



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday, August 10, 2025
Worship at Home

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

Call to Worship

L. We have been invited into this place by God's Spirit

P. Lord God: Help us to know Your love and the love of each other

L. Set us free to become our true selves because we are loved, and to free others because we love.

All. Go before us to prepare the way; walk behind us to be our protection; and walk beside us to be our companion through Christ our Lord, Amen

(adapted from Hymns for the Family of God)

Hymn 26 **As pants the hart**

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord's Prayer

Our heavenly Father; our creator and sustainer, Spirit of life and Truth, known to us by Your Holy Word and revealed to us in Jesus Your Son our Saviour: may this time of Worship please You. May our words and prayers and hymns be sweet in Your hearing & may the hearts we open to You, show You our true faith and our sincere desire to spend our lives intimately bound to You, our God!

Our Father, in our hearts and minds you also see how conflicted we often are. Troubles in our relationships, loneliness, troubles with our finances, and worry for our children cause us to *rely on ourselves*; to look elsewhere for comfort and guidance, and sometimes – we totally wander away from You and doubt Your love and desire & ability to protect and care for us –

We ask for Your forgiveness, lord God. We ask for You to strengthen our faith. We humbly pray for Your guidance for our life, whether we understand or see what You are doing, or not. – We pray that You will give us more faith. We pray that you will love us as ever you love us, and help us, as we need Your help. In Jesus' holy Name, we pray this. Amen (pause)

Be assured, children of God, that our God hears our prayers and knows our needs. Be assured that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God.

Be assured that God forgives your sins and transgressions for which you ask forgiveness. **God is love, and those whom he loves and knows, have nothing to fear in heaven and earth.** Be at peace. Amen

Together, let us say the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to say:

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 the kingdom of God**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 33: 12-22

Genesis 15 :1-6, Hebrews 11: 1-3; 8-16

[Not used in the readings: Luke 12:22-23, 32-40 for home use]

SERMON: 'Faith has many 'faces' OR 'righteous living'

When you were young, did you ever play 'Hide and Seek'?

– We certainly did! – Of course, I enjoyed the 'hiding-part' more than the 'looking-for part! But, all in all, I thought it was a great game! As we got older and were allowed to be out until after dark, we still played 'hide and seek' – and the game took on a new exciting aspect: we'd scoot from hiding-place to hiding place in order not to be found by the player who was 'it'! *No-one wanted to be disqualified* by being seen! And no-one wanted to be 'it'!!

*There was something else going on while we played: we often ended up paired up with one or two other players in the best hiding-spots. **But not everyone that played [in the dark] was comfortable as the game dragged on – they got the 'creeps' when they had to sit in the dark, silently for a longer period of time. They purposefully moved around and made noises – so they could get caught so that part of the game would come to an end for them! *They intentionally 'gave themselves up' – & sometimes us –too!!*

To 'give ourselves away', or to be 'given away' has a variety of meanings and history. As Christians we believe self-giving, generosity, sharing ... are at the heart of our faith. **Jesus is our example! His life and his teachings and his sacrificial death are *given for us*! ***But, our human history also speaks of slavery; of being taken & being given away!** Indentured workers lose their freedom until their debt is paid off = a practice still seen today! * In our Christian wedding rituals some still ask the family of the bride: 'who gives this woman away?' – and it is usually the father or a male relative that answers: 'I do', or 'my wife and I do' – meaning she is now **given** to her new husband and family! *That practice comes from times past when a dowry had to be paid for a bride, which had to meet the expected 'value' or price the family placed on their daughter. Again, this is a practice still seen in some countries these days – where child-brides are bought and sold – and to buy their freedom, the **Christian agency** freeing the girl also has to pay a suitable, agreeable price to redeem the girl's freedom!

** I'm making a pretty simple connection between our kids' game of 'Hide and Seek' and the serious life-stories before us from Scripture. On the one hand, you can see how 'words' and 'practices' rooted in our past can have a far deeper meaning & consequence than we are sometimes aware –

*Incidentally, that marriage ritual of 'giving away the bride' is gradually stopping as people are educated about it!

*Something else might be worth noting: in our very '*anonymous society*' today, many people like the idea of 'being hidden' in their homes as they abuse others on social media, or being hidden spreading graffiti at night or destroying places of worship when no-one is looking = which, of course, is very negative & *spreading* – lawmakers & social scientists are studying how this can be discouraged or directed in a more meaningful expression of the self and to benefit society -- for eg. by painting big wall-murals where otherwise pornography and racial

slurs would land! We recognize, *because we are all different*, that *some people need to be seen & heard and appreciated* and can be examples to others, they can be helped to turn their 'desires' & talents into something positive ... for example, to share and to be kind and generous ... ie. 'these are the 'givers' of our world -- in contrast to the destructive side of "coming out", or 'giving off' something destructive...

Some time ago the Canadian Bible Society put out a leaflet entitled 'The Bold Ones', which highlighted the first Apostles of Jesus 'going out' to proclaim their faith – This leaflet encourages us who read it, to also **be bold in our faith!** – ?? Does that appeal to you? God sees what we do; who we are, and **God** ultimately decides and guides us. This is our faith, isn't it!?

Our Old Testament story for today is about the relationship between God and his faithful servant Abraham. It's about how, despite many difficulties, Abraham remained faithful. He honoured that relationship between God and himself that was revealed to him and that motivated him to strike out on his journey to a new homeland. (ch.12) Their relationship is based on **trust and commitment** to each other. *The ultimate test, *for Abraham* as I see it, was *whether this relationship would endure after Abraham's death* – which was fast approaching for the old man! What will his legacy be?! What difference will it make to anyone that he 'gave his life' to God!!? That he gave up everything, in the hope that God would respond to what he really needed = PROOF! Abraham, in his time and culture, needed a son – to carry on the leadership of his clan. He needed a strong heir to provide for them & to provide for his aging parents, which are Abraham and Sarah! He needed to teach his Son about God & about their covenant relationship that had – though with 'some wrinkles and bumps' brought him this far! – and so finally, in our part of the story, Abraham blurts out what he can't hold back anymore: **God, I have no heir!** My slave will take over – and what then? **God has to be equally faithful, for Abraham to continue in their relationship; to continue in this relationship of 'giving himself to God' and to God's Plan & to God's promises for Abraham – which although somewhat realized, still needed to be *more*, for Abraham to fully 'know' God – **Because we know the story, we know God is being faithful! And we see Abraham's descendants 'materialize'. He gets a son from Sarah as God promised, & Abraham's trust or faith in God are rewarded! Yet, not because of the child, but because Abraham struggled & believed God, **God counted** Abraham's **trust** as righteousness, ie. Abraham is found to be on the 'right side of God'; God loved Abraham because he was good, honourable; because Abraham met & fulfilled the terms of their covenant!

Abraham had followed God in 'blind faith', so to speak. He gave up everything. He left family and friends. He left his home and country in his advanced age – for what?

While we read in the Gospel – in ch. 12 of Luke, after Jesus' parable of the rich fool – that life is not to be worried about. Food and clothes aren't as important as seeking after heavenly things, we still have to eat and we still have to pay the rent, and we may be responsible for a friend or family-member ... and so we can understand the pragmatic aspect of life that is sometimes brushed away when we 'speak' religion. Not all disciples understood Jesus' teaching – and some left. (Jhn. 6:60f)

Jesus was considered mentally ill by some; perhaps even *by his family* (Matth.12:46f) and certainly he was seen as a threat to society by the religious teachers and leaders!

*We can understand *this* struggle to be meaningful; to be sincere disciples who serve God & not some other 'demon'. – We have to watch how we judge others who *can't* 'do it'.. **Of course*, material things don't fully describe who we are or what we need – whether in life here on earth or in God's sight, *and we've recently heard from victims of the wild-fires: who have said that when they lost their homes and their family treasures and family keepsakes, they also lost their lives. *Their life as they knew it, was taken from them by the fires! So now – **what to do??** **We can surely feel empathy for them** – without judgment. *On the other hand – some, *having lost nothing*, still feel 'cheated' by life and resort to crime; stealing & gathering wealth illegally or to killing as *Judas did* – and feel justified *in this*. ***Seeing and knowing the difference in life* DOES curry favour in God's sight! Cleaving to God – because of the changed heart Jesus has given us, helping others; giving ourselves away to others and to God's Work – sets us on the righteous path of God! -- *but sometimes*, the rocks and debris of life, obstructing our way, make it hard for us to stay strong & to 'continue on the journey to the kingdom' --

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews, addresses these questions that each person has to answer for themselves: what is God asking of me? What is my part or responsibility in this relationship; in this covenant between us? Where is God in all this?

How can I understand or believe that God has promised me a future in His care? **Faith is believing** or trusting this revelation despite not seeing fully what that means! Abraham and his descendants show us or teach us this truth and **encourage us!** Faith is believing as Abraham believed that God IS faithful TOO in His covenant relationship with us. The full realization of the covenant promise remains in the future, but the promise is given to us now IN JESUS CHRIST; through his ministry, death and resurrection. Paul says: “Indeed, by faith our ancestors received [God's] approval [because they followed and lived by that faith 'that God is good, just, true to His Word, merciful, present ...] They accepted the entire 'cosmological and theological teachings' of their leaders and prophets: that God not only created everything, but God continues to rule the cosmos and participates in our lives as God participated in Abraham's life and in every other life God creates! *That includes the 'adjudication' we frequently read about in the Old Testament; that we also heard about last Sunday in the Gospel story – *only that by Jesus' time, God's role had been hijacked by religious leaders to control & oppress the people who really needed God's help & direction. *Jesus chose to clarify this difference and to point people back to God whom *they* sought & who *loved them so dearly* that He sent them His Saviour, to teach them about faith – and to cleanse them of everything that obstructed this relationship between God & them! (?Hebrews 12) = the meaning of the New Covenant between God and humanity. *Unfortunately, some still teach that God's favour is dependent on *our actions*. Some still teach that when we suffer or are persecuted, that *we lack faith or deserve our humiliation* ... But that is not the kind of faith that Jesus revealed to us; still to be fully realized; 'blind' on the one hand, but firmly in God's fatherly 'grip' ... proven, if you will, by our resurrected Lord!

The Abraham we meet in our passage today is just exploring & discovering this God. Abraham is just discovering who God is and what God wants of him and what God's Word to him 'really means' – Does God mean what Abraham thinks he means? Is there any point or purpose in this 'crazy' adventure they are on together – an adventure unheard of in human history?! Abraham's 'needs' cause him doubts! Abraham's wife challenges him not to gamble his credibility on this God whom he's never seen! After all, Abraham has responsibilities ...

Abraham doesn't know whether he can keep this covenant, which is written in the stars in the night-sky, by a God who dwells somewhere 'up there'; out there – so he's anxious. He's testing God. He's brutally honest with God. He needs to know more! He wants to be able to share his faith with someone; with his own son!!

This struggle seems to me, to be eternally human. In their playing, I see children exploring; pretending life is that game of hiding & finding, of chasing someone and catching them, of outsmarting one another – and sometimes, not succeeding, & learning to deal with that – of sometimes being left out & then finding something better, more wonderful to do ...

Faith. Believing in the unseen that has somehow been shared with our mind and placed in our heart–

has always been the 'fuel' of Christian believers.

What I mean is that faith has also revealed our 'full humanity'. Paul puts it elsewhere: 'Christ is all in all'. Our 'adventure' with God will reveal that we are more than just children chasing around in the dark! We are more than adventurers looking for treasure. – On our quest for life we 'pollinate' or enrich the lives of others. *In Colossians last week, we heard about some of the virtues of Christians. (Col.3:12f) As we read on in Hebrews, Paul also moves past the more philosophical conversation there about faith of the heart, to the life of faith in the 'marketplace', so to speak (chs.12,13) – built on the foundation of the patriarchs, sealed by the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

To this day, God's people – not to be confused by the current State of Israel & it's government; – **to this day we/God's people, seek God's Word for us** in worship & in devotion and prayer for guidance and for 'fulfillment; to be fully who we are created to be.

We also struggle with the 'meaning' of words and of seemingly conflicting teachings in Scripture, all the while believing that God's Holy Spirit is directing us & will lead us to the truth! God's promise to Abraham, to lead him to his own City and home have taken on a new meaning – which for us may mean that our 'end goal'; our destination, **our home is heaven**, as described in the Book of Revelation. Our covenant with God in Jesus has become clearer and clearer now that we can all read God's Word for ourselves. We can openly worship, and everyone; absolutely everyone *in this free country* can enjoy the promise of redemption and of salvation that Abraham first experienced!

Righteous living should not be passed off to desperate people as some sort of **condition** for God's love – or to get God's approval. Already we know, as we know one another better, that Faith has many 'faces' or expressions and sees various struggles and experiences – and so may seek clear assurances – or seek **our** help & understanding – **whereas we** may just want to be left alone; to be comfortable, to 'just hide away' in our 'cozy, intimate' relationship with God –

*But God didn't call Abraham 'to sit tight'. On the other hand, God didn't promise to make Him a world leader either ...

***God spoke to Abraham in the darkness or in his searching for true life and true meaning. God, the source of life, revealed Himself to Abraham and set Abraham on the journey he sought and whereby he found his true self – and God guided Him, and God rewarded him, and in that relationship, **Abraham believed in God! For such a faith, we too will be rewarded, and everyone we touch in God's Name, will be too.** // Amen //

Hymn 478

To Abraham and Sarah

Invitation to the Offering

What does the Lord require of you? “With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high” – *the believer asks himself* as he prepares himself for worship (according to the prophecy of Micah, ch.6:6).

His answer comes to him from the prophet: “He has told you mortal, what is good ... but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

*To this God, who requires no gift or price from us, we now offer what we have brought to this worship. Amen

Doxology

Accept these offerings, generous, self-less God.

How else can we respond to You, but in the same way. Use our offerings of money and recommitted hearts to bless those who need help. Use these gifts to keep our Church and ministry strong. Bless all who need advocacy or just a meal, through these gifts given to glorify You. Amen

Prayers of Thanksgiving and for the People

Holy God, we thank you for this hour of worship with our friends, Your people. We thank you for the safety of this place and for Your silent Presence in our hearts, communing with us, assuring us of Your Presence and care for us. We thank You for friends unable to be with us here – but whom You also draw close to Yourself, and whose Presence we can feel when we draw close to You in prayer and devotion.

Lord God, we see Your world in great turmoil these days. We hear terrible news from the terrible warzones, daily spreading, daily making more victims, daily breaking Your heart & Your commandments: to nurture and to protect life; all life! Lord God, be the protector of those persecuted, of those who had to flee their homeland – direct the ways of those who are seeking a new homeland and soften the hearts of those who need to welcome them & help them in their quest. Direct the hearts and minds and policies of **our** lawmakers, of our armies and of our citizens. Fill void hearts with love. Replace hardened hearts with Your love and compassion, we pray.

We pray for Your Church. Make us strong in love and make us wise, so we can teach and guide our society, so we can offer helpful criticism and the necessities of life to the stranger – whether they knock on our door – or when we *see* or *hear* about their needs elsewhere.

Preserve us from complacency and from seeking our own comfort and contentment. Strengthen us if we are tired. Help us be creative and bold in our faith and witness.

*We remember those in our congregation, and those in our families and friendships who need Your special attention and touch, Lord God. Be with them in difficult times. Be with them always. (pause)

In all things, **may we give You the glory You deserve**: our Lord and Saviour, and Ruler of the Church. *And bless us* as we go into the world, to serve You and to serve one another. Amen

Hymn 79 (R) **Trusting Jesus**

BENEDICTION

L. When Jesus was 'transfigured' before the eyes of his own disciples, Peter said to Jesus: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings for you; one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah". -- he thought Jesus wanted to stay high up on the mountain top with that faithful Pilgrim and with that famous Prophet. But, Jesus declined. At the end of Jesus' long sojourn with his disciples and with the people in his immediate area, Jesus gave his disciples this instruction: "Go into all the world, making disciples of all people, baptizing them in the Name of God: the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Friends, God calls us into the world to be God's blessing to others.

P We give God glory and praise for God's Love and for God's Wisdom.

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

Thank you to Rev. Martin Wehrman for leading us in worship

***Next Sunday Service, August 17 at 10:00 am at Rockway**

***Summer Pulpit Supply – August Blessings:** While Rev. Jacob is away on vacation during the month of August, we are blessed to welcome a wonderful lineup of guest preachers who will lead us in worship and share God's Word each Sunday:

- **Rev. Nicole Reid** – August 17 & 24
- **Mr. Kent Reynolds** – August 31

***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.

***While Jacob is on vacation, he is still available for pastoral care matters.** Reach Jacob at jacoblee0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797 or contact your Elder.