

THE SERMON SUPPLY



A Resource from
Region 6



Lectionary 10, Year A

Pastor Karl Biermann

ELCA Foundation Regional Gift Planner

Gospel Text - Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

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

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹ And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰ Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, ²¹ for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that moment. ²³ When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been

put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.²⁶ And the report of this spread through all of that district.

SERMON TEXT:

Hello, I am Pastor Karl Biermann, your ELCA Foundation regional gift planner. Welcome on this second Sunday after Pentecost!

The faithful production schedule that makes this online preaching resource possible requires that I record this sermon in advance when the trees are still bare and the weather is chilly—not like June at all!

The lifeless scene outside makes me want to cry, “Kyrie Eleison!” meaning “Lord, have mercy!”

Jesus calls for mercy in verse 13 of today’s Gospel reading. He says, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice,” to the Pharisees—the religious scholars—who would otherwise force their religious knowledge, authority, and judgment on those they see as unworthy.

The Pharisees would likely condemn Matthew and the other tax collectors for having the bad reputation of overcharging on taxes and skimming off the top for themselves. Meanwhile, the label “sinners” means instant condemnation for them and anyone—

Jesus included—who would eat with them or with Matthew and the other tax collectors.

The Pharisees would probably also push away the bleeding woman as unclean and not worthy to be out in the crowd, much less touch Jesus' cloak.

Today, let's ask ourselves who would seem so unworthy that we would not be willing to show mercy to them. We might be tempted like the Pharisees to lord our imagined superiority and power over them, just as others presume to lord their superiority and power over us.

Perhaps this is why we find ourselves crying "Kyrie Eleison!" "Lord, have mercy!" amidst war and general unfairness, as well as nastiness and murder in our streets.

Jesus responds, "Follow me." Or to paraphrase writer Shawn Madigan, "...follow me into a way of life that is about using power FOR others, not OVER others (Shawn Madigan, CSJ, *Homilies for the Christian People*, 112-113).

Some might see this as weak—those who would rather see Jesus and the Church basking in popularity and impressive power displays; perhaps even establishing national religious control or bringing about global apocalyptic clashes.

Instead, Jesus says something like, "Follow me. Invite people like Matthew and the other tax collectors and sinners to the table for a meal. Join me in healing people who feel alienated and alone. Imitate me in celebrating their acts of faith that inconveniently make it harder to dislike them."

Showing mercy like this might appear to be weak, but it has life-changing power. Jesus gains Matthew as a follower, perhaps some of the other tax collectors and sinners, too. Jesus also accepts and heals the bleeding woman and shows that she is not an outcast either.

Perhaps Jesus' calling of these so-called undeserving for mission illustrates that noteworthy discipleship saying, "God doesn't call the equipped. God equips the called."

Jesus also raises a leader's daughter from the dead. Many times, scripture describes leaders as opposing Jesus. What if Jesus shows here that he's giving this leader the benefit of the doubt and is open to working with anyone to bring new life into the world?

To do so, Jesus interrupts the flute players and the crowd gathered to mourn the daughter's death, endures their laughter, and takes her by the hand. News of Jesus' merciful, life-saving miracle for the leader's daughter spreads and gains even more followers to share God's love in the world.

Later, God raises Jesus from the dead in a way that also interrupts things after Jesus gives up his life on the cross for love's sake. We receive opportunities today to experience the Good News that Jesus "wins by losing," especially as we cry, "Kyrie Eleison!" "Lord, have mercy!"

Jesus responds something like, "Follow me. Follow me into a way of life where love prevails over death and love is all that matters. This love is for you and for all people!"

Just as today, Jesus invites us to the Holy Communion table, where in his mercy, he offers us the spiritual food and presence of his body and blood, the bread and wine, as well as his forgiveness and strength to go out, invite others, show mercy, and breathe new life into an otherwise bare and lifeless world.

Now that it *is* June, many of us are indeed seeing green leaves and new life out in God's creation. Let us also then support each other in finding and sharing new spiritual life in Jesus Christ.

Jesus' call to "follow him" into his life, death, and resurrection of showing mercy to all promises to change our cries from "Kyrie Eleison!" "Lord, have mercy!" to—now wait for it, God is doing a new thing here—to "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord!" Let us praise the Lord by sharing mercy and new life in the Risen Jesus Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit. AMEN

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