

# St Thomas Methodist Church, Exeter

June 2026

## *Weekly Worship Resources*

### **07 June – Beyond hope**

After calling Matthew, a tax collector, to follow him, Jesus is criticised for his association with ‘tax collectors and sinners’. He responds that he was sent to those who are sick. The gathering is interrupted by a synagogue leader whose daughter is sick. On his way to the girl, a woman who has been ill for 12 years touches Jesus’ cloak. Jesus restores the girl to life and heals the woman. News of this spread quickly!

Today’s passages show how Jesus offers love and acceptance for those who seem beyond hope. How might we live as a witness to others so that no one sees themselves as beyond hope?

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 5 Year A: Genesis 12:1-9; Psalm 33:1-12; Romans 4.13-25; **Matthew 9.9-13, 18-26**

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26 [NRSVA]

### **The Calling of Matthew**

<sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax-collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?’ <sup>12</sup>But when he heard this, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup>Go and learn what this means, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.’

## **A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed**

<sup>18</sup>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.' <sup>19</sup>And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. <sup>20</sup>Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, <sup>21</sup>for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.' <sup>22</sup>Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And instantly the woman was made well. <sup>23</sup>When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute-players and the crowd making a commotion, <sup>24</sup>he said, 'Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. <sup>25</sup>But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. <sup>26</sup>And the report of this spread throughout that district.



### **Thought for the week**

The predominant theme throughout the Gospel of Matthew is Jesus's declaration that he has come to seek and save 'the lost Sheep of the House of Israel' – the Jews. He gets into big trouble for expanding his search to the Gentiles, but in today's reading Jesus encounters trouble enough simply by seeking those within the house of Israel – the Jews – who are lost. We know Jesus' heart is for all people; no one is beyond hope.

Today's passage opens with Jesus back in his hometown, where he calls Matthew a tax collector to follow him. Here we see Jesus not

only reaching out to the lost and lowly, but also to the privileged and powerful. Matthew's story raises the question of inclusion and exclusion: who is 'in' and who is 'out'.

At that time, there were people considered by society to be either in or out: there were the Romans who were in – the occupying power – who had their own society and as the oppressors looked down at the Jews; there were the Jews who had their own hierarchies of who was important and who wasn't, who can contribute and who should be shunned – the Jews looked down on the Gentiles.

Jesus shows that there is no place for saying who is in and who is out, including within his group of disciples. In the early chapters of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus begins his ministry by calling specific people to be his disciples. Now, Jesus calls Matthew to follow him. The choice of Matthew, you'd have to say, was a little bit out of the box – the other disciples were mainly fishermen.

Even as a Jew, Matthew would have been totally surprised when Jesus came into his life – something beyond what he was expecting or could even hope for. When Jesus reached out and invited him to follow and be a disciple, it would have been a total turnaround, not only leaving his life of privilege and ill-gotten wealth but also following a teacher who obviously upset the establishment. Can you imagine?

When Jesus calls Matthew, it provokes immediate controversy. The Pharisees and Jewish leaders were outraged. And maybe this is Jesus' point. When the Pharisees saw who Jesus was hanging out with, Jesus' response was: 'If you are well, you don't need a doctor. I came only to seek and save the sick' (9:12). It's a little parable. Jesus says to his critics in effect: You are all insiders, saved, among the elect, you are already in; you don't need an invitation.

In these stories, Jesus invites us to examine our relationship with him and ask the question: Have we allowed Jesus into our lives to change us each day as we grow our faith?

The story of Matthew's calling is about profound grace, about a life turned around. It's a story that calls us to rejoice for all who had been beyond hope and have been found and can claim that Jesus is Lord. It is also a story that challenges each of us to go and share that hope with one another and those who think they are beyond hope.

### **A prayer of confession**

Lord, you always had time for people.

Forgive us that so often we misuse time.

We miss opportunities to serve you.

*Forgive us, Lord, and make us ever hopeful.*

There are times we don't have enough faith to hope in you.

We don't believe you can heal us in the way we need it most.

*Forgive us, Lord, and make us ever hopeful.*

There are times we write people off, decide they're beyond hope.

Stay within our own four walls, not venturing out to serve you.

*Forgive us, Lord, and make us ever hopeful.*

### **Assurance of forgiveness**

Lord Jesus, our living hope, you came to call sinners, not the righteous.

As we stand in penitence before you, we have the assurance that we are forgiven.

Your powerful restoring love, the hope of new life ever present.

Life in all its fullness follows as we come to you with hope in our hearts. Amen

### **14 June – Out of your comfort zone**

Jesus sends out the 12 disciples to be like shepherds bringing good news and healing to the lost sheep of Israel. Jesus instructs them how to go, what to take and how to respond to welcome (or unwelcome) behaviour. They are not to take much so that they can rely on the kindness of strangers.

This week, we explore how sharing the good news with others is a key part of faith and how we can learn to do so, even when it might feel challenging.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 6 Year A: Genesis 18:1-15,(21:1-7); Psalm 116:1-2,12-19; Romans 5.1-8; **Matthew 9.35-10.8**

Matthew 9:35-10:8 [NRSVA]

### **The Harvest Is Great, the Labourers Few**

<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’

### **The Twelve Apostles**

**10** Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup>These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

### **The Mission of the Twelve**

<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup>but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim the good news, “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” <sup>8</sup>Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

### **Thought for the week**

Comfort zones. It seems to be quite a new phrase, and yet one we can relate to. What does your ‘comfort zone’ look or feel like? Is it being on the sofa with a steaming mug of hot chocolate? Is it in your room with the music turned up loud, or out in nature walking and listening

to the birds (or the rain!)? For each of us, our comfort zone will be different, a safe space where we feel most at home and most truly ourselves.

I also wonder if your comfort zone has moved or changed recently? If so, why? Sometimes, we go to an unfamiliar place or start something new, and everything feels unnatural and agitating. It could even be a familiar place, but it's different for some reason.

Life is full of challenges and new experiences. That's just normal. But sometimes we are called upon to do something special, something different, something that God wants us to do. When Jesus lived in Galilee, he knew that he had come to usher in the kingdom of heaven, God's new way of being, where people learnt to relate to him as Father and friend. For Jesus, this meant stepping out of heaven and entering all the mess, joy and pains of living on earth. I wonder if he felt out of his comfort zone as a child or young man?

But Jesus had a mission to accomplish, and so he set about it with passion. He went and chose others to join that mission with him, proclaiming: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Then he told them to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons. We don't know how they felt about this, but I reckon there must have been some butterflies in their stomachs, even though Jesus gave them his authority. And there is no greater power and authority than that of God. Jesus didn't ask them to do anything he hadn't equipped them for. He trusted them to follow his instructions and go in his name.

It can be tempting to think that this message was just for them and not for us. But surely we have the same authority to go and tell our friends, our families, our colleagues, the bus driver, the postman... that the kingdom of God is near? And it is for them, just as it is for you and me.



### **Prayers of intercession**

Living God, we pray for those for whom sharing their stories and faith is costly and dangerous, places where Christians are in the minority and persecuted, places where the Gospel has been distorted and manipulated, places where it has been sidelined.

We pray for our churches in all their diversity and in all their challenges, and for ourselves as we live out our faith and answer God's call on our lives.

*God of truth,*

*Christ of compassion,*

*Holy Spirit of healing,*

*strengthen and inspire all those we have prayed for; and*

*empower them and us to share your story and ours, simply,*

*passionately and honestly.*

We pray for all those sucked into a culture violence, fear and crime.

We pray for those whose stories of transformation have the power to challenge, change and transform the lives of others, especially ex-prisoners, ex-gang members, ex-drug dealers and recovering addicts.

*God of truth,*

*Christ of compassion,*

*Holy Spirit of healing,*

*strengthen and inspire all those we have prayed for; and*

*empower them and us to share your story and ours, simply,  
passionately and honestly.*

We pray for places that have been in the news this week ....

We pray for people who have had their stories shared in the media,  
for those who have witnessed what no one should see and  
experienced what no one should go through.

*God of truth,*

*Christ of compassion,*

*Holy Spirit of healing,*

*strengthen and inspire all those we have prayed for; and  
empower them and us to share your story and ours, simply,  
effectively and honestly. Amen.*

And we pray for those whose stories have been cut short by illness  
and tragedy, especially those we know and those who suffered alone.  
We pray for those who continue to share their stories even as life gets  
more difficult, for those whose faith shines brightly even in the  
darkest of times, for those whose legacy is transformative.

*God of truth,*

*Christ of compassion,*

*Holy Spirit of healing,*

*strengthen and inspire all those we have prayed for; and  
empower them and us to share your story and ours, simply,  
effectively and honestly. Amen*

## **21 June – No compromise**

Matthew continues Jesus's teaching on mission to the world pointing  
out that the disciples must expect opposition, including possibly from  
their own families. Following Jesus won't be straightforward, but he  
reminds the disciples of their value and of God's love for them.

This week we ask: What is the true cost of discipleship? What is  
sacrificial living, and how do we do it? Can we be those who do not  
compromise and know God's great reward?

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 7 Year A: Genesis 21:8-21; Psalm 86:1-10,16-17; Romans 6.1b-11; **Matthew 10.24-39**

Matthew 10:24-39 [NRSVA]

<sup>24</sup> ‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master;  
<sup>25</sup> it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

### **Whom to Fear**

<sup>26</sup> ‘So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. <sup>27</sup> What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. <sup>28</sup> Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. <sup>30</sup> And even the hairs of your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup> So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup> but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

### **Not Peace, but a Sword**

<sup>34</sup> ‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup> For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

<sup>36</sup> and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

<sup>37</sup> Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup> and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.



### **Thought for the week**

Politicians and leaders often make stirring speeches to encourage or rouse their supporters. Just read a political manifesto at election time and you will see the many promises, all designed to gain your allegiance. One of the most famous is probably that from Winston Churchill, the renowned WW2 British Prime Minister. On 4 June 1940 he encouraged the country with the words: ‘ ... we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.’ It was exactly what people needed to hear. It didn’t leave room for doubt. It wasn’t designed to leave people wondering whether to follow him or not.

The words of Jesus in today’s Gospel reading are also very direct. But their very directness also seems shocking to us. Jesus talks about division and swords and not loving people... none of it sounds like the ‘gentle Jesus meek and mild’ that we might have been brought up with, or the Prince of Peace that we hear about at Christmas. What’s going on here?

Well, imagine a household where two nationalities are represented – let’s say an English wife and a Spanish husband. Imagine that both husband and wife love football. Imagine that both England and Spain reach the World Cup final. Is there no division in that house? What

about the children? Are they on Mum's side or Dad's? Maybe they don't sit together on the sofa like they used to? Perhaps they have to watch the match in separate rooms! Discussing who's going to win might cause arguments at the breakfast table. You could say that football has caused the division. It hasn't really ... but this is what Jesus was getting at here. Putting him first above everyone and everything else will not always be popular. In many countries, it can lead to imprisonment or death. But still, he urges us not to compromise. Why not? Because, if we do, we won't be happy. We will not give ourselves wholeheartedly to anything. We won't be focused and determined.

But this is all so counter-cultural. Our world these days invites us to embrace a bit of this and a bit of that. Being 50/50 is OK. It's encouraged because it seems to demonstrate acceptance of everything and everybody. But it's not the Jesus way. To be faithful followers of Jesus, there must be no compromise. He wants us to give him our 100% because he gave his 100% for us. What would have happened if he'd changed his mind halfway to the cross? What would have happened if God hadn't raised him from the dead, or decided not to send the Spirit to live in us? We wouldn't have the opportunity for life in all its fullness. We wouldn't have God as our Father. We wouldn't have the promise of eternal life. God didn't compromise. And so he asks that we don't compromise either. He knows it won't be easy. But he never promises that following him will be.

However, he does promise to be with us. He does promise to acknowledge us before his Father ... to tell God, 'Yes, she's on my team'. He does promise that we will be rewarded in the end for following him. He knows it's a big ask, especially when our allegiance to him means losing the respect and love of our family or friends. But the rewards are immense. The question is... do you think it's worth it?

### **A prayer of approach**

Lord God, as we come to you today, we will hear difficult words.

Words we might not expect from you.

You warn us that the way ahead might not always be easy.

We need to look closely at ourselves.

Make sure we are ready for whatever comes: not frightened to trust in you, whatever you ask us to do; not frightened to take up our cross as we walk your way.

Make us ready, Lord. Amen

## **28 June – Recognised**

Jesus concludes his teaching on mission by stressing the close identification between Father God, Jesus himself, those who go in his name, and those who receive his followers in the right spirit. He sends his disciples out to preach in his name, and they are to assume that God will provide for them.

How can we see the image of Christ in those around us and do we recognise ourselves as made in God's image? This week we think about how we honour Jesus through the way that we love and serve others.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 8 Year A: Genesis 22:1-14; Psalm 13; Romans 6.12-23; **Matthew 10.40-42**

Matthew 10:40-42 [NRSVA]

### **Rewards**

<sup>40</sup> 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; <sup>42</sup> and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'

### **Thought for the week**

Have you ever spotted a famous person? Did you go up and ask them for a selfie or an autograph, or were you too shy? Or perhaps you were unsure if it was them?

Some celebrities perhaps revel in people asking for selfies and autographs when they are out and about, whereas others probably wish they could hide or wear a mask, particularly if they are on holiday with their families. Being recognised is not always a comfortable situation. The same can be true for teachers if they meet one of their pupils while out shopping. Who feels more embarrassed, the student or the teacher? Might these interactions go more smoothly if we recognise the other person as human, like us, people in need of welcome, gentleness, privacy or respect.

Today's short Gospel reading comes at the end of Jesus' instructions for mission, which he gave to his disciples. Jesus says that, if they are welcomed, it is the equivalent of welcoming God. The same is true for us. When we welcome others into our midst we are welcoming God, whose image we can see in everyone we meet. It doesn't have to be an elaborate welcome. Something as simple as providing someone with basic needs (a cup of cold water) is a demonstration of love and respect. 'These little ones' that Jesus mentions doesn't just mean the children, but the marginalised, the elderly, or those from minority groups – anyone, in fact, whom Roman or Jewish society did not rate highly.

Likewise, our contemporary values seem to struggle with 'otherness'. There seems to be a mismatch between accepting that everyone is different, while fearing the stranger in our midst. Living the Jesus way is counter-cultural in that it demands that we treat everyone with the same worth and value, whatever their status, nationality or orientation. Jesus teaches that everyone should be valued and recognised as highly as another because they are made in the image of God. Serving them means serving God.

Even just remembering someone's name can bring them respect when otherwise they might go unnoticed. It is very frustrating to be called by the wrong name or have your name used informally in a formal situation, because our name is part of our identity and the essence of who we are. In the early days of her career, the tennis star Martina Navratilova got very frustrated with a Wimbledon umpire

who couldn't pronounce her name. At one change of ends she was heard to say: 'Can't you get my name right?'.

We can show respect to people simply by calling them by their preferred name in any particular situation.

So, our daily challenge is to recognise and acknowledge those around us who are being overlooked by others. Is there someone who is part of a group you attend who no-one talks to? Is there someone sleeping rough by the shop entrance, or a person at work who never speaks to anyone? What 'cup of cold water' can we provide, or listening ear, or sandwich? Perhaps we can offer a friendly smile and say 'hello', or ask someone their name and then use it regularly when we pass them in the street?

Whatever we do, we can be sure that these small acts of faithfulness will not be unrecognised by God.

But Jesus's words don't just refer to our recognition of others. Part of being human is allowing others to minister to us on occasions.

Allowing others to serve us can be just as gracious an act as serving someone else. This is another way of showing them respect: accepting their help.

Whether we are giving or receiving, Jesus tells us: 'you will receive a reward' – the reward of being known and loved intimately by God, no matter what. What greater reward could there be?



## **A prayer of thanksgiving**

We thank you, Lord, that we are a part of your great family.

Our welcoming God has brought us in, and sends us out to recognise his presence in our world, not only in the big things, but in all the tiny details of our lives.

We thank you, Lord, for all the signs of you that we can expect to see in the coming week.

Our eyes are open. Amen

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