

Collect, Readings and Sermon
Sunday 7th June 2026
The First Sunday after Trinity

Collect

God,
the strength of all those who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Hosea 5:15-6:6

I will return again to my place
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face.
In their distress they will beg my favour:
'Come, let us return to the Lord;
for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us;
he has struck down, and he will bind us up.
After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.
Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord;
his appearing is as sure as the dawn;
he will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that water the earth.'
What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?

What shall I do with you, O Judah?
Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets,
I have killed them by the words of my mouth,
and my judgement goes forth as the light.
For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.

Psalm 50:7-15

The response to the Psalm is:

Hide not your face from your servant, O Lord.

Romans 4:13-25

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations', according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him', were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax-collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' But when he heard this, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'

While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, 'My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.' And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.' Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made

you well.' And instantly the woman was made well. When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute-players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, 'Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. And the report of this spread throughout that district.

Post Communion

Almighty and eternal God,
you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
and live and reign in the perfect unity of love:
hold us firm in this faith,
that we may know you in all your ways
and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory;
holy and eternal Trinity,
one God, now and for ever.

Sermon

I trained for ministry at Westcott House in Cambridge. The training was residential, so in my 30s I found myself living in shared accommodation rather like an undergraduate leaving home for the first time. It was not without its challenges. However, throughout the entire two years, there was an observation that I held onto. On the day of our arrival, there was a community service of Holy Communion. In the sermon, the Principal of the college said something like this. You are probably looking around wondering how it is that the people alongside you were selected for ministry in the church. And they are probably thinking exactly the same thing about you.

It is fair to say that living in community, especially once you have spent many years living in your own space, does not always bring out the best in anyone. This was, I think, part of the learning experience towards ordination. God calls each and every one of us. Not because we are perfect. Not because we have got everything sorted. Not because we don't mistake. But because it is in the nature of God to call and commission us.

This morning's gospel reading is a stark reminder to expect the unexpected when it comes to our life of faith and our understanding of God. The first part of the reading describes the call of Matthew to be one of Jesus's disciples. So little detail is provided that its significance can almost pass us by. But there are so many things to note. And so many things that will have surprised, even shocked, those who were getting to know Jesus.

In one brief sentence we hear that Jesus is walking along and sees Matthew sitting at the tax booth. I just love the way that it is the most natural thing in the world for Jesus to be spotting disciples. He hasn't set up a mission programme or launched a campaign with a catchy slogan. Neither has he plunged an eye-watering amount of money into a "growing disciples" initiative. He is, quite simply, out on a walk, and notices Matthew in his tax booth.

It's worth noticing that we are quite a way through Matthew's gospel at this stage – in chapter 9. We have heard about Jesus's birth and early years; his baptism and temptations; he has started his ministry, most particularly with the lengthy teaching of the sermon on the

mount, as long as some very significant miracles, some of healing. We are not told whether Matthew has come across Jesus by this stage. While this may have been his first encounter, it is perfectly likely that over the time of Jesus's ministry to this point, Matthew had been listening and observing intently. He may have already been almost convinced.

What we do know is that as soon as Jesus asked Matthew to follow, he did so. No questions asked. It might feel almost breathtaking to us, but perhaps it tells us something about the transformative nature of the person he encountered in Jesus. We also know that Matthew was a tax collector. And while that may seem insignificant to us, it was highly significant in that culture. Tax collectors were largely mistrusted because, while they were paid to collect taxes on behalf of the emperor, it was reasonably common practice to take a cut for themselves, making the burden of taxation that much higher. They were also quite often foreign occupiers, which was equally unpopular.

As the gospel goes on to suggest, tax collectors were seen in the same bracket as sinners. Mixing with tax collectors is not what was expected of religious officials, and so Jesus's tendency to do so raised eyebrows to say the least. And yet here we get a glimpse into the purpose of Jesus's ministry. When criticised for mixing with the wrong sort, he simply says that they are the ones most in need of him. When it comes to Jesus, we need to expect the unexpected.

This sense of our expectations being overturned continues into the second section of the gospel reading, the two stories set alongside one another of the daughter of the leader of the synagogue, and the woman with haemorrhages.

At this stage I just want to briefly explain a technicality about the gospels. You may know that it is widely agreed that the gospel of Mark was written first, and that the gospels of Matthew and Luke drew heavily on the material in Mark's gospel, and this story is one that appears in Mark's gospel. Throughout Mark's gospel there are examples of something called intercalation, which is a posh way of saying that one story is set inside another, because they two are supposed to be understood together. You can see how it works in this story. There is the story of the synagogue leader's daughter, which is interrupted by the story of the

woman with haemorrhages, and then concluded. This is also sometimes called the Markan sandwich.

What is relevant here is that two stories of healing are set alongside one another to compare them, contrast them, and interpret them together. The first person who approaches Jesus is the leader of the synagogue. He will have been a person of significance. He believed that he had the right to approach Jesus and did so openly. No one will have been surprised by his action. And no one will have been surprised by Jesus's decision to go with this man to find his daughter.

The woman, by contrast, has been suffering for years. To those hearing these stories, the significance of this affliction would not have gone unnoticed. A woman experiencing bleeding was considered unclean, so this woman would likely have been on the margins of society for some time. Even she did not believe that she had the right to approach Jesus. Notice that: she said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.' The leader of the synagogue went straight up to Jesus, face to face. This woman could not even bring herself to speak out loud.

And here is the unexpected. Jesus gives the woman his attention. Just as he has given attention to the leader of the synagogue, so too he gives attention to the woman with haemorrhages. He expresses no concern about whether or not she should have touched him. He simply turns; sees her; and says: 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.'

I wonder where the real healing was here. Of course the gospel indicates the physical healing, and we cannot underestimate its importance. But this woman who was so unsure of her worthiness that she would not even speak aloud is seen by Jesus. There are many levels of transformation here. And Jesus continues on his way to the leader of the synagogues house, where the daughter is likewise healed.

This morning's gospel reading is such an important reminder to constantly be looking beyond what we might expect. It can be so easy to get caught up in our own view of the

world that we forget to look beyond it. It can also be easy to make assumptions about people from the smallest amount of information – whether it is what they look like, or how they talk, or even what they say.

In the scriptures we are constantly reminded to expect the unexpected. That we will find signs of God's work in the most unexpected places. Perhaps that is something to take into the coming week, wherever it is that we find ourselves.

Amen