

Proper 5

(5 to 11 June, if after Trinity Sunday)

Principal Service readings

Hosea 5.15—6.6	The Israelites vow to return to the Lord
Psalms 50.7-15	The Lord, the God of Israel testifies
Romans 4.13-25	The promise is inherited by faith not law
Matthew 9.9-13, 18-26	The call of Matthew, tax collector; healing miracles

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The call of Matthew; healing the sick

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

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

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

took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶And the report of this spread throughout that district.

Matthew 9.9-13, 18-26 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Tax collectors get a bad press, being lumped together with ‘sinners’, but Jesus doesn’t mind having dinner with them, though he is criticised for it. He tells his critics that it is the sick who need a doctor, and he quotes Hosea 6.6: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’. Are they really sinners, or are they ‘sinners’? Using *air quotes* shows that what the Pharisees thought of as sinners weren’t really as bad as that.

The miracle stories have the theme of Jesus’ power. There are four healing stories between Matthew 9.18-34. In chapter 10 Jesus shows he is willing to share his healing powers with his disciples. Matthew has abbreviated Mark’s account (Mark 5.21-43). Mark had already intertwined the story of Jairus’ daughter with that of the woman with a haemorrhage. He leaves out that she was ill and moves on to her having died. Matthew summarises the woman’s condition, but adds ‘hem’ to the garment, which may have described the fringes or tassels worn in accordance with Numbers 15.38-39, Deuteronomy 22.12. (See Matthew 23.5 for a reference to such tassels worn by the Pharisees.) Matthew’s focus is on the woman’s faith and desire for healing. The woman’s faith in Jesus’ power to heal leads to her healing. The word used her, *sozo*, can mean ‘heal’ or ‘save’.

The mention of the tassels and of the flute-players indicates the Jewish context in which Jesus is operating. Jesus’ resuscitation of the dead girl is a pointer towards his own resurrection.

Quotations

1

The greatest destroyer is of course death itself. Here we see a stage further in Matthew’s description of Jesus’ healing work. The official’s daughter is already dead, and the people in the house know it. They have already begun the sorrowful process of weeping and wailing,

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

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letting their grief have full vent over the lovely young life cut short. Jesus won’t have it. Taking a huge risk – they were already laughing at him, and now he was going to touch the corpse – he holds the little girl’s hand, and she gets up (again the word is a ‘resurrection’ word: she ‘arose’.

Matthew for everyone / Tom Wright. 2002

2

We are no more secure in Christ with a strong faith than with a small faith, so long as that small faith is true faith.

The storytelling God: seeing the glory of Jesus in his parables / Jared C. Wilson. 2014

Related topics

For further study:

God’s mercy; salvation/soteriology; faith/works; Christology; forgiveness; repentance; morality; goal of liturgy; conversion; social justice; sacrament of reconciliation; sacrament of the sick

Closing Prayer

God of compassion,
your mercy calls outcasts and sinners
to share in the work of Jesus.
Let that same power of love
subvert our righteousness and change our lives,
that we may put our trust, not in good works
but in your grace alone.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Celebrating the Christian year, Proper 5, Year A²

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² *Celebrating the Christian year: prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C* / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2004-5.

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