



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday, August 3, 2025
Worship at Home

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

Call to Worship

L. Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Mt.5:5)

P. We come to learn what really matters in life: to act justly, not with pride; with kindness and humility, not to prove we are 'superior' to others *or* to 'lord it over them'. Jesus said: "whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant." (Mt.20:26)

L. We are here to worship God, and God will guide our ways.

All. We thank God for God's steadfast love. Amen

Hymn 461

Be thou my vision

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord's Prayer

Our heavenly Father; 'abba': hear our prayers.

We've come from our life's busyness to worship you in the quiet of this beautiful church and in the fellowship of our friends in Christ; your congregation!

It is gratitude for our life that brings us here. It is our need to feel loved and heard when we are otherwise alone and overlooked.

God our heavenly Father and Saviour: in Your Presence we feel special. You don't make us feel humiliated or ignorant – as we do when we try to make a call to our Government offices – or when we try to rectify a mistake about a payment that has been wrongly sent our way – (pause) God, we are sinners ourselves! We get angry. We want to see justice – but none of it helps – only **You help!** Today, we feel and know that **You are truly a God of love and mercy!** Thank you, Lord, for quieting my soul!

We've also come because we need spiritual healing.

As we grow older our bodies are weakening like the flowers in the heat of the past weeks! We accept that. But, we are also facing what our kids call 'downsizing'; having to make those difficult decisions about what to keep and what to let go – ??

Please help us God, to hold on to **You** and to let go of what neither feeds our spirit or blocks us from being charitable and kind towards others. The 'baggage' that burdens us most is not excess furniture or money in the bank that we don't know what to do with – it's knowing we have left a kind word unspoken and an apology unsent; a prayer for the world not lifted up to You, and the faces of the millions of dieing people never thought of by us --

Lord, in Your mercy hear our prayers, and give us an answer – through your Spirit, through Your Word here, in your congregation, as we gather and discern Your Will for us – Unburden our hearts and draw us close to Yourself again and again –

Lord God, Jesus our Saviour, Holy Spirit: hear us also as we pray in the words our Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray;

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 344 **The wise may bring their learning**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 107 : 1-9, 43

Epistle: Colossians 3:1-11, Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

SERMON: Living faithfully in a challenging world *OR* Living up to our baptism

These days, we're surrounded by '*loud noise*'!! The American Government is going to make America 'great again'! It's being 'shouted from the roof-tops', so to speak! – But Canada & nations around the globe believe this is being done at the expense of every other people! – *Some* Canadian leaders are wondering 'out loud' whether suspending environmental concerns and Aboriginal treaty rights might make us 'great' too!!?

Athletes are offered millions of dollars with multi-year contracts – to ensure their team or their 'label' makes them money – On the other hand, Health-care workers are burning out, because there's no money for more help!

– We're amazed that more young athletes are breaking world records, and it makes us wonder where they'll be in a few years – will they go on to become even greater athletes or coaches – which would be wonderful for them – and then coach the next generation of our young athletes? -- or, will they be 'thrown away' when their trainers & handlers find even 'greater' talents – ??

*We suspect that happens in some countries that compete with ours.

'Smarter, richer, greater, more powerful, wiser ... ' – grammatical 'superlatives' have seized the day, or so it seems, **in the free west** as we used to call ourselves, while millions of people are uprooted by wars, millions are starving & dying because politicians & guerrilla armies prey on them for personal gains – Millions of innocent lives pay for their insanity!

In short: *things aren't looking good for us humans; not to mention our world, that is on fire almost everywhere & for the animals & for all other life* –

In this prosperous time, and in this time of great knowledge and skill in the human race, it seems to me, at least, that we are wasting 'our God given talents! Many of us feel totally helpless and are losing hope that humanity will survive much longer!

* Is that the price we have to pay so America can become great again!

So a handful of athletes become stinking rich!

So children can prove they have the stamina to outperform adults in sports; probably robbed of their childhood by relentless training --

So what that I can afford the latest EV (electric car) or a 'smart house'!

*The 'noise' that is making some people 'crazed' with our rapid technological advancement and potential to live worry-free in the next few years – doesn't seem to be filtering down to adequately address more universal concerns ... that may eliminate cancer or Alzheimer disease or eliminate the mold that attacks our fruit-crops ... or the insect-infestations that ruin hundreds of thousands of tons of crops annually that could feed the world –

*That' 'deafening noise' and its proponents would be well to listen to **the voice of God**, known to the poorest of the poor, the sickest, the youngest; heard by those who have nothing & are treated

like 'nothing!' --

For them – and for us – God's Word is shared today!

I'd like to begin with just a very brief reference to the prophet Hosea, as he speaks about **God's love** for God's people there, in ch.11:3-4. – We have all heard about God's love for His people! **In this passage** it is expressed especially tenderly. [And although I haven't included it in our Scripture selections for today – it **is important for us to hear again**. *As you read it, you can imagine a parent remembering how close they were with their child in those first years of infancy – teaching it to walk, cuddling their little infant, having to bend down to hold their little hand so they could safely walk and explore this new world they were born into –

*Were you a parent or an auntie or uncle who enjoyed this stage in your family's life – ?? For a long time the child's parent is the 'centre' of the child's world. Mom is especially close and sought after – **but then it changes – (pause) Hosea's prophecy doesn't gloss over that!*

*Our Psalm for today tells us the same story with different examples – how God saw his people struggle, and how **God helped them!!** (pause) *Our Psalm may be referring to the Exodus.

It may be referring to later experiences of Israel when deported to Babylon & to other places –

*but, we can see the point of the psalmist – and of the prophets: that **God is merciful**. Over and over again God reveals His heart to us! *Hosea wrote that God said:

*“I will not execute my fierce anger ... My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ... **for I am God** and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.”* (v.9)

Psalm 107, which is a long psalm, concludes: “Let those who are wise give heed to these things, and consider the steadfast love of the Lord.”

“Let those who are wise give heed to these [stories of God's mercy and salvation], and **consider the love of the Lord!**”

*In all the yelling and the bluster among politicians these days – we should be concerned, *as believing Christians*, because God has been eliminated from the Plan to make 'some part' of humanity **great again!!**

I believe our Old Testament Scriptures, esp. the Psalm, are intentionally ambiguous in their historical references so that they remain eternally relevant! *Which generation can survive the ever-changing & challenging affairs of this world without God as their compass and rudder!? * Although the so-called Old Testament is Israel's

Holy Book – we are also addressed by it too! *For that matter, God continues to speak to all the world. God made a new covenant with God's entire creation. (John 3:16) God **excludes no-one** – We **ignore** His message of mercy and salvation **at our own peril!!**

*We disregard God's 'Good News in Jesus' and the message of the Prophets and Judges of old – to our own detriment! *We see that history bears out our selfish and thoughtless inclinations and our 'lostness' without God/Jesus in our hearts!

On the other hand: We are saved; here and now, by listening to God!

Our Gospel for today is a good place to begin the next step in our message: the Jewish teachers

or rabbis of Jesus' time were consulted about almost anything that concerned their community. – Remember, that as far back as the stories about Moses, we see references to Elders having this role (Ex.18:13); then priests and Levites (Lev.1) [after the Golden calf incident] and then scribes & pharisees – the latter were strict adherents and protectors of the laws and traditions of Israel. They held much power over the people.

In our story, Jesus didn't want to take on that role of adjudicator or law-maker! Jesus *objected* to it as we see in some of his criticisms of them & the obligations they put on the people.

*Jesus' concerns were spiritual things – so what he recognized in the man's question, to be included in his brother's inheritance, was **a spiritual failing**; greed perhaps? Jealousy? Wanting to be equal too – to his brother?

Jesus' parable about the rich fool seems 'unrelated' to the question he was asked by the man about his brother's inheritance – but we can see that Jesus' answer makes an even more important point: Death will ultimately solve your problems! Death is the 'great equalizer!' My father used to say: “Der Mensch denkt, aber Gott lenkt.” – (Mankind thinks/plans, but **God** directs). My own recent experience with an inheritance matter seemed so very unfair to me – but as I remembered my father's words, and my Christian upbringing, I was able to let go of trying to 'get our fair share' and instead, asked God for peace of mind and for mercy. The peace that returned to us has enabled Nancy and I to rest peacefully again, without always wondering how to get what seemed rightfully to be ours, or to be afraid of our opponent's next move --!

This lesson is very important for us, isn't it!? God's people, on many occasions, had to wait for generations to be saved from their physical afflictions! A great number of people all over the world **still** experience generations of abuse and persecution – *and we ask them to be patient* – [which isn't fair, is it!?]. Sometimes, as in the biblical story of the Babylonian Exile, God uses their experience, and even the most unlikely leaders of the then known world, to set them free!

* But these lessons are usually only realized in hindsight!!

*Sometimes, however, **we**/the people suffering the yoke of injustice, look '**up**', up into the sky, *waiting for our salvation* 'to come sometime in the future', and we are deaf to God's Word – given to us in the **present** – through Jesus Christ; printed on the pages of our Bibles here, *in front of us* –

*The Gospel has a clear lesson for us today, doesn't it!? **God is in charge!!**

God knows what is best for us – and God acts fairly, lovingly, towards us. Jesus' Word and sacrifice make that clear for us. We should not worship worldly gifts or covet them – (pause)

*In our Epistle; in Paul's letter to the Colossian Church, a community of believers converted from faith-traditions ignorant of the Good News of Jesus, is described here. *It paints **a grim picture** of all the sins and transgressions people are capable of – AND WHICH JEWISH BELIEVERS, at the time, *BELIEVED PAGANS ENDULGED IN!*

Here, it is said by some scholars, we have to differentiate fact from fiction. *Stereotypes are never accurate! While some of the sins the Apostle lists are ours also – they are not exclusively 'the sins of our heathen brothers' – *and seldom][& not usually] the sins of our believing **sisters** – *whom Jewish society swiftly did away with in Jesus' time -- by stoning the female sinner!*

//// So, maybe these are not **our** sins --

* But, maybe *also*, looking through Paul's list of sins **you also noticed** 'greed' (v.5b) – and you noted that Paul makes a point to say that greed is 'adultery'!

*I don't think we usually think of greed as sinful as 'fornication' or being 'unfaithful to our

partner' – *but remember *our Gospel's point*: anything that replaces God in our life is idolatry! Furthermore, and this is very important for Paul to tell us/ his 'congregation': we've been raised from that 'low living' by Jesus – so why return to it!? Seek the things that are above!! – and not because you have something to gain or 'get' or to prove ... ; instead, by **your baptism** you have died to those worldly things and your true life is hidden with Christ in God! (v.3)

*First reading Paul's message to the Colossian Christians, that may sound very lofty; unrealistic! – After all, who is that 'perfect' we might say – *that they always have their baptism in mind!?*

But, friends [in Christ], as we give this more thought we can see that **salvation** isn't God's gift or Jesus' gift *that waits 'for us tomorrow'*. Some people try to please God so they won't lose their place in heaven. They are 'good' *in order to receive* that 'jewel in their crown', as we sometimes hear it said, **when this life is over** – *But there's *another saying* we have: 'don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today!' *Jesus didn't spare any pain or suffering for us – and now [by Jesus' gift] we have 'stripped off' the old self with its practices and have **clothed ourselves** with the new self *which is **being renewed** in knowledge*, according to the image of its creator. In that image/in that renewal [we are all made one] **AND CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL!** –

*That last sentence reminds **me** not to think of myself as better than anyone else – *if you know what I mean?* *It also reminds me of the last verse in our Psalm for today: 'Let those who are wise give heed to these things, **and consider the steadfast love of the Lord.**' And, I am reminded of God's words, spoken through Hosea: “**How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? ...My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender ... for I am God ...!**”(vs.8, 8b, 9c)

*So often we think of our faith as commanding us *to give up everything* so we will please God or so we can enter heaven! *As teens, in church membership class, we often debated this dry, joyless life that we had to suffer through to be a Christian!

*We never thought of the **Gift Jesus gave us & to all of humanity** *just because God loves!!*

We didn't realize that we are already indescribably blessed *because that yoke of having to prove ourselves to anyone; least of all to God, has been removed* and we can 'dress' any way we want!! Yes, Jesus left us 'free choice', *So, *why not choose life!* *We are able to do so!!**

***Salvation is already ours! *That final day of our life will only 'clarify' what is still not clear to us – as the Apostle says in I Corinthians 13:12! “ ... then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.”**

(pause)

*God's Word, it has been said, is a love letter to the Church – But really, it's a love letter to the **world**; to our world **in our time**, to make it possible for us **to survive** another generation, and **to enjoy God's richest blessings!** To listen and to allow God's 'Image/Word' to be seen & heard within us, will be a blessing to everyone we meet! And-- it is more important than the 'noise' that is absent of God's Love for God's Creation, in its entirety! (pause) Amen

Hymn 637

Take my life and let it be

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayers of Thanksgiving and for the People

God: I have some wonderful Books containing prayers: One is called Bread for the Journey.

Another: The Bread Book. Another: the Blessing Cup –

It's clear to me their titles have been carefully chosen! **Prayer and Communion with You, God, are as important for a healthy spirit and mind as food is for the body!** Your Love for Your world and for all that is in it moves our heart to pray for these also – because we see ourselves as 'one'; as blessed with the same blessing & as fragile – as all nature and life is around us! We pray for the world. We pray for unity and health and safety for all! We pray for forgiveness where we have wronged one another. We pray for an end to the never-ending wars and slaughters presently ravaging Your world and Your people! We pray not only for Christians, but for all people and scattered across this creation! Lord, hear our prayers! Feed all Creation with the blessings they crave!

We pray for your Church. We pray that we may be healers in our communities, instead of sowing seeds of division. We pray that our prayers for healing may be like incense before You in the building up of the body of Christ. As we study Your Word speak to our minds and change what needs changing – Make us bold in our sharing of Your Word; as bold as those who shamelessly dismiss Your existence and Your Love and Your life-saving Word!

We pray for ourselves. Help us who feel lost. Help us who need love. Help us who need strength in our faith and in our daily living.

Renew us with your Holy Spirit, that we may trust You, that we may be strong again, as the disheartened disciples were renewed in their faith & strength, to re-enter the world after your death and resurrection, to share Your Good news regardless of *cost to them!* (pause)

Amen

Hymn 726 **May the God of hope (sing once)**

BENEDICTION

Minister: Go forth and serve the Lord. Colossians 3:15-17

Hymn 726 - **May the God of hope (sing again)**

Minister: Live your life-giving God the glory; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace

Postlude

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

***Next Sunday Service, August 10, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

***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. Martin Wehrman** – August 10
- **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.