

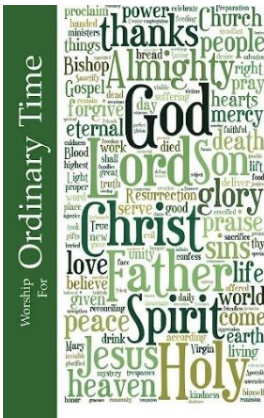


We are reminded of the many ways in which we see God at work, in the ordinary times and spaces of our lives.

# Opening

Holy Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,  
your work is done in faithfulness,  
and the earth is full of your steadfast love:  
**we give thanks for your presence among us,  
not only at this time, but in every moment of our lives.**  
We celebrate the ways you challenge us:  
**we give thanks for standing securely in our midst  
even when we face those challenges.**  
Hear us today as we offer you our praise,  
**we give thanks, for you are the One God  
in whom we live and move and have our being. AMEN**

adapted from <https://centerforfaithandgiving.org/2023/05/june-11-2023>



In this 'ordinary time' we hear stories of our faith, including narratives from the Hebrew Scriptures, stories of Jesus' life and mission, and the writings of the epistles. This can be seen as a season of growing in understanding of scripture, in discipleship, and in faith. We are encouraged to be open to the ongoing work of God in our 'ordinary', everyday lives. The gospel of Matthew tells of Jesus' ministry, as Jesus invites ordinary people to respond by following him.

## Matthew 9:9-13

*As Jesus went on from there,  
he saw a man named  
Matthew sitting at the tax*

collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed

*him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*



Matthew was an ordinary person, and not necessarily a popular one: tax collectors were notorious for taking advantage of others and were often not well liked. From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus made it clear that God's love was not only for upright and honest law-abiding church-goers, but was inclusive of all. Jesus went out of his way to build relationships with those who were marginalised, sick and the needy, those who were sometimes misunderstood or excluded.

**When have you felt misunderstood or excluded?**

**How did it make you feel?**

**How did you respond?**

**Have you ever offered welcome or compassion to someone else, knowing that others might question your actions?**



### **Matthew 9:18-26**

*While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. Just then a woman who had been*

*subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you."* 2

*And the woman was healed at that moment. When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but*

*asleep." But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region.*

*New International Version*



The woman touching Jesus, and Jesus taking the girl by her hand, broke social norms. Sometimes following Jesus calls us out of our comfort zones, beyond our usual boundaries. It can call us into places we might rather not go, or to do things outside of our social norms. Following Jesus can be confronting and challenging, yet rewarding and life-giving. We can see that Jesus was not made impure or sinful by healing the

woman and the girl: rather, his compassionate actions brought healing and life to them.

Jesus told the Pharisees to “go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ Perhaps we can see mercy both as an attitude and an action.

## JESUS SAID...

“But go and learn what this means:

‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’

For I did not come to call the righteous,  
but sinners, to repentance.”

Matthew 9:13

Actions without sincerity are as false as sincerity without action. God wants both, our hearts as well as our lives. Sacrifice is more about what we don't do. Mercy is more about what we do. Thus, we are to measure our faith not by what we deny ourselves, what we resist, or who we exclude, but rather by what we embrace, what we create, and who we include. Mercy shows compassion for the weak, the fallen, the helpless and the miserable. Mercy is the soul of sacrifice, and thus of the essence of God.

<https://www.lca.org.au/worship/wpp/service-order/?order-type=sermons&post-id=17996>

Jesus demonstrates love and mercy and calls us to do likewise. We are to love our neighbour, even when that is challenging or makes us uncomfortable. We might remember that we are each in need of the healing and life that Jesus offers: we are no more or less deserving than anyone else. And in loving others, with compassion, we might just play a part in bringing healing and life to them.



## Prayer

If we're honest, compassion does not come easy to us, God; we see others who struggle; those without homes, or food; those dying from curable diseases, simply because they can't get access to the medicine they need; those who have lost loved ones through death or circumstance, and long for human companionship; those who are persecuted and judged because of their difference; those who are facing the awful consequences of the choices they have made; and those who must live with the consequences of choices that others make that impact their lives; It all just feels like it's too much, and there's nothing we can do.

But, we know that's not true – we know that compassion is enough; that when we allow ourselves to feel, compassion will lead us to do what we can, and that this will make a difference.

And so, we pray first for ourselves: that you would soften our hearts, and still our fears, and lead us into those acts of compassion that we are capable of doing. And then we pray for these others whose lives can be changed through small, simple acts of care; that you would disturb us, and others like us, until we finally step up and play our part in the saving of your world; and that enough of us would answer your call, that the needs of the hurting ones may be met. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

- John van der Laar <https://sacredise.com>



## Closing

Hear God's call to *go*! Go into the uncertainty of the week ahead, trusting that of this you *can be certain*: God is with you, and God's people surround you. You are not alone. Thanks be to God! Amen.

-adapted from Dr. Lisa Hancock, *Discipleship Ministries*, December 2022