



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
17th Sunday after Pentecost, September 20, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Jesus says, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'" (Mark 12:29–30)

P: We come to church to learn how to love God with all that we have and all that we are.

L: "The second most important commandment is this: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'" (Mark 12:31)

P: We come to church to learn how to love our neighbours, near and far, as much as we love ourselves.

L: And this morning, we come to learn something else too —

P: what it means to love ourselves. Let us worship God together!

Hymn 371 **Love divine, all loves excelling**

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Awesome and loving God,

We come to worship you, seeking faith for today, hope for tomorrow, and love to guide us on the way. But where do we begin, O God?

We come with our own needs and concerns, while also carrying the needs of those around us. We try to give ourselves in love, yet we often feel inadequate, guilty, frustrated, or tired. Sometimes we feel unappreciated, overworked, neglected, or taken for granted.

We want to be loving, gracious, and faithful, but we confess that our patience sometimes grows thin. We become resentful when our efforts go unnoticed. We hide our pain, ignore our limits, and pretend that we are fine when we are not. Hear us now, O God, as we open our hearts honestly before you. (silence)

Loving God, you know us completely, and still you love us. Yet we confess that we do not always believe this. We sometimes think that we must prove our worth, earn the love of others, or keep giving until nothing remains.

Forgive us when we forget that we, too, are your beloved children. Teach us to see ourselves through your compassionate eyes. Remind us that we are precious, not because of what we accomplish, but because you created us and called us your own. Forgive us and renew us

through your generous and unfailing love. Help us receive your grace without shame, care for ourselves with wisdom, and love our neighbours with compassion. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who hears our cries, carries our burdens, and teaches us to pray together, 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.

Passing the Peace of Jesus Christ

Hymn 682 **Just as I am, without one plea**

Prayer for Illumination

Loving God,
open our ears to hear your Word, and our hearts to receive it. Remind us that we are beloved — not for what we do, but because we are yours. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Responsive Psalm 103: 1–14
Mark 10:46–52; Mark 12:28–34;

Sermon **Loved as We Are**

This past summer, my family faced a hard decision. My mother is ninety-five years old, and her health had grown too weak for her to keep living on her own. She wanted to stay with her children. But her care needs had grown beyond what any of us could give her at home, and in the end, a nursing home became necessary.

Everyone in my family loved my mother. Everyone wanted what was best for her. But love did not make the decision easy. My oldest and second-oldest brothers have always loved each other, yet over the years each one had carried the family's responsibilities differently, and old tensions came to the surface. Weariness, guilt, and fear got mixed in with the love. Some of you know this experience well. Families face hard decisions about aging parents, health, and caregiving all the time. We can love one another deeply and still disagree. We can want to help and feel exhausted at the same time.

That experience taught me something I want to share with you this morning: sacrificial love does not mean pretending we have no needs, no limits, and no pain of our own.

In today's Gospel, a teacher of the law asks Jesus, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answers, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Then he adds, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." We often stop at the first half of that sentence and rush past the last two words. But

this morning I want us to sit with them: **as yourself**. What does it mean to love our neighbour as ourselves — and what does it mean to love ourselves in a way that is healthy and faithful, not selfish?

As Christians, we rightly honour sacrificial love. Jesus says, "No one has greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends," and he shows us that love through the cross. But sacrificial love does not mean we must ignore our own health, bury every feeling, or carry every burden alone. Jesus does not ask us to destroy ourselves in the name of love. He invites us to give ourselves in love while remembering that we, too, are beloved children of God.

Our second Gospel reading shows us what that looks like. Bartimaeus is a blind man sitting beside the road. When he hears that Jesus is passing by, he cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The crowd tells him to be quiet. They treat him as though his voice and his need do not matter. But Bartimaeus cries out even louder. And here is one of the most beautiful moments in the whole Gospel: Jesus stops. He hears the voice others wanted to silence. He notices the man others overlooked.

Then Jesus asks him, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus answers honestly, "My teacher, let me see again." He isn't being selfish by naming his own need — he's being honest. He trusts Jesus enough to ask. And Bartimaeus doesn't just receive his sight and walk away. Mark tells us he follows Jesus on the way. He receives mercy, and then he becomes a disciple. That's the pattern of grace: we cry out, Jesus stops, healing is given, and we follow.

Jesus may be asking each of us that same question this morning: "What do you want me to do for you?" Maybe your answer is, "Help me see hope again." Maybe it's, "Help me carry this grief," or "Give me the courage to ask for help," or "Teach me to rest without feeling guilty." God already knows what we need. But like Bartimaeus, we are invited to name our need honestly and bring it to Jesus.

That's where healthy self-love begins — not with saying "I am better than everyone else," but with recognizing, "I am also someone God loves." Self-love isn't pride, and it isn't self-indulgence either. It's seeing ourselves the way God sees us: made in God's image, carrying both gifts and limits, forgiven where we've failed, and worth just as much when we can no longer do what we once could.

That message matters in a world that measures people by what they produce. When we can't work as hard, walk as quickly, or remember as clearly as we used to, we may start to wonder if we still matter. The Gospel gives us a clear answer: yes, we matter — not because of what we accomplish, but because we belong to God. Before we did anything to earn it, God loved us. When we're weak and need to depend on others, God still loves us. Our worth was never something we earned. It was given.

So here is what I want to leave with you this week: name one need, and bring it to Jesus — out loud, in prayer, or to someone who can help you carry it. Maybe that means finally telling your doctor how you're really doing. Maybe it means letting your family help instead of insisting

you're fine. Maybe it just means saying to God, in plain words, "Here is what I'm carrying." Bartimaeus did not remain silent on the roadside. He trusted Jesus enough to cry out and bring his need before him. This week, do not suffer in silence. Bring what you are carrying to Jesus and, when needed, to someone who can walk beside you.

This isn't selfish, and it won't separate you from your neighbour — it will help you love your neighbour better. When we ignore our own limits for too long, we grow tired and short-tempered, and our love for others runs thin. But when we let God and others care for us, we're renewed, and we become more patient, more able to forgive, more able to serve. Receiving care and giving care are not opposites. Both belong to a faithful life of love.

There will still be seasons when love asks for sacrifice — parents caring for children, spouses caring for one another through illness, this congregation supporting those who are grieving or struggling. But we don't make those sacrifices to prove we deserve love. We make them because God has already loved us first. Jesus says, "Love your neighbour as yourself" — not above yourself, not below yourself, but together, inside the same love of God. My neighbour is precious to God, and so am I. My neighbour needs mercy, and so do I.

Jesus stopped for Bartimaeus because God's love notices the people the world walks past. On the cross, Jesus gave himself for us completely. In the resurrection, God showed that suffering and death would not have the last word. That is the love holding you this morning.

When the world tells you that you are no longer useful, remember: you are beloved. When guilt tells you that you have not done enough, remember: God's grace is greater than your failures. When grief tells you that you are alone, remember: Jesus hears your cry. And when you wonder whether you are worthy of love, look to the cross and hear God say, "You are mine. You are precious. You are loved."

So let us love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Let us receive the love God offers us. Let us care for ourselves as people who belong to God. Then, renewed by grace, let us rise and follow Jesus on the way, just as Bartimaeus did.

Like Bartimaeus, let us cry out when we need mercy; and like Jesus, let us stop when someone else is crying. Let us receive God's care without shame and share God's love without fear. For we are loved by God, held by grace, and called to love one another. Amen.

Hymn 746

What a friend we have in Jesus

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God,

you loved us long before we had anything to give back. These gifts are our thank-you for that love, not a payment to earn it. Use them to care for others, and remind us that we, too, remain beloved as we give. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

God of everlasting love,

We thank you for the precious gift of life and for all the people with whom we share it. We thank you for our families, friends, and church community, for creatures great and small, and for the beauty and abundance of your creation.

As your beloved children, remind us that we belong to you and that we are deeply connected with one another and with all that you have made. We thank you for today's Gospel, which reminds us to love you with our whole being and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Teach us the true meaning of faithful love. Help us to care for ourselves without guilt, to recognize our needs and limitations, and to receive help when our burdens become too heavy. Then renew us so that we may care for others with patience, generosity, and compassion.

Loving God, our church family has carried much grief. We remember Jim, Roy, and Bill with gratitude, and we continue to pray for their families and friends. In the quiet and lonely moments, surround them with your comforting presence and assure them that those they love remain forever within your care.

Today we pray especially for Tim and Pat, whose hearts are overwhelmed by the sudden death of their beloved son. There are no words large enough for their sorrow. Hold them gently in their shock, pain, and emptiness. Give them strength for each day, and place loving people around them who will listen, remain near, and help carry their burdens.

Receive their beloved son into your everlasting mercy, and let your compassionate love hold this whole family when faith feels difficult and hope seems far away. Make us attentive to every cry for help. Like Jesus, teach us to stop, listen, and care. May no grieving, lonely, sick, or struggling person among us feel forgotten or left to suffer alone.

Fill us with the faith, hope, peace, and love that come from you. May these gifts guide our personal lives, our families, our church, and our community. We place ourselves and all those we love into your faithful and compassionate hands, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 371

Love divine, all loves excelling

BENEDICTION

May God remind you that you are loved. May Jesus meet you where you are. May the Spirit renew you to love your neighbour as yourself. All God's people said, "Amen."

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace

Postlude

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***Next Sunday Service, Sept. 27, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

In Loving Memory of Timothy Clark Norton:

With deep sadness, we share that Tim and Pat's beloved son, Tim, has died suddenly. Visitation will be held at Pelham Funeral Home, 1292 Pelham Street, Fonthill, on Tuesday, September 22, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. A memorial service celebrating Tim's life will be held at North Pelham Church on Wednesday, September 23, at 11:00 a.m., followed by interment at North Pelham Cemetery and a reception in the Youth Hall. Please hold Tim, Pat, and their family in your prayers, surrounding them with God's comfort, love, and peace.

***Tai Chi – Every Monday:** Our free Tai Chi classes continue every Monday as part of our church's community outreach ministry. Everyone from our church family and the wider community is warmly welcome! Classes begin at 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., with no charge to participants. Come and enjoy gentle exercise, health benefits, and friendly fellowship together!

***Wednesday Bible Study:** Our Bible Study meets every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. at North Pelham. Come grow in God's Word, faith, and fellowship. Everyone is warmly welcome!

***Thursdays – Outreach 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.

***Prayer Requests and Pastoral Care:** If you or someone you know needs prayer or pastoral care, please contact your elder or Rev. Jacob at 289-213-2797 or jacoblee0501@gmail.com. "Carry one another's burdens." — Galatians 6:2