



**Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge**  
**Pentecost 16 Sunday, Septemer 28, 2025**  
**Worship at Home**

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**Welcome and announcements**

**Call to Worship**

**L:** Jesus told a parable: “There was a rich man who lived in luxury every day. And at his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus.” (Lk 16: 19-20)

**P: We come to worship God who opens our eyes to those at the gates of our lives.**

**L:** The rich man did not see Lazarus, though he was always near.

**P: We come to worship God who calls us to notice, to care, and to love.**

**L:** True abundance is not found in riches or comfort.

**P: True abundance is found in compassion, in generosity, and in Christ.**

**All: Come, let us worship God—who meets us here, calls us by name, and sends us out to see and serve one another in love.**

Hymn 307

**God of the sparrow, God of the whale**

**PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord’s Prayer**

Here we are, O God.

We have come. We have come to find refreshment. We have come to enlighten and energize our souls. We have come to build up our faith, deepen our hope, expand our love—so that we may see beauty where once we saw only ugliness.

But, to do this, we also realize, O God, that there are obstacles in our lives—beginning in our own hearts. Some of us carry hardness of heart toward certain people; some of us hold on to grievance and resentment; some of us wrestle with envy and jealousy; some of us bear hurt so deep we fear that if we spoke it aloud, we would unravel. Some of us are weighed down by worry and overwhelm in circumstances and situations that distract us, O God.

Hear us now, as we bring our personal confessions to you in the silence. (silent prayer)

Free us, O God. Heal us, O God.

Transform us, O God. Walk with us on our journey from darkness to light. Show us your way of repentance, your way of forgiveness and compassion. Show us how to enjoy, how to rejoice, and how to give thanks along the way.

And so, with trust in your mercy, we pray together the words Jesus taught us, 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 229                      **Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love**

### **Children of God Moment**

#### **Prayer for Understanding**

God of mercy,  
who sees the poor at the gate and calls each one by name, open our eyes with compassion, that we may hear your Word with understanding and live with hearts made generous in Christ. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGES                      Psalm 113; Luke 16:19-31**

**Sermon                                      The Man who Lies at the Gate**

### **SERMON                                      The Man who Lies at the Gate**

One common myth about Canada is that it is a wealthy and generous nation with a dependable social welfare system for those in need. According to UNICEF’s Report Card 18 of 2023, Canada still faces significant issues related to childhood poverty. Currently, Canada ranks 19th out of 39 wealthy countries regarding child poverty, with approximately 17.2 per cent of Canadian children living in income poverty. Although Canada has made progress—reducing child poverty by about 22.7 per cent since the early 2010s—it still trails behind many of its peers. The report highlights that inequality remains persistent: children from poorer families continue to encounter limited access to resources, nutritious food, and opportunities compared to those from wealthier backgrounds. In fact, the disparity between the rich and the poor in Canada is not only substantial but also growing over time, urging us to take more decisive action and make a stronger commitment to ensure that all children can grow up with dignity, security, and hope.

Does this matter to us as Christians? Yes, it matters because as Christians we need to love and care for one another. But how do we deal with such a problem? One way that is quite familiar is judgment: we judge poor people for being poor to avoid feeling too overwhelmed or guilty. By judging them, we give ourselves a way out. “People are lazy. If they were motivated and worked hard enough, they would not be so poor,” we say. Or “Sure I can help here and there, but I cannot do anything significant to change the situation. Besides, Canada is a generous nation. We take in a lot of people.” By judging people for their problems, and denying our individual role, we put the responsibility on the state (and on them) in order to limit how badly we ourselves feel about their situation.

There is another big problem besides judgmentalism, and that is apathy. Apathy is the failure to recognize others and to care about their suffering. A failure to recognize means we don’t have any feelings towards people who are suffering. We don’t even notice they are there. Imagine

how detrimental it is for the welfare of a society, of a nation when people are so self-absorbed with their own interests, their own concerns, and their own suffering, that they never step out of their space to engage with the world around them.

As human beings in the web of God's life—interconnected, interdependent, and intertwined with each other—such failure to care is the worst kind of spiritual disease we can ever suffer. The opposite of love is apathy or indifference, not hate. I believe that we are dangerously vulnerable to this spiritual disease of apathy. In fact, this disease called apathy has already made its way into Canadian society where individualism is the dominant culture.

Today's gospel reading is a story about apathy and indifference. In order to understand the message from Jesus' parable, we need to understand the context of Jesus' time. The rich man and Lazarus stand for types in Jesus's society, and I dare to say in ours also, even though, unlike Canada, his world was one where there was no social safety net whatsoever: no publicly funded health care services, schools, and services of different kinds to support people when they were vulnerable and in need. Individual persons and families were basically on their own in Jesus' time. If misfortune struck them and their source of income went down the drain, they were vulnerable, hopeless, and ultimately dependent on the charity of other people.

On the surface of the story the rich man has a good life. He has the best of clothes and looks sharp. He dresses "in the most expensive clothes" and lives "in great luxury every day." He enjoys his life in pleasure and comfort. But we are also told in the next verse that there is a poor man who lies just outside his gate.

The poor man is sick and "covered with sores." Besides, he is hungry and hopes "to eat the bits of food that fall from the rich man's table." He is a miserable, sick, and desperate human being. Interestingly, in the story he is given a name – Lazarus - while the rich man is not given a name. And as life goes on, the rich man remains so absorbed with his good life that he fails to notice that Lazarus even exists.

Such situations are alive and well here in Canada where we live also. How informed are we about our neighbors' situations? How much do we know about the real people who end up on the streets or in bankruptcy? People sometimes fall into desperate situations. Whether they have made mistakes or have just been unfortunate, we should not presume that we are somehow different from them.

There is another point against the rich man. God helps Lazarus, while the rich man stands condemned. Now the rich man recognizes Lazarus and hopes Lazarus will come over and give him a drop of water to cool his burning tongue. And the rich man also asks for a chance to go tell his brothers about the fate that awaits them if they continue to live as he has. The rich man doesn't express any regret, repentance, or shame. His only regret appears to be that his brothers will end up just like him.

What then would the rich man tell his brothers? Maybe he would tell them that they should be generous and help the poor. Unfortunately, the rich man does not change his heart. He does not

see that wealth and abundance have nothing to do with luxurious clothing and elegant living. He does not see that the material things of the world can be a terrible distraction from life's real meaning.

The rich man loses his spiritual identity because he focuses on himself. We lose our spiritual identity if we are indifferent to others in need and if we lack the energy of compassion and generosity. We can't live out our individual lives abundantly if we lose our spiritual identity and don't care for others in need.

Poverty plays a role in inviting us to build up and grow our spirits, not our bank accounts. It invites us to genuine abundance, which is about expanding the energy in us, so that we both notice and care about others, rather than judging them. Poverty invites us to grow our spirits so that we become faithful and responsible children of God. And that means we have to recognize and love all other people as persons.

This is precisely what it means for us to be the hands, feet, voice, and heart of Christ in the world. It is the practical application of our faith. And in our own church family, we see this compassion taking shape in real ways. As we celebrate Thanksgiving, we gather food for those in need through *Pelham Cares*. In doing so, we are not blind to the Lazaruses at our gates—we see them, we care for them, and we share from the abundance God has given us.

And very soon, on North Pelham's Anniversary Sunday, we will bless young university students who need help and support for their spiritual journey. Through our special offering for the *Brock Chaplaincy*, we will walk beside them, letting them know they are not alone, but surrounded by the care and prayers of God's people. These are glimpses of what it means to live abundantly—not in riches or comfort, but in compassion and generosity.

May we never be complacent or indifferent when it comes to poverty in our community and nation. May we build up our spirits in abundance by opening ourselves up to feel the pain of misfortune that is poverty. May we encounter many people who have names like Lazarus and notice them and care for them, even if it is just one person at a time. And may we trust that, whatever we give, will be multiplied into what Jesus describes as the treasure in heaven that can never be taken from us, because it is who we are. Amen.

Hymn 722

**Lord, whose love**

**Invitation to the Offering**

**Doxology**

**Prayer of Dedication**

Compassionate God,

receive our gifts and use them to open eyes, lift burdens, and share your abundance with all.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Prayers of Thanksgiving and for the People**

Awesome God, what a life you have given us to live! Sometimes, O God, life feels so uneven—what we face, compared to others. At times it is overwhelming what we must cope with, yet you have promised to provide the strength we need to endure, to heal, and to discover peace and abundance once more.

Sometimes we lose our spirit, our will, our joy, our passion for life. Yet you call us to live in the rhythms of life, to nurture body, mind, and spirit. You do not forsake us, even when we feel forsaken. You call us to love the world you love, and to welcome you into our lives, so that the seed of love in us may grow and bear rich fruit. We trust, O God, that you can resurrect what feels dead.

And so, in the spirit of Christ's love, we make intercession for the world around us: for those struggling to make ends meet in a world where some have vast luxuries; for those who suffer the consequences of environmental disasters taking place across the globe; for families grieving the death of loved ones, unexpectedly, through accident or in the call of duty; for all places torn by social unrest, poverty, and war.

We name before you now, in silence, particular people and situations in need of your reconciling and healing power. (pause)

Merciful God, we also lift before you the needs of our own congregations—the sufferings known and unknown to us, the burdens both small and heavy, the worries and stresses that weigh upon hearts. We pray for those among us who are ill or in weakness, and for those who feel the limits of aging, especially the loss of strength or functions of the body once taken for granted.

We pause in silence, O God, as we offer prayer for our own need, or for a beloved family member, a dear friend, or a particular situation where your help and grace are longed for. (pause)

Surround them with your comfort, remind them of your steadfast love, and assure them that they are never forgotten, but precious in your sight. Grant to us all the grace to carry one another's burdens, to rejoice in one another's joys, and to walk together in faith, until your kingdom of compassion and peace is revealed in its fullness. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Hymn 490

**God of grace and God of glory**

### **BENEDICTION**

May the love of God open your eyes with compassion, the grace of Christ guide your steps in generosity, and the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen you to serve. Amen.

**Sung Response- Go Now In Peace**

**Postlude**

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

**\*Next Sunday Service, October 5, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

**\* Wednesday Bible study led by Diane McMillan 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.

**\*Fall Fellowship at Rockway:** Today, following the service, we'll share in a joyful lunch together, enjoying a time of fellowship. All are warmly invited to join this special occasion.

**\*North Pelham Church Building Use on Sunday, September 28:** Please note that our church building will be used by Living Hope Presbyterian Church of Beamsville for their morning and afternoon worship services on September 28th.

**\*World Communion Sunday:** Join us this **Sunday, October 5**, as we unite with Christians around the world to celebrate World Communion Sunday.

**\*Thanksgiving Food Donations:** This year, we will be collecting non-perishable food items and fresh produce for **Pelham Cares** on **both Sunday, October 5, and Thanksgiving Sunday, October 12**. Your generous donations will build a beautiful Harvest Table, symbolizing our gratitude and commitment to caring for those in need in our community. Monetary gifts are also welcome and greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping us share the joy of Thanksgiving with everyone.

**\*Mark your calendars** - Sunday October 19, 2025 is First Presbyterian Church North Pelham's 197<sup>th</sup> Anniversary service with guest minister, Rev. Mark Lewis.

**\*Custom Sewing Services by Belqis** – call 905-325-8927 or email [belquisebrahimi9@gmail.com](mailto:belquisebrahimi9@gmail.com) Belqis' arrival to Canada was sponsored by the Niagara Presbytery - please consider her custom sewing service should you need anything, hemmed or made.

**\*Update on Rev. Jacob Lee's Wider Ministry:** While Jacob has completed his term as Moderator of the Presbytery, he has been appointed as the Interim Moderator for Kirk on the Hill Presbyterian Church in Fonthill as of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. He will also continue to serve as the Interim Moderator for Stamford Presbyterian Church. Please continue to keep him in your prayers as he takes on these responsibilities.

**\*Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits.** Reach Jacob at [jacoblee0501@gmail.com](mailto:jacoblee0501@gmail.com) or 289-213-2797.