

Sermon 7 June 2026 – Second Sunday after Pentecost

By Revd. Karen Adendorff

Life can feel like a roller coaster—full of ups and downs, sharp turns, and moments when everything seems out of control, as if the wheels might come off the track. Even if we enjoy amusement park rides, we don't want our lives to feel that way. We prefer things to be neat, tidy, and predictable. We seek certainty and control. That's why we plan, prepare, and organize. We set goals, follow rules, and convince ourselves that if we manage everything carefully, we can chart our own course and determine the outcome.

Yet today's readings take us on a very different journey. They introduce us to people who responded in faith to God's call. And what we discover is that God's call is almost always a call to move. It shatters the status quo. It unsettles our carefully constructed plans. It reminds us that God's will, accomplished in God's time, fulfills God's promise. We are invited to participate in that journey—but we are not the ones in control. And that can feel very uncomfortable.

In the first reading God speaks to 75-year-old Abraham and says, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." No explanations, No directions. No detailed plan. Just, "Go." Leave what is familiar and secure. Abraham is called to exchange visible security for an unseen promise. And how does he respond? Well, the text simply tells us: "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him." (Genesis 12:4) Abraham steps forward in faith without having all the answers. He did not control the promise — he trusted in the One who makes the promise.

Paul echoes this in Romans 4, reminding us that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness because he "hoped against all hope," trusting in the God who gives life to the dead.

Faith is not passive agreement. It is an active, forward motion in the direction of God's promise. When our own lives feel out of kilter and uncomfortable, we are called to do the same: to hope against all hope, and to place our trust in the God who brings life out of death.

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus say to Matthew, "Follow me." Alongside this call, we witness two powerful healings: the raising of a synagogue leader's daughter and the restoration of a woman who had suffered from heavy bleeding for twelve years.

At the heart of each encounter is the transforming power of faith. This is not passive, intellectual, or vague optimism. Rather, it is an active, risk-taking faith—one that moves, transforms, and heals.

Matthew's call, "Follow me," sounds abrupt. Yet we are told that Matthew "...got up and followed him" (Matthew 9:9). It sounds almost too easy – too simple. But think about what Matthew was giving up and leaving behind. Tax collecting was secure work—profitable and predictable. True, it meant isolation; tax collectors were viewed as collaborators, sinners — outcasts within their own community. Yet, it was a livelihood. A reputation — not a good one, perhaps, but a secure one. He had a place at a table. Following Jesus meant stepping out into uncertainty - losing status, security, predictability. It was highly unlikely his own people would ever welcome him back; he would still be viewed with distrust. Yet, he was open to change even when the cost was high.

Immediately after Matthew follows him, we see Jesus sitting down to eat with tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees - the religious elite - are scandalized. They ask the disciples why Jesus eats with "those kinds of people." Why are they so offended? Is it because Jesus welcomes outcasts and sinners? Or is it because mercy threatens the boundaries that make them feel secure?

Religious systems can make us feel secure and in control. Sacrifice is measurable, manageable, and within our control. It feels righteous. It keeps categories neat: good people here, sinners there.

Although the question is not directed to him, Jesus responds: "**Go and learn** what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Matthew 9:13). "**Go and learn**," Jesus says, clearly revealing that they do not understand the heart of God

You see, mercy requires us to get close to the brokenness of others. Mercy blurs the boundaries we set. It challenges our judgments and our need to control. Sacrifice keeps the system intact. Mercy disrupts the system. Sacrifice can be offered without ever changing us but, mercy transforms us.

Jesus' mission is clear: to seek out and save the lost. To go where the need is greatest. To bring life to dark places. If we follow him, we will find ourselves walking into uncomfortable

spaces. We will sit at unexpected tables. We will stand beside those others avoid. We may even discover that we are the ones most in need of mercy all along.

Healing comes from caring, not shunning. We see this clearly in the two healing stories that follow. A desperate synagogue leader kneels publicly before Jesus because his daughter has died. A suffering woman reaches out secretly, believing that even touching his cloak will heal her.

In both cases, human effort had failed. Neither is in control of their situation. Both take a risk. There is no indication that they knew Jesus before this encounter. There is no indication they knew Jesus personally before this encounter, but they must surely have heard about him. They have nothing to lose and so instinctively turn to the One whose very nature is life-giving. And Jesus responds. Not rebuke or judge the woman for breaking religious purity laws by touching him. But to commend her faith. He does not ignore the grieving father. He walks with him into the house of mourning and brings life out of death.

Showing mercy is not always easy - especially when we believe the other person deserves judgment. Yet, God journeys with us through our own difficulties and suffering, transforming and reframing how we see the world and measure ourselves in it. The nature of God is life giving, and we are called to be part of this mission that seeks to offer life in dark places. (Word and Worship, compiled by Ekklesia 2020, A Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University)

Abraham was not in control of the promise. Matthew was not in control of where the road would lead. The woman was not in control of her healing. The synagogue leader was not in control of life or death. But each of them was found on the road, moving forward in faith. Faith is, thus, not control. Faith is participation.

And so, as we journey, on this roller coaster called life may we heed God's call to follow him. May we do so in faith to bring healing where it is needed most. May we remember faith says, "I will step forward." "I will reach out in hope." "I will rise when called."

Amen