: “Throw your net out on the other side of the boat.” Because they have been having no luck anyway, they throw their nets on the other side, and suddenly feel the weight of many fish caught and struggling in the nets.

Recognition dawns on Peter. He knows who this guy is. But can it be? Can it be after everything they saw and lived through? He can’t wait to find out. Forgetting the shame and sense of failure, he can’t wait for the boat to land. He jumps into the water and swims to shore. It is the resurrected Jesus! How can it be? But that doesn’t matter. What unspeakable joy he experiences!

There is still unfinished business, however. After breakfast, as they are sitting around the campfire absorbing all that is happening, Jesus asks Peter a question: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” he replies, “You know that I love you.” Jesus says to him, “Then take care of my sheep.” Jesus repeats this question three times, just like Peter’s three denials. Surely, this must hurt Peter a lot. Jesus is reminding him that he is no rock. He denied Jesus three times, but Jesus is now calling him again. Jesus is calling Peter to use his experiences of fear, shame, and failure to become an even more effective and mature fisher of persons. “I forgive you Peter, because I know how weak, vulnerable, and desperate you are. So you must face what you have done and use the painful, shameful experience to become compassionate and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the kingdom of love and grace.” Peter has been given a second chance. He is being called again. And he discovers his life purpose through the second chance given to him by the resurrected Jesus.

“To follow” the risen Jesus means accepting that we are all imperfect people. Like Peter, we make mistakes. We sometimes fail. We feel regret, fear, or shame. But that does not mean our story is over. Jesus came back to Peter, not to scold him, but to restore him. He gave Peter a second chance, and in that moment, Peter discovered a new purpose. In the same way, Jesus

comes to us again and again. He does not give up on us. He meets us where we are, even in our failure, and invites us to begin again.

So let us be people who follow the risen Christ by offering second chances—to ourselves, and to one another. Let us live as those who know we are forgiven, called, and loved—even when we feel broken.

As Peter turned back and followed Jesus again, so too can we. No matter what season of life we are in, no matter our age or our situation, God still has a calling for us. When life changes—when we face new beginnings, or when we experience loss—let us keep asking: “Lord, what would you have me do now? How can I bless others today?”

May the God above us, the risen Christ who walks beside us, and the Holy Spirit who lives within us be our guide, strength, and peace. Amen.

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

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God,
we offer these gifts as a sign of our gratitude for your endless mercy and second chances. Bless what we bring today, and use it to bring hope, healing, and love into your world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Gracious and loving God,
Thank you for the wonder, beauty, mystery, and goodness of this world. Thank you for the love we give and receive, and for those who serve not just out of duty, but because their hearts are moved by compassion. We are grateful for those who support us in times of trouble, for those who guide us, encourage us, and walk beside us. Thank you for the many ways we are sustained—through joy, laughter, music, and moments of deep connection.

Thank you for the gift of second chances, for grace that meets us in our failures, and for steadfast love that calls us back again and again. We praise you for the risen Christ—who restores us when we fall, strengthens us when we are weak, and calls us to love and serve without fear.

Hear us now as we pause in silence to name the gifts for which we are especially thankful...(pause for silence)

Today, O God, we lift up our broken world. Where there is war, bring peace. Where there is hunger, bring food. Where there is despair, shine your light. Where there is injustice, raise up voices of truth and courage. We pray especially for the people of Gaza. For those who are hungry, sick, and displaced, for families who have lost everything—Lord, have mercy.

Open the hearts of leaders to choose peace over violence and to work toward a just and lasting ceasefire. May humanitarian aid reach all who need it. Bless those who lead and serve, that they may be guided by wisdom, humility, and compassion. Bless your Church around the world, that we may be faithful witnesses of your mercy and grace.

Finally, we pray especially for our church family members and friends among us—those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. (silence)

Bring comfort to the weary, healing to the sick, peace to the anxious, and hope to the discouraged. Hold them close with your tender hand. Renew them through your healing Spirit. Remind them through your unfailing love that they are never alone.

Renew us all, O God, that we may follow Christ with willing hearts—loving, forgiving, and serving in His name. We pray this through Jesus Christ, our risen Savior and Lord. Amen.

Hymn 634

Will you come and follow me

BENEDICTION

May the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit go with you as you begin again. 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, May 11, at Rockway**

***The RPCW will meet** on Wednesday, May 7, at 1:30 PM at the church.

***Easter Breakfast – A Heartfelt Thank You!**

We thank God for a joyful and meaningful Easter celebration! We especially appreciate all who gave their time, energy, resources, and generous hearts to make the Easter Breakfast such a warm and welcoming event. Through your kindness, \$700 was raised and sent as a gift to support Rose City Kids in Welland—a ministry that cares deeply for children in need. Thank you for living out the spirit of resurrection through love in action!

***Wednesday Bible study:** Diane McMillan will lead Wednesday Bible study at 10:00 AM at First Church.

***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.

***Guest Preacher: Rev. Anita Van Nest on May 11:** We're delighted to welcome Rev. Anita Van Nest as our guest preacher on May 11 while Jacob is on study leave from May 6-12.

***Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits.** Reach Jacob at jacoble0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797.