

**Gospel and Sermon Transcript -2nd Sunday After Pentecost - June 7, 2026**

00:01

[ Music ]

00:29

Would you like me to preach like extra long, though, just to kind of--

00:32

[LAUGHTER]

00:34

Oh, I need to do this.

00:35

Did you want me to preach extra long to makeup?

00:39

Oh, OK.

00:43

You know, I've never had anybody ask me to do that.

00:45

Well, once.

00:46

OK.

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As we gather in this season, Marilyn can attest to that.

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You change the pyramids to green.

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They'll stay that way for 26 weeks, roughly.

01:01

Right.

01:04

And as we learned last week from Bishop Larry,

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there's a hinge in our church here that takes us

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from looking at the life of Christ

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to the life of the church.

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And I think I would qualify that only slightly

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by saying that the life of the church

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is informed by the life of Christ.

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And so today when we hear that story

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of Matthew leaving his post as a tax collector,

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I think there's a hint in there for the church,

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so we'll explore that today.

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(gentle music)

01:47

[Music]

02:12

**The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the ninth chapter.**

02:17

Glory to you, O Lord.

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As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax collection station.

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And he said to him, "Follow me."

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And he got up and followed him.

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And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and his disciples.

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When the Pharisees saw this, they said to the disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

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But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

03:01

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice, for I have come not

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to call the righteous, but sinners. The gospel of our Lord.

03:18

Won't you be seated.

### **The Sermon**

03:25

Grace to you and peace.

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Not a real good chance that there was a farewell cake in the break room for Matthew when he left being a tax collector and followed Jesus.

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And it is a sure bet that there was not that bland memo from corporate.

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You know the one whenever somebody leaves a job and we wish them the very best in their future endeavors.

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And we say things like thank you for your attention to this matter.

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Matthew's day job, historians believe, was that he collected taxes for transport goods.

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Being in the port town of Capernaum.

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That might be significant because this means that when you shake somebody down,

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which was allowed among tax collectors, you could shake them down for a lot of money.

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So Matthew ends up being enriched by a system of greed and exploitation.

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We can appreciate, though, that Matthew leaves that system.

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But do we think about the risk at which he leaves the system besides economic loss?

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Remember, his employer is not just Acme Inc.

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It's the Roman Empire.

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Insatiable and appetite.

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Paid for in taxes and the blood, sweat and tears of forced labor.

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And we have a pretty good idea what happens when you mess with Rome, or cross them, if you will.

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The response is swift and it is severe.

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So it makes one wonder, if going from his position to something else, what is so compelling?

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He said, "Only Jesus' voice, the voice of the Good Shepherd,

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does Jesus' voice drown out the voice of the empire."

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And what is it that Matthew goes into?

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When Jesus says, "Follow, where is Jesus going?"

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Well, when Jesus recruited Peter, James, and John,

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and a few others, he didn't have the full compliment

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12 yet. The first thing he did was he went out and he healed and he taught and

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he fed. He went to the margins. He didn't go to the seat of power. There's the

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first lesson I think for us as church. If we follow Jesus we too go to the

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margins. In North America, I think maybe we have forgotten that. Now the extreme

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form is what's called Dominionism. This essentially means that Christians of

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some stripe believe that they are so right that they need to control seven

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major pillars of our world. I'll give you a couple of examples of such pillars.

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education, politics, the media, or journalism.

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And so if the church controls these things, is the church really going to the

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margins or has it gone elsewhere?

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And what is it that we find in the margins?

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There's a beautiful phrase that I'm going to use at least once today, maybe multiple times.

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A community of restorative mercy.

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Restorative mercy is a phrase that has been coined, I think, by Professor Danny Zacharias.

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If you've read ahead to today's sermon, you might know how much delight I took in reading his biography.

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Just in the little liner notes.

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Well, first of all, he's Canadian. That's good.

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He is a professor of religion at Acadia Divinity School in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

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But his background gives him a unique insight.

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See, being born in Winnipeg, that might also be a good thing unless you're an NHL fan,

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but being born in Winnipeg, his ancestry is Cree, Anishinaabe, Métis, and Austrian.

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He identifies most closely with the indigenous community and he describes for us how ritual

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always curated among his people.

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I think you'll hear hints of what we had read for us today

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in the Psalm as well as the first reading about mercy.

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Professor Zacharias says that is important as it is

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to curate ritual among indigenous people.

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The reason for that care is for the sake of the people

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there. For relationship, for restoring, for inclusion, doesn't that sound a lot

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like mercy? The professor would go on to say that this restorative mercy is the

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living out intangible ways the way God's kingdom is meant to be. Certainly a

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startling contrast from the Roman Empire.

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And this leads us to dinner.

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Jesus is having table fellowship, as it's called, with tax collectors and sinners.

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Tax collectors, of course, being thought of as collaborators with Rome, and they were

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lumped right in there with thieves and bandits and brothel owners.

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So not exactly the Cramdilla, Crambo society in and of themselves.

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And sinners?

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Well that was pretty much everybody who didn't fit the mold, whatever the mold was by whoever

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decided.

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Now the Pharisees had their own take on what it was to be faithful.

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And even before I tell you what that is, so do we.

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And I think I need to also say that there have been times when we have mistaken our

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actions for faithfulness when they were not faithful.

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A bit more about that later.

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So imagine Jesus having supper or a meal with tax collectors and sinners in a society where

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it was believed that the people that you dined with, well, they kind of rubbed off on you.

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That you were associated with them in a very public sort of way.

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Sort of like holding up a sign that says, "I'm with them."

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says, "I'm with them."

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And with us. Maybe another lesson for the church.

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Back to this notion of faithfulness though.

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That restorative mercy,

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I think, calls us

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to think about those times when we've been a lot like Matthew,

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where we have benefited from systems that we really can't extricate ourselves from,

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but systems that have done violence to the planet,

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that have past and present done violence to other people,

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whether that is actively or through being too quiet when we should have spoken up.

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Maybe the benefit is not wealth.

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Maybe benefit is just getting along in society,

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but the church has benefited in ways

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that maybe made us complicit with an order

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that is not restorative and not merciful.

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How else are we like Matthew?

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simply by saying we're no longer playing along. That's risky. That requires courage.

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And it's helpful I think at this stage to remember as tall of an order as that is,

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that Jesus has to follow him. We don't go places instead of him while he does management stuff.

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We follow him where he goes, even through life, through death, through resurrection.

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And so in that kind of following, we confront those times when we as church have not acted

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justly. We remember our baptismal vows to work for justice and peace. And we strive as God's

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Spirit helps us and animates us that we might be a community of restorative

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mercy not only for us gathered but for all who are within our orbit of

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friendship and acquaintance and even in our community. It is a tall order. It is a

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grand vision and yet it's one that Jesus calls us to. If I can take a leaf out of

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Bishop Larry's sermon book, I'd like to conclude this sermon the way he would if

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he were with us today. May it be so among us.

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Amen.