

Sunday between June 12 and June 18

Prayer

God of tenderness and summons,
you draw near in the heat of the day,
in weary villages,
in longed-for promises,
and in the pain of a world
that does not know how to mend itself.

When hope feels late, stay with us.
When compassion feels costly, strengthen us.
When we laugh at what seems impossible,
meet us there without shame.

Teach us to receive your compassion
and to let it become practical care.
Make us a people who notice the overlooked,
who pray with honesty,
who offer healing with humility,
and who carry good news into bruised and hungry places.

Through Christ, who notices the crowds with compassion
and sends us in love, we pray.

Known, Sent, and Sustained

Some weeks begin with weariness and end in calling. These readings hold together promise, gratitude, grace, and the urgency of compassion. They speak of a God who does not stay distant from human frailty, but comes close, hears laughter and doubt, meets the ache of long waiting, and then sends people out to join in the work of practical care. The mood is tender and demanding at once. We are known in our need, and drawn into care for the needs of others.

Threads to explore

- Promise in the face of doubt
- Compassion that becomes action
- Grace given before deserving
- Being sent into real need

Context

Genesis tells of Abraham and Sarah receiving mysterious visitors and an astonishing promise: that life will come where age, waiting, and disappointment have made hope seem impossible. Psalm 116 is a song of gratitude from someone who has been heard and held by God, and who responds with thanksgiving in the company of others. In Romans, Paul speaks of peace with God through Christ, and of grace that holds even in suffering, because God's love has already been poured out and made known. In Matthew, Jesus moves among villages and crowds with healing and compassion, then gathers disciples and sends them out to share in that work among people who are harassed, helpless, sick, and in need of good news.

Connections

These readings gather around the movement from receiving to responding. Promise is given, love is shown, prayer is answered, and compassion becomes mission. There is honesty here about weakness, lateness, and need, but none of it closes the future. God's grace comes first. From there, gratitude, courage, and service begin to grow. The mood is not frantic activism, but compassion with movement – love that notices suffering and does not leave it untouched.

Deepening the Word

Genesis 18 is wonderfully human. Sarah laughs, and not with uncomplicated joy. It is the laugh of someone who has waited too long, heard too much, and does not know how to trust a promise that comes after disappointment has settled in. The story does not punish that reaction. Instead, it lets the promise stand. That matters, because faith is not always bright confidence. Sometimes it is receiving grace with a wary heart, and finding that God is not driven away by our disbelief, our tiredness, or our questions.

Matthew shows divine compassion in public. Jesus receives people not as a problem to manage, but as sheep without a shepherd – exhausted, vulnerable, and underserved. His response is not detached pity. It is movement, healing, teaching, feeding hope, and then sending others to do likewise. The disciples are not sent as spiritual celebrities. They are sent as people who have first received. That matters too. Christian service does not begin in superiority. It begins in mercy received and shared.

In everyday life, this kind of compassion is needed everywhere. It is needed where systems leave people confused, delayed, exhausted, or afraid. It is needed in overstretched healthcare, underfunded support services, schools and workplaces where people are barely coping, churches that need to become safer and more accessible, neighbourhoods where loneliness grows unnoticed, and public life where some suffering is treated as normal. Com-

passion becomes real when it changes what people experience – when burdens are shared, needs are taken seriously, and practical care accompanies prayer. Grace is not abstract. It takes shape in what helps people breathe.

Be mindful that language of “harvest”, “workers”, or being “sent out” can feel pressured for people who are already exhausted, overcommitted, or harmed by church cultures that equate worth with usefulness. Keep the emphasis on compassion, not productivity. We are not sent to prove ourselves. We are drawn into God’s mercy, and invited to live it in ways that are humane, realistic, and attentive to real limits.

Discussion

Matthew 9:35—10:8

Jesus attends to the crowds and is moved with compassion. He recognises people’s vulnerability, names the need, urges prayer, and then sends disciples out to share in his healing and hopeful work. Mission begins not in self-importance, but in noticing suffering and responding with grace.

Questions:

- What do you notice about the way Jesus responds to the crowds?
- Where do you notice people today who are “harassed and helpless”, worn down, or left without support?
- What is the difference between pity and compassion that leads to action?
- Sarah laughs at the promise. When have you found hope hard to trust?
- Paul speaks of love shown “while we were still...” What does that say about grace?
- What might one small act of healing, encouragement, or practical

care involve this week?

Call to Worship

Compassion is already moving.
 Promise is already near.
 Grace comes before we are ready.

So let us worship
 with honesty,
 with gratitude,
 and with hearts made ready for love in action.

Adoration

Faithful God,
 you come close to those who have waited long,
 hoped hard, and nearly given up.

You are patient with our laughter,
 gentle with our doubt,
 and generous in your promise.
 You do not despise the tired heart
 or the guarded spirit.

Christ of compassion,
 you move among the overlooked.
 You notice what others miss.
 You heal without spectacle,
 speak hope without cruelty,
 and move towards those whose lives are frayed by fear.

Spirit of grace,
 you stir courage where hope is dimming.
 You gather communities into care,

gratitude, and shared responsibility.
You keep opening paths for mercy to travel.

We praise you,
God who promises,
God who heals,
God who sends love into the world.

Confession

God of compassion,
we confess that we do not always notice
the pain around us.

We become used to suffering that should trouble us.
We protect our time, our comfort,
our emotional distance,
and call it wisdom.

We confess that we sometimes laugh
not with joy,
but with resignation –
as if nothing can change,
as if hope is for other people.

Forgive us when we turn away from need.
Forgive us when we make compassion too abstract.
Forgive us when we withhold kindness
because we feel unsure, afraid, or tired.

Turn us again towards your way.
Teach us to receive grace honestly,
to pray with open hearts,
and to offer care with humility and compassion.

Intercessions

Optional response

God of compassion,
hear our prayer.

Faithful God,
 you notice the weary and the overlooked,
 and you do not turn away.

For those who are exhausted –
 bring rest, support,
 and people who respond with tenderness.

For those waiting –
 bring courage for the waiting,
 and change where change is needed.

For those who serve in places of deep need –
 strengthen them, protect them from burnout,
 and let their labour be honoured.

For churches and communities –
 make them places of access, honesty, generosity,
 and wise, sustainable love.

For all who have stopped expecting good news,
 for those who laugh because hope feels too risky,
 for those who have been disappointed too many times –
 let gentleness find them,
 and let promise begin again.

Receive these prayers,
 and shape us into people
 who carry your mercy into the world with care.

Thanksgiving

Generous God,
we give thanks that your love comes first.

We thank you for grace that meets us
before we are ready,
before we are confident,
before we know how to respond.

We thank you for prayers heard,
for burdens shared,
for laughter turned towards joy,
for people who keep showing up,
and for communities where kindness becomes visible.

We thank you for the compassion of Christ –
for healing that restores dignity,
for words that strengthen,
for hope that travels from person to person,
and for the quiet courage to take the next loving step.

Receive our gratitude,
and keep shaping us in compassion, trust, and thankfulness.

Blessing

Go in the grace
that comes before readiness.

Go with compassion
for the weary and overlooked.

Take what love gives.
Offer what care can carry.
And trust that God

will keep working
through your honest, human yes.

Visual

- Set a simple table with three cups and a small loaf, suggesting hospitality, unexpected visitors, and shared welcome.
- Display a simple image or words from Matthew: “He had compassion for them,” allowing that phrase to shape the tone of the service.
- Place a basket or satchel near the front with a few simple items of care inside, as a sign of being sent with compassion into real need.

Creative

- **Laughter and Promise:** Invite people to write one thing that feels hard to hope for, and place it in a basket as a quiet prayer.
- **Compassion Map:** Create a simple map of the local area and add notes naming places where compassion is especially needed this week.
- **Sent with Care:** Give out small cards with one word on each – kindness, courage, healing, patience, welcome, rest – for people to take away.
- **Table of Practical Care:** Provide paper cup or plate shapes where people can write one way a community could make welcome more practical.
- **Burden Sharing:** Invite people to name one kind of support that would lighten life for others – meals, lifts, captions, check-ins, advocacy, listening.

- **Promise Stones:** Offer smooth stones or paper circles with words such as heard, held, called, sent, or beloved.

Meditation

Based on Genesis 18:1–15; Romans 5:1–8; Matthew 9:35–10:8

Sometimes hope arrives after the point
when you thought hope should have come.

After the long waiting.

After the disappointment.

After the heart has learned to protect itself
with a half-laugh.

Sarah laughs.

And perhaps you understand.

Not because the promise is funny,
but because it feels too late,
too tender, too difficult to trust.

And still, love stays near.

Not offended by your guardedness.
Not driven back by your questions.
Just present, steady,
offering a future
you do not yet know how to receive.

Then Christ moves among the crowds.
He recognises what wears people down.
He attends to what leaves them scattered.
He moves towards what others avoid.

And compassion moves in him
like breath.

Not spectacle.
Not hurry.
Not performance.
Just love
that will not keep its distance.

Perhaps this is where faith begins again –
not in having certainty,
but in being known.

Known in your waiting.
Held in your tiredness.
Met in the places
where you want to believe
but do not know how.

Rest here a moment.
You do not have to force hope.
You do not have to become impressive.
Grace comes first.

And from that grace,
one small thing may begin:
a prayer,
a thank you,
a reaching out,
a willingness to care,
a yes that is still trembling.

Let that be enough for today.

You are held in promise.
You are met with compassion.
And love is already on the move.

Performance

A short dramatic piece: "When He Noticed the Crowds"

Voice 1: He has noticed them.

Voice 2: Who?

V1: All of them.

V2: There are too many to take in.

V1: He seems to manage.

V2: They are tired.

V1: More than tired.

V2: Hungry?

V1: Some.

V2: Ill?

V1: Some.

V2: Afraid?

V1: Many.

V2: What does he notice?

V1: People worn down and helpless.

V2: That sounds harsh.

V1: It sounds honest.

V2: And what does he do?

V1: He has compassion.

V2: Feeling sorry for them?

V1: No. More than that.

V2: What, then?

V1: He moves towards them.

He heals.

He teaches.

He calls others in.

V2: Calls others in?

V1: Yes.

V2: I thought compassion was what he did.

V1: It is.

And then it becomes what we are sent to do.

V2: I'm not ready.

V1: They probably weren't either.

V2: I don't have enough.

V1: No one does alone.

V2: What if I get it wrong?

V1: Then stay close to compassion.

V2: What if the need is too much?

V1: Then do not turn away.

V2: What do we carry?

V1: Good news.

Healing.

Peace.

A willingness to notice.

V2: And if we are tired too?

V1: Then we remember:

we are not sent as heroes.

V2: How are we sent?

V1: As people who have first been loved.

Practice

A daily compassion pause

Choose one ordinary moment each day this week that already happens in your routine. It might be when you pick up your bag, make a drink, sit down at your desk, wash your hands, or get ready for bed.

Pause for a slow breath.

As you breathe in, think: “You have heard me.”

As you breathe out, think: “Teach me compassion.”

Then notice one place of need. It may be in you, in someone close to you, or in the wider world. Do not try to fix everything. Simply tell the truth about what you notice.

Ask one simple question: What is one small act of practical care I can offer today? Keep the answer realistic. It might be a kind message, a practical offer, a prayer, a pause before speaking, an act of welcome, or a way of making someone’s day a little lighter.

At the end of the day, take a moment to notice where grace met you, and how compassion was able to move.

Digital

- Post a simple question: “Where do you most notice compassion is needed right now?”
- Share a text-on-image line: “Grace comes before readiness.”
- Invite people to name one word they associate with promise or compassion.
- Post a short reflection: “Sometimes faith begins not with certainty, but with being known.”

- Share a community prompt: “What is one practical way to make compassion more visible this week?”

Explore

These readings can help people understand that faith is not about being impressive, certain, or fully ready. For someone new to faith, it may help to say that God often meets people before they feel prepared: in doubt, weariness, laughter, gratitude, and need. Grace comes first, and compassion grows from there. Being sent by God begins with being met by compassion and care, not with having everything sorted.

Discover

- Genesis tells of Abraham and Sarah receiving a promise that seems almost impossible to trust.
- Psalm 116 is a song of gratitude from someone who has been heard and helped by God.
- Romans says that God’s love is shown before we have earned it.
- Jesus notices the crowds with compassion and sends disciples to share healing and good news.
- Together, these readings speak of promise, grace, gratitude, and mercy in action.

Reflect

There are times when hope feels late, fragile, or hard to trust. These readings suggest that this does not place us outside God’s love. Faith can begin with a guarded laugh, a weary prayer, or a small willingness to care. Grace comes first, and compassion grows from there.

Connect

You might recognise this in everyday life when someone receives help before they have the words to ask for it, when a community notices need instead of ignoring it, or when kindness turns into practical support. It appears wherever compassion moves from feeling into action.

Think

- What makes hope feel hard to trust sometimes?
- What does compassion involve when it becomes practical and local?

Do

Choose one small act of compassion today. Check in on someone, offer practical help, listen without rushing, or make one space more welcoming. Afterwards, pause and notice what changes when compassion becomes action.