



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday, August 31, 2025
Worship at Home

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

Call to Worship

Sing aloud to God who is our strength!

Raise a shout of joy to the God of all generations!

For our God feeds us with the finest wheat;

with honey from the rock God will satisfy.

Let us worship the Lord our God,

For God has done great things for us, and so we bring God praise.

Hymn 412 – Come, let us sing to the Lord our song

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION

God of all generations,
 you are the Source of all life and the strength of our lives.
 You know us through and through.
 In Jesus Christ, you entered our lives
 and showed us how to live with hope and generosity.
 Through the Holy Spirit, you nourish us each day
 to inspire acts of hospitality and kindness to those we meet.
 As we worship you,
 fill us with your living water to refresh our faith,
 and make us a blessing to others
 as we serve you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Welcoming God,

**we confess we too often fall short of the kindness and compassion
 we meet in Jesus.**

**You have welcomed us like guests to a banquet,
 yet we find it hard to welcome a stranger in church.**

**You have shown us what matters most in life,
 but we are distracted by worries,
 busy with things that really do not matter.**

Forgive us, O God.

**Teach us to honour you and those we meet
 in all we do and say, for the sake of Christ, our Lord. And now as we conclude in prayer,
 let us share the words Jesus taught us to pray together:**

“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.

Assurance of Pardon

While it is true that we have sinned and fallen short of God’s hope for us, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God’s amazing love. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God I say, in Jesus Christ our sin is forgiven. So be at peace with God, with yourself, and with one another

Hymn 674 – **In the bulb there is a flower**

Children of God Moment

Prayer for Understanding

O God, still in us the worries of the world to listen for your wisdom spoken by prophets, poets, and apostles. Move in us and among us by your Spirit so that in their words, we meet your Living Word, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 81

Isaiah 40 : 27-31, Romans 5 : 1-11

SERMON

I am not okay ... or am I?

I am not okay
I'm barely gettin' by
I'm losin' track of days
And losin' sleep at night

I am not okay
I'm hangin' on the rails
So if I say I am fine
Just know I've learned to hide it well

These are lyrics from a song by country music artist, Jelly Roll and as words they are powerful and paint a picture of someone who is clearly suffering and experiencing some dark, struggling days.

For those not familiar with Jelly Roll, which likely many of you aren't, Jelly Roll displays what some might say a harsh exterior, displaying many tattoos on his face creating a very ominous presence. But, when you actually hear the story behind this rough looking exterior, you quickly

realize this man has a story to tell. Born Jason DeFord, he had a tumultuous life. Not one to be a stranger to the legal system, he was incarcerated many times over a 10 year period for drug related offences, and aggravated robbery. He readily admits, "I was not a nice person, and I deeply regret the harm I caused people" About a year ago, Jelly Roll returned to his Christian faith, expressing, "I **have a heart for God, and I have a heart for Jesus**". Now, with a successful music career, Jelly Roll is sharing his experiences with mental health and troubles with the law through his music hoping to help others struggling.

Now, my family thought I was nuts to even think about working Jelly Roll into this message, but I am intrigued by who he is, where he's been and the message his song imparts. And it doesn't really matter if you've heard of him or not, he is simply a representation of someone who isn't ashamed to express that he is not okay. The power of music and the power of lyrics can make change happen, make you think and reflect on your own journeys.

I think it's fair to say, that all of us here can say those words, "I am not okay". While the song specifically addresses Jelly Roll's own experiences with mental illness, I am not okay can relate to so many aspects of our life's experiences - loneliness, aging, financial concerns, family worries, health worries, employment challenges and on and on. Life is hard, this we all know. But this is what we've got folks! Have you ever heard the expression, Life is Messy? For some, that's an understatement.

I know I can't be the only one
Who's holdin' on for dear life
But God knows, I know
When it's all said and done

I'm not okay
But it's all gonna be all right
It's not okay
But we're all gonna be all right

That line resonates with me - We're all gonna be all right!

While the song centers around feeling "not okay," there's also an underlying theme of hope. In the darkest moments, it may feel as though healing is impossible, but Jelly Roll's message suggests that healing is not only possible, but it's within reach.

I believe this to be the case.

But before I go any farther, I want to say that this message is not to minimize or trivialize others situations. I recognize that mental illness is very real and very serious and a battle many face. I

also acknowledge that people's struggles are very personal so for me to suggest that I have all the answers would be very false and very presumptuous of me.

The purpose of my message is to offer some hope - and that's what I feel about the chorus of this song. The chorus acts as a beacon of hope amidst the turmoil, emphasizing that while the narrator may not be okay at the moment, there is a belief that everything will eventually be alright. The lyric "I'm not OK, but it's all gonna be alright" serves as a mantra for resilience and faith in a better future.

I know one day
We'll see the other side
The pain'll wash away
In a holy water tide
And we all gonna be alright

These words provide a sense of solace, suggesting that someday the pain will fade away, bringing a sense of renewal and healing. Overall, "I Am Not OK" is a raw and honest portrayal of the struggles with mental health, the importance of acknowledging one's true feelings, and the enduring belief in better days ahead despite the current challenges.

From our scripture today:

Psalms 81:6 & 7 states, **"I removed the burden from their shoulders; their hands were set free from the basket. In your distress you called, and I rescued you"** This verse emphasizes God's promise to deliver His people from their troubles and burdens, symbolizing freedom from oppression and hardship. It reflects the theme of divine care and deliverance, reminding believers of God's ability to lift their burdens and provide relief in times of distress.

Our faith is such a gift! "In your distress you called" Ask God for help, take it to God in prayer, include him in your struggles because he gives us hope.

The heading in our Bibles for Romans 5 says Peace and Joy which in of itself I find reassuring and comforting. Verses 1 and 2 states, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God".

When we have faith in Jesus, we are granted reconciliation with God. This means that all barriers and separation caused by sin are removed, and we can have a harmonious and intimate relationship with God. This peace with God brings a sense of wholeness, security, and assurance that we are accepted and loved by our Creator. It is a profound peace that surpasses understanding and fills our hearts with joy and gratitude.

Furthermore, in Jesus, we find hope in the boundless love of God. This love is unconditional, sacrificial, and everlasting. It is a love that transcends human comprehension and offers us a sense of purpose, belonging, and significance. We can rest in the assurance that God cherishes and values us, and His love will guide, protect, and sustain us through all circumstances when we trust in Jesus. This verse reminds us of the transformative power of faith in Jesus, leading us to experience the deep peace and abiding hope that come from being reconciled to God and enveloped in His endless love.

Continuing with our passage from Isaiah

Verse 29 says, He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak, and verse 31, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

In this powerful passage from Isaiah, we hear a message of hope and strength deeply embedded within the verses. The scripture begins by addressing God's chosen people, Israel, who feel lost or overlooked. They express sentiments of being unseen and unheard by their God. This situation often resonates with us when we face difficult times in life, feeling that our struggles are invisible to God. Yet, the text assures us that the Lord is entirely aware of our circumstances and that His understanding transcends human comprehension. It's baffling to us sometimes, how God can care for us so much and so deeply, but this is also our assurance that we can turn to God with whatever our struggles are.

Isaiah emphasizes that even the strongest and most youthful among us can become weary and fall short. In a world that often idolizes strength, fitness, and performance, this reminder is refreshing. We can confidently acknowledge our limits, knowing that God does not expect us to be invincible. Rather, through Him, we can find the endurance needed to keep moving forward even when life challenges us.

I woke up today
I almost stayed in bed
Had the devil on my back
And voices in my head

Some days it ain't all bad
Some days it all gets worse
Some days I swear I'm better off
Layin' in that dirt

This acknowledgment of pain and cautious hope makes Jelly Roll's song stand out, but I also think it is something we can all relate to. And through this connection, we find comfort in knowing we are not alone.

I believe it is all going to be all right - I have to believe that we all have to believe that, because being all right is the only option. God needs us to be all right so his work can continue to be done in whatever way we can. It's crucially important.

Baptized at 14, and then led astray by life, upon Jelly Roll's return to religion and the church, he states, "I was reminded of the genuineness that can be in those walls, too. I was reminded of the humanity and the compassion and the forgiveness, the love and the community, more than anything"

This past week something happened in Minneapolis, a gunman opened fire on Annunciation Catholic Church while children from Annunciation Catholic School were gathered for the opening of the school year mass. Two children were killed and during one of the news reports, a spokesperson, I'm not sure if it was for the police or a school official, commented "There is no hope here, these kids were in church praying when this happened" And that line struck me - **"There is no hope here"** and while in the face of tragedy and darkness the immediate thought might be that there is no hope, I believe hope is still present. Darkness in the world exists - always has and always will, but it is because we have this trustworthy hope in God that we can come together, we can heal, and we can move forward. Hope propels us forward, equips us with the gift of having our faith and God in our lives. Hope turns darkness to light and provides strength of understanding. Hope in the Lord is like the ball always coming back down after it has been tossed up - it's guaranteed! God gave his Son, so we might have this gift of hope. It is a hope that transforms lives, providing comfort, motivation, and a future expectation of glory with God. It inspires renewal and restoration in believers' lives promoting change and healing. My hope, our hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Peter 1:3.

So, let us not forget that we can support each other - we are a family of God - through which he can work to help us make each other's struggles more bearable.

And as summer ends and we start a new month this week, let us return to church with renewed energy and hope for our future, our friends and our faith, because honestly, when it's all said and done, God knows, it's all gonna be alright!

Amen!

Hymn 748 – **Lord of all hopefulness**

Invitation to the Offering

On this Labour Day weekend, we offer to God the fruit of our labour to support the redeeming work God has begun in the world. Give in hope and in trust that God will accomplish more than we can ask or imagine through our gifts.

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

O God, bless the gifts we bring today, as well as the time, talent, and concern we will offer you this week. We trust that, through the power of your Spirit, these gifts will accomplish more than we can ask or imagine, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and for the People

God of all times and all people,
on this Labour Day weekend,
we thank you for all the skill and talent with which you bless your people.
Thank you for what we have accomplished through the work we do,
and for what each one of us contributes to the wellbeing of our community.
Inspire us to work together on the challenges we face
and surprise us with the solutions to problems that once seemed overwhelming.
God, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Today we pray for all those who labour in difficult situations:
for children who work in terrible conditions and are paid very little.;
for migrant workers who must labour far away from their families;
and for all those who are underpaid or unjustly treated in their workplace.
God, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who cannot labour:
for those who are unemployed or underemployed;
for those who have become injured on the job or too sick to keep working;
for those who are denied the opportunity to earn a living because of war or discrimination.
God, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who labour in our community.
for those who must work today and tomorrow instead of enjoying this long weekend;
for those who must work several jobs in order to care for their families;
for those who work at jobs we wouldn't do ourselves because they are messy or unpleasant.
God, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

And on this Labour Day, O God, we offer gratitude for laws that protect children,
for health and safety practices that prevent tragedies in the workplace,
and for generations before us who advocated for vulnerable employees,
fair wages and equal opportunities.

Thank you for the work that goes on behind the scenes,
delivering things we enjoy and services we rely on.

Help us to look beyond these things

to picture the faces of those whose work provides for all our needs.

Through their faces, let us see your face, Creator and Sustainer of all that is.

Hymn 349 – **My hope is built on nothing less**

BENEDICTION

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. So let us go out to love and serve him in all whom we meet. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, both this day, and every day. Amen.

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace

Postlude

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

***Next Sunday Service, September 7 at North Pelham – Rev. Jacob is back!**

***Watermelon Party - On Sunday, September 7, we invite everyone to a Watermelon Party following worship! Come enjoy sweet watermelon, joyful fellowship, and give thanks for God's blessings—whether expected or delightfully unexpected.**

***The RPCW will meet on Wednesday, Sept. 3 at the church at 1:30 PM**

***Presbytery Pulpit Exchange: On Sunday, September 14, we are excited to take part in a special Presbytery of Niagara pulpit exchange! Rev. Jacob will be leading worship at Kirk on the Hill in Fonthill, while we warmly welcome Rev. Anita Van Nest**

*** Wednesday Bible study led by Diane McMillan will resume on September 10 at North Pelham at 10:00 am**

***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.

***Reach Jacob at jacoble0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797**