

Sermon for Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
June 7, 2026 – Proper 5
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Los Alamos, New Mexico

Genesis 12:1-9
Psalm 33:1-12
Romans 4:13-25
Matthew 9:9-13,18-26

Go to dinner with Jesus and watch things just happen.
Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector
then goes and sits down to dine with sinners.
Then he's called out to help a Synagogue elder,
and on the way a woman is cured just by touching Jesus' cloak.
Then Jesus brings a little girl back to life.
Healing – it was all in an evening's work for Jesus.
Trust Jesus to make it look easy.

Trust is a biggie in the lessons today.
That's not the word that's used, but that's what the lessons are about.
Paul talks about the promise of God to Abraham
through the righteousness of his faith.
The Greek word Paul uses for faith is "pistis."
The root word for faith is the same as that for trust,
and a better translation would be "to dwell in faith" – to live trusting God.

Abram trusted the promise of God.
He followed God's request:
leave his home and take everything he had
and go off to a place he did not know.
Abram trusted that God would give him and Sarai children,
though they were both beyond child-bearing years.

Abram was 75 years old.
He trusts that he would have offspring
who would inherit the land God promised to give him.
That's the trust that Paul equates with the promise of God to Abraham that made him righteous.
But there's more to it with Paul. He makes it not just about Israel but about those beyond the
borders of the land and even to us today.

In the Genesis reading, God promises:

“Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will
show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great,

so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

God is giving directions and refers to “the land” where Abram will end up.

Paul uses the promise that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” to make the promise global.

Paul writes: “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.”

We who are in the faith share in the righteousness given to Abram and we are descendants and share in the promise of the blessing.

As Paul writes, righteousness comes through faith. Righteousness does not come from being right or wrong according to the law.

Righteousness is all about being in relationship with God rather than living by following the rules.

It means having faith in God and living life in that relationship.

It’s about trust in the healing power of God to make us whole.

There are not just two healings in the Gospel reading but three. Matthew himself is healed.

Here we have a man who is an outcast in his own culture who makes his living by overcharging his people on their taxes. Jesus calls out to him, “follow me” and Matthew does.

Then while Jesus is dining with a bunch of sinners, a leader of the synagogue throws himself at Jesus’ feet to beg him to save his daughter.

Imagine how that man must have felt.

He goes into a home where sinners dine.

He makes himself ritually impure and unable to return to his place of worship, to beg for his daughter’s life.

Then when Jesus goes with him, he encounters a woman who has suffered 12 years of bleeding, 12 years of ritual impurity, 12 years of being an outcast from her people, unable to associate with them.

And by merely touching Jesus’ cloak, she is healed: “take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well.”

Then Jesus goes to the little girl.

He takes her by the hand, and she rises from the dead.

Three healings, each more dramatic than the last: from outcast to disciple,

from illness to health,
from death to life.

But it is more than mere healing,
Jesus makes each of them well,
and not just well,
but whole.

He takes on their impurities and purifies their lives by his presence,
he touched their lives and made them whole.

“Go and learn what this means,” Jesus told the Pharisees,
“I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

Mercy in the Jewish tradition means “acts of loving kindness”
done with no thought for recompense.

In a sense Jesus is redefining what sacrifice means.

The requirement for temple worship
was the shedding of blood in the temple “sacrifices.”

But Jesus expresses here an understanding that true sacrifice,
that which is required of us,
comes through acts of mercy, acts of loving kindness.

I recently read “The five people you meet in heaven” by Mitch Albom.
In the book a man who feels he has wasted his life dies.

As he meets his five people
he is taught lessons about what his life has meant.

The second lesson comes from his commanding officer from WWII.

The man has been bitter about his “sacrifice” of his during the war.

What he discovers is that his captain gave his life for him.

He asks the captain why he doesn’t feel angry or bitter about losing his life. Sacrifice, the captain
tells him, is not about feeling bitter or deprived,

but sacrifice is about feeling privileged

because he was able to give his life for someone else.

His sacrifice meant something.

There’s a hymn from my childhood
that came to mind as I contemplated the today’s lessons.

“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

Trust is what we do by having faith in Christ.

Obey is what we do when we live a life of mercy

Faith is what we do when we act in loving kindness.

As the collect says today:

“Grant that by your inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may do them.” Amen.