

St James' Church, Weybridge

Proper 5 Yr A – Trinity 1 – Sunday 7th June 2026

Introduction and Call to Worship

Jesus came to call not the righteous but sinners, and he taught his followers that God is a God of mercy, not of sacrifice. In our worship today let us experience God's mercy and proclaim it amongst our friends.

Today's Readings

First Reading Hosea 5:15 – 6:6

Hosea calls for Israel to return to genuine spirituality, telling the people that God longs for the love of his people and a relationship with them rather than ritual sacrifices.

Gospel Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Jesus demonstrates his power and his forgiveness in calling Matthew, and in healing a woman and a child. He shows in action how God longs to reconcile all people to himself.

HOMILY *"For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." (Matthew 9:13)*

I heard this comment on the radio; "So many people are too judgemental these days. I can tell, just by looking at them."

In today's Gospel, Jesus reaches out to the people around him who are pre-judged, those considered by others to be unimportant. Our Lord is not concerned with the human desire of respectability or the transient trappings of entitlement. Matthew may well have been a tax collector because we first meet him sitting at a tax booth and later eating with Jesus in the company of others, described as tax collectors and sinners. In defending his choice of company, Jesus gives us one of the central definitions of his – and therefore our – mission. He has come to call "not the righteous but sinners." This is an inclusive call, for all. Let us be frank about it, most of us are sinners. The late, great Desmond Tutu, formerly Archbishop of Cape Town spoke openly about the importance of seeing God in each other and not judging. He also rather prophetically said that the loss of one human right, is the loss of our own personal human rights. He believed that people matter. For everyone is called, everyone is invited, because Jesus came among us to bring all people into a new relationship with God, setting right all that is wrong in our lives.

Yet in a wider context, we seem to have entered a time when voices both within our great nation and from outside, speak openly against inclusivity, challenge notions of diversity and welcome, and desire a narrowing of the rules around who is in and who is out. From a desire to move away from human rights and responsibility, especially for minorities, to the way we police our streets or recognise diversity of faith. Consequently, we as Christians are faced with an important choice. Do we follow the example of Jesus, expands our horizons, and accept God's Kingdom is for all, and therefore live that out in our own daily lives and discipleship? Or do we favour a narrower way, that excludes others for all sorts of reasons, like the religious of our Lord's Day who judge and divide?

Judging others is far from Jesus' response. He is genuine in his search for the lost and his love of the outsider. The two females in the second part of today's Gospel are considered unclean and they, like Matthew, are excluded from the company of their peers. The woman with haemorrhages has been untouched and ignored for twelve years, but her hope and her

spirit are still strong – she trusts God. She is determined enough to get close to our Lord, and brave enough to admit what she has done. She earns from Jesus more than just her health as her reward; she also earns her self-worth. Jesus gives her some of the warmest words of commendation in the Gospels, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” (Matthew 9: 22)

The little girl’s only fault is to have died. In a religious sense, because of her death, she became ritually unclean, and Jesus should not have touched her. But he did. He makes all the noisy mourners leave, and, in the quiet he calls the girl back to life. Astounding as this miracle is, he does not do it for the crowds – for show - but for one little girl, who is loved, as we all are. He gives her back her life and with it her sense of how precious she is. Goodness, people did talk about that, as the report of this miracle spread far and wide.

Each one of us is precious, loved, and unique – made in God’s image. Although these Gospel stories have lost some of their impact for us, since we do not have the same understanding of ritual uncleanness, such as handling money, blood or death defiling us, people in modern Britain and many other places are still judged and excluded, for things they can’t change about themselves. But just hear how fierce Jesus is with those people who question the company he keeps. He says to them, “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) Such strong words apply to us and our society and values today!

Do we live humbly, without entitlement? Do we reach out to today’s untouchables, seeking the wellbeing of the outsider, whoever they may be? Yes, it is easier and none the less important to donate to charity and financially support organisations such as Christian Aid, Manna, and Elmbridge CAN, all of whom work with the marginalised, homeless, and oppressed. Yet it is so much harder to sit beside someone taking shelter in a high street doorway, sleeping on a bench in the churchyard, or desperate for a new home when fleeing persecution abroad. It is easier to judge and exclude. But it is not Christian.

We experience the kingdom of heaven here and now when we show God’s love to others and recognise his presence in them. When Christians walk alongside others, not preaching or condemning, but quietly showing God’s love through selfless friendship and generosity. Then we see the real presence of Jesus in and through us, who came to call “not the righteous but sinners.”

I am wary of political, religious, or social media figures who judge and seek to divide. Often such views are about wanting to keep what we have for ourselves and not wanting to share or being worried how others coming among us could change things for us. That is not British at all, the nation built on the very foundations of international diversity. That self-seek entitlement is not Anglican, the church founded upon diverse cultures from around the world. And it is certainly not Christian, people who long to live like and for Jesus, who called tax collectors and sinners, who heals the woman with haemorrhages and raises a little girl from condemnation and death to life.

Remember the warning from Archbishop Tutu, judge others, give up on one person’s rights and yours will be next. May our response to others and their need always be generous, accepting and loving. And may we choose to live out the inclusive Gospel values we see in Jesus, which bring healing and hope, for all people. Amen.

Father Damian Harrison-Miles, June 2026