

# Sunday between June 5 and June 11

## **Prayer**

God of calling and compassion,  
you meet people on the road,  
at the table,  
in the crowd,  
and in the pressing need of ordinary life.

When we are unsure of the next step,  
guide us.

When fear narrows our vision,  
widen our trust.

When shame tells us to stay hidden,  
draw near with mercy.

Call us beyond what is familiar.

Teach us to follow with courage.

Make us a people who welcome as we have been welcomed,  
and who carry hope into places  
that feel closed, weary, or overlooked.

Through Christ, who notices, calls, heals, and restores,  
we pray.

## Called and Drawn Near

Some weeks gather around movement: leaving, following, rising, trusting. These readings speak of journeys begun without guarantees, of faith that leans into promise, and of grace that moves towards people others might avoid. There is calling here, but also companionship. There is risk, but also mercy. At the heart of it is a God who makes room for new beginnings, and who keeps drawing life out of places that seem hemmed in by fear, loss, or exclusion.

### Threads to explore

- Calling and trust
- Mercy before respectability
- Promise that opens the future
- New life in places of fear

### Context

Genesis tells of Abram being called to leave home and step into a future shaped by promise, with no detailed map beyond God's word and presence. Psalm 33 praises God as creator and faithful guide, delighting in the justice and steadfast love that hold the world. In Romans, Paul reflects on Abraham's faith as trust in God's promise, insisting that inheritance comes through grace rather than law or achievement. In Matthew, Jesus calls Matthew from the tax booth, shares table fellowship with those judged unworthy, and brings healing and new life in situations marked by desperation, grief, and social boundary.

## Connections

These readings hold together trust, calling, and the widening reach of grace. There is movement from what is settled into what is promised, and from exclusion into welcome. They speak of a God who does not wait for people to become impressive before drawing near, but who calls, accompanies, and brings life in the middle of real need. The mood is not tidy certainty, but courageous trust – a willingness to step forward, to receive mercy, and to let hope redraw what seems possible.

## Deepening the Word

Genesis 12 begins with interruption. Abram is called to leave what is known and travel towards a future that cannot yet be seen. The passage does not romanticise this. There is no full plan, only a promise. That makes it a profoundly honest text for anyone living with uncertainty. Faith here is not certainty about outcomes. It is trust in the God who calls and goes with. Romans takes up the same thread, insisting that promise is not earned by getting everything right. It is gift. Abraham trusts not because life is easy, but because God is faithful.

Matthew shows what that promise feels like when it comes close. Jesus calls someone who is already judged by others, then shares a table where respectable boundaries begin to fall apart. He does not organise belonging around moral performance or social approval. Mercy comes first. That same movement continues in the healing stories: a leader in crisis, a woman reaching from the edges, a crowd, delay, urgency, touch, and restoration. Jesus is not distant from the mess of human life. He enters it.

In everyday life, this kind of faith appears wherever people take brave steps without having the whole picture. It appears when someone leaves a harmful situation, when a community chooses welcome over reputation, when a church makes practical changes so more people can belong, when people trust that new life can begin after grief, stigma, debt, exclusion, or failure. It appears in the quiet decision to keep going, to keep making room,

to keep treating people with dignity when the world prefers categories and suspicion. Faith is often less like having answers and more like taking the next faithful step.

Be mindful that themes of “following”, “getting up”, or “new life” can land differently for people living with chronic illness, trauma, grief, depression, or circumstances that do not change quickly. Offer these texts as invitation, not pressure. The emphasis is on God’s mercy and promise, not on heroic response. Grace comes first, and each step must be held with gentleness.

## **Discussion**

### *Matthew 9:9–13*

Jesus calls Matthew, then sits at table with people others dismiss. The scandal in the story is not only who is called, but who is welcomed. Jesus names mercy as the heart of his mission. This is a passage about grace coming before respectability, and about the kind of community that grows when welcome is taken seriously.

### ***Questions:***

- What strikes you most about the way Jesus calls Matthew?
- Why do you think table fellowship matters so much in this passage?
- Where do you see people being judged as “outside” or “not the right sort” today?
- What does “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” mean in practice for a church or community?
- How does Paul’s emphasis on promise and grace shape the way you hear Jesus’ actions here?
- What might one next faithful step look like for you this week?

## **Call to Worship**

There is a road ahead,  
even when we cannot understand the route.

There is mercy at the table,  
even before we know how to belong.

So let us turn towards God  
with trust, with need,  
and with room for grace to do something new.

## **Adoration**

Faithful God,  
you call people beyond fear  
and into promise.

You do not wait  
for lives to look tidy  
before you speak.

Your mercy begins  
before respectability.  
Your welcome reaches  
the table others avoid.  
Your hope moves  
through crowds, questions,  
grief, and need.

You honour those  
written off by the world.  
You make space  
for trembling beginnings  
and slow courage.

Where routes feel closed,  
you open paths.  
Where hope has dimmed,  
you draw near.  
Where communities become guarded,  
you widen mercy again.

We praise you,  
God who calls,  
God who heals,  
God who keeps making room for life.

## **Confession**

God of mercy,  
we confess that we often cling  
to what feels safe  
instead of trusting your promise.

We draw lines  
where you offer welcome.  
We judge by appearances.  
We protect respectability  
and miss the work of grace.

Forgive us  
when we make belonging harder than you do.  
Forgive us  
when fear keeps us small.  
Forgive us  
when we forget that mercy comes first.

Turn us again towards your way.  
Teach us to trust, to welcome,  
and to follow with gentleness and courage.

## Intercessions

### *Optional response*

God of mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Faithful God,  
 you call people into hope  
 and meet us in the midst of need.  
 So we bring our prayers before you.

For those standing at thresholds –  
 facing change, uncertainty, hard choices,  
 or costly decisions –  
 bring wisdom, courage,  
 and companions for the road.

For those who feel judged,  
 dismissed, or kept at a distance –  
 by church, family, systems,  
 or public opinion –  
 bring welcome that is real,  
 and communities that make room.

For those living with grief,  
 illness, exhaustion, or long waiting,  
 and for those reaching out  
 with only a little strength left –  
 bring tenderness, relief,  
 and people who respond with care.

For churches and organisations,  
 that mercy may be more than language –  
 make them places  
 of access, honesty, hospitality,  
 and shared dignity.

For all who risk love in practice –  
 those who visit, organise, advocate,  
 listen, accompany, repair, and include –  
 strengthen them,  
 and let their work bear fruit.

Receive these prayers,  
 and shape us into people  
 who trust your promise  
 and make your mercy visible.

## **Thanksgiving**

Generous God,  
 we thank you for callings that open life,  
 for mercy that comes before merit,  
 for tables where welcome becomes real,  
 and for moments when courage quietly begins.

We thank you for those who help us take the next step –  
 friends who encourage,  
 communities that include,  
 people who notice need,  
 and all who make space  
 for others to breathe.

We thank you for signs of new life –  
 trust returning,  
 belonging widening,  
 grief being held,  
 strength being renewed,  
 hope finding a way through.

Receive our gratitude,  
 and keep shaping us  
 in faith, mercy, and love.

## Blessing

Go trusting the promise  
that opens the road ahead.

Go held by mercy  
that meets you before you are ready.

Take the next faithful step.  
Make room for others as you go.  
And trust the grace that holds your future.

## Visual

- Place a simple path of footprints, stones, or cloth leading forwards, as a sign of journey, calling, and the next step.
- Set a table with one cup, one plate, and an empty chair, as a quiet sign of welcome and shared mercy.
- Display the words: “I desire mercy” somewhere visible, allowing them to shape the tone of the week.

## Creative

- **Next Step Cards:** Invite people to write one small “next faithful step” and keep it privately in a pocket, wallet, or journal.
- **Mercy at the Table:** Provide paper plate shapes or cards where people can write one way a community could widen welcome in practice.
- **Journey Stones:** Offer smooth stones with words such as promise, mercy, trust, courage, or welcome for people to take into the week.

- **Reach and Rest:** Invite people to stretch out a hand, or simply imagine doing so, as a reflection on the woman reaching for healing.
- **Threshold Prayers:** Create a doorway or marked threshold where people can pause and pray for courage in change.
- **Story of Welcome:** Invite people to name, in speech or writing, a time when someone's kindness made room for them.

## Meditation

*Based on Genesis 12:1–9; Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26*

There are moments when life asks for a step  
before it offers clarity.

Not a full map.

Not a guarantee.

Just a voice, or a nudge,  
or the quiet knowing  
that staying still is no longer enough.

Abram leaves.

Matthew rises.

A grieving parent pleads.

A woman reaches through the crowd.

And none of them,

not one,

has the whole picture.

They move with need.

They move with hope.

They move because something in God's call  
feels more trustworthy than the fear  
that keeps them fixed.

Perhaps that is where faith begins –  
not in certainty,  
but in movement.

A step taken.  
A hand stretched out.  
A table joined.  
A name answered.  
A hope spoken aloud  
even while the heart is still trembling.

And Christ is there.

Not waiting at the end  
with a scorecard,  
but present in the middle –  
in the following,  
in the reaching,  
in the asking,  
in the making room.

So if you do not know  
the whole way ahead,  
you are not alone.

If all you have is the strength  
for one small movement,  
that is enough for today.

Take the step you can.  
Reach with the hope you have.  
Let mercy meet you there.  
And trust that grace is already  
further along the road  
than fear can imagine.

## Performance

*A spoken reflection: "Mercy First"*

I used to think faith was mostly about getting things right.

The right answers.

The right beliefs.

The right kind of life.

The right kind of people around the table.

Then I noticed how often Jesus begins somewhere else.

Not with sorting,

but with calling.

Not with a lecture,

but with an invitation.

Not with "Improve yourself first",

but with "Follow me."

And then – almost immediately – there is a table.

Not a polished table.

Not a respectable table.

A table where people arrive

with complicated stories, bad reputations,

real hunger, and no guarantee

that everyone else approves.

And Jesus sits there

as though mercy matters more

than image.

As though grace can hold

what religion sometimes cannot.

As though healing might begin  
 not after people become acceptable,  
 but while they are still reaching, still grieving,  
 still finding their way through the crowd.

Perhaps that is what makes some people uneasy.

Mercy rearranges things.  
 It unsettles categories.  
 It widens the circle.  
 It suggests that God may be kinder  
 than our systems of sorting.

And if that is true,  
 then faith is not mainly  
 about protecting the right table.

It is about learning to sit where Christ sits,  
 to welcome who Christ welcomes,  
 and to trust that grace is already at work there.

## **Practice**

### *One step of mercy*

Choose one ordinary moment each day this week that already happens in your routine. It might be when you leave the house, open a door, start the kettle, switch on your phone, or settle into the car before going somewhere.

Pause for one slow breath.

As you breathe in, think: “Call me.”

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

Then ask yourself one simple question: What is one small step of trust or welcome I can take today?

Keep the answer small and real. It might be sending a message, offering an invitation, changing your tone, making a small adjustment, asking a kind question, noticing who is missing, or leaving room at the table.

At the end of the day, take a moment to notice where mercy met you, and where you were able to pass it on.

## Digital

- Post a simple question: “What helps you take the next step when you do not have the whole picture?”
- Share a text-on-image line: “Mercy comes first.”
- Invite people to name one word they associate with “welcome” or “promise”.
- Post a short reflection: “Faith is often less about certainty and more about taking the next faithful step.”
- Share a community prompt: “What is one practical way a church or group can make more room at the table?”

## Explore

These readings can help people see faith as trust rather than as having everything worked out. Abram is called into an unknown future. Paul describes promise as a gift. Jesus welcomes people others judge and brings healing into situations full of urgency and vulnerability. It can help to say that faith often begins with one small step, and that mercy does not wait for people to become impressive before it draws near.

## Discover

- Genesis tells of Abram being called to leave what is familiar and trust God’s promise.

- Psalm 33 praises God's faithful love and delight in justice.
- Romans says that promise is received through faith, not earned through achievement.
- Jesus calls Matthew, shares table fellowship, and brings healing in situations of need and grief.
- Together, the readings speak of trust, mercy, and the opening of new possibility.

### **Reflect**

Faith can feel like stepping forward without having the whole plan. These readings suggest that this is not failure. It is often where trust begins. God's promise is a gift, and Jesus' mercy reaches people in the middle of real life – at work, at table, in sorrow, in hope, and in the crowd.

### **Connect**

You might see this in everyday life when someone takes a brave step out of a difficult situation, when a community makes welcome more practical, or when kindness meets someone before they have the words to explain their need. It appears whenever mercy is chosen over judgement, and whenever hope is allowed to move.

### **Think**

- What does it mean to take the next faithful step without having the whole picture?
- Where is mercy needed more urgently than respectability in your setting?

**Do**

Choose one small act of welcome today. Sit with someone, invite someone to do something with you, change one thing that makes belonging easier, or respond kindly where judgement would be easier. Afterwards, pause and notice what happens when mercy goes first.