

**Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKY**

11 June – Second Sunday after Pentecost

**HYMNS:** 329 300 305 440 verse 1

**INTROIT:** Psalm 119:65-72

You have been treating Your servant well, O LORD, according to Your Word.  
Teach me good judgment and knowledge! For I trust in Your  
Commandments.

Before I was afflicted, I used to sin thoughtlessly but now I have been  
keeping Your Word.

You are good and do what is good. Teach me Your Prescriptions!

Although arrogant people have smeared me with lies, I shall keep Your  
Directions with all my heart.

Their hearts are as insensitive as fat, but I have taken delight in Your  
Instruction.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your  
Prescriptions.

The Instruction from Your mouth is better for me than thousands of gold  
and silver pieces.

**COLLECT:** Almighty and most merciful God, You sent Your Son,  
Jesus Christ, to seek and to save the lost. Graciously open our ears and  
our hearts to hear His call and to follow Him by faith, that we may feast  
with Him for ever in His kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ, our  
Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now  
and for ever. Amen.

**READINGS:** Hosea 5:15-6:6 Let us return to the LORD.

Romans 4:13-25 Abraham, a type of the person who is righteous through faith.

Matthew 9:9-13 The call of Matthew.

*Welcome to all worshipping with us today!*

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

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***Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.***

**Hosea 5:15-6:6**

*(The Lord said):*

<sup>15</sup> “I shall go back to My own place until they suffer for their guilt. Then they will be intent on My face, and, in their distress, they will earnestly search for Me.”

<sup>6:1</sup> “Come! Let us return to the LORD! For, although He has torn us apart, He will heal us. Although He strikes us down, He will bandage our wounds. <sup>2</sup> After two days He will revive us. On the third day He will raise us, that we may live in His presence. <sup>3</sup> Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD! He will come out as surely as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the Spring-rain, which waters the land.”

<sup>4</sup> “What shall I do with you, Ephraim? What shall I do with you, Judah? Your faithful love is like a morning cloud and disappears like the early dew. <sup>5</sup> That is why I have used the prophets to cut them off. I have used the Words of My mouth to kill them. My Judgments against you go forth like the light. <sup>6</sup> For **I desire mercy and not sacrifice**, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”

**Romans 4:13-25**

<sup>13</sup> It was not through the Law that Abraham or his descendants received the promise that he would be the heir of the world but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup> For, if those who belong to the Law are the heirs, then faith has been made worthless, and the promise has been made ineffective. <sup>15</sup> For the Law works God’s anger, and where there is no Law, there is no transgression either.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the promise belongs to faith, that it may be according to grace, that the promise may be sure to all Abraham’s descendants, not only to those who belong to the Law but also to those who belong to the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all, <sup>17</sup> as the Scriptures have said, “**I have made you the father of many nations.**” He is our father in the presence of God, in whom he believed, the God who makes the dead live and calls what does not exist into existence.

<sup>18</sup> Abraham, contrary to hope, in hope believed and so became a **father of many nations**, as he had been told: “**That is how many descendants you will have.**”

<sup>19</sup> Without becoming weak in faith, he considered that, since he was about a hundred years old, his own body was already dead, and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. <sup>20</sup> There was no unbelief to make him doubt what God had promised, but his faith was made strong, and he gave glory to God. <sup>21</sup> He was fully convinced that God also had the power to do what He had promised. <sup>22</sup> That is why his faith “was **reckoned to him as righteousness.**” <sup>23</sup> However, the Words

**“It was reckoned to him”** were not written for him alone, <sup>24</sup> but also for us. God is about to **reckon righteousness** to us, who **believe** in Him who has raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>25</sup> He was **handed over** because of our offences and was raised for the sake of our justification.

### **Matthew 9:9-13**

<sup>9</sup> When Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax-collector’s booth. He told him, “Follow Me!”

Matthew got up and followed Him.

<sup>10</sup> As Jesus was reclining at the table in Matthew’s house, many tax-collectors and other disreputable people came and reclined at the table with Jesus and His disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?”

<sup>12</sup> When Jesus heard that, He said: “It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Rather, go and learn what this means, **‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’!** For I have not come to call righteous people but sinners.”

## **FOLLOW ME**

### **Sermon for the Second Sunday after Pentecost 2023**

#### **Matthew 9:9-13**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel reading from before, Matthew 9:9-13: **When Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax-collector’s booth. He told him, “Follow Me!”**

**Matthew got up and followed Him.**

<sup>10</sup> **As Jesus was reclining at the table in Matthew’s house, many tax-collectors and other disreputable people came and reclined at the table with Jesus and His disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?”**

<sup>12</sup> **When Jesus heard that, He said: “It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Rather, go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’! For I have not come to call righteous people but sinners.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Romans had an awful, corrupt system for collecting taxes. They had tax-collectors who were charged to collect taxes from the people to the state treasury, but it was up to them to collect more money on top of the taxes to make a profit for themselves. In general, tax-collectors had a reputation of being dishonest. They would collect unreasonable amounts and enrich themselves in the process. No wonder their countrymen regarded them as the vilest of sinners. Tax-collectors were barred from the synagogue and were forbidden to have any religious or social contact with “respectable” Jews because others regarded them as traitors and liars.

As Matthew was Jewish, he was seen as betraying his own people. His fellow countrymen considered him a traitor and treated him with contempt, ridicule, and scorn. Yet it was to this man that the Lord came and offered him a new and higher vocation. The Lord saw Matthew sitting in a tax-collector’s booth and spoke two simple words to Matthew. He said, “**Follow Me.**” This was not an irresistible command of Jesus’ almighty power; it was a gracious invitation, and Matthew accepted it eagerly.

In his account, Luke notes that Matthew left everything and followed Jesus.<sup>1</sup> There was no stalling by Matthew; he did not say, “*Sure, Lord, I’ll follow You, but first allow me to scoop up all this money so I don’t lose it.*” There was none of that. No, the money remained at the booth. The Lord called Matthew to discipleship. He would no longer be collecting taxes but would be one of Jesus’ close disciples.

To celebrate the occasion of Jesus calling him, Matthew prepared a dinner at his home to honour Jesus and introduce him to his friends and associates. “**As Jesus was reclining at the table in Matthew’s house, many tax-collectors and other disreputable people came and reclined at the table with Jesus and His disciples.**”

Matthew’s guests included fellow tax-collectors and others who are called simply “**disreputable people,**” those who were caught up in an ungodly way of life. Indeed these other guests were people Matthew knew, and he invited them so they could meet Jesus. Perhaps some would also be led to forsake their sinful life, believe in Jesus, find forgiveness, and follow Him. And they did come. Matthew had a full house, not only filled with his colleagues, but his house was

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 5:28

filled with the very presence of the Lord Himself. The Lord came to his house and ate with him.

Surely there can be no greater blessing than to have the Lord present in one's house. Matthew must have felt joy as the Lord took him from his miserable life and called him to higher things. No longer would he be serving Rome but his Redeemer. What a privilege it was for Matthew and all these bottom-dwellers to eat in the very presence of the Lord. *Their cups undoubtedly overflowed with joy*. Yet the Pharisees could not accept that this Teacher would associate with such sinful and unclean people. They asked, **“Why does your Teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?”**

The Pharisee's lack of concern for others only showed their narrow-mindedness. But before we go and criticise them too much, the trouble is that even though the Pharisees may have had a narrow view of what it means to be people of God, unfortunately, our view is even narrower. Think about it. We are often so short-sighted that our concept of the church does not extend much past what we see in our own mirrors. We concern ourselves with what we can get out of the church to the exclusion of serving others. If that person is not me or someone I am related to, I don't care about them! We yawn when we hear what is happening within the church at large or even within our backyard. We do not express interest in the mission work of the church. Whether more souls or not are added to the kingdom of God is of no concern to us because we are stuck on ourselves, just as the Pharisees were stuck on themselves. The Lord responded to their hypocrisy and quoted from the prophet Hosea, urging them to learn the meaning of Hosea 6:6. He said: **“...go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’”**

Quoting these words from Hosea, the Lord shows the Christian life He desires His children to lead – not merely *acting* like we do. He wants His people to be like Him, exhibit His qualities in their life, and be holy as He is. The Pharisees were so concerned with their exact fulfilling of the *ceremonial Law* that they showed no regard for the *moral Law*. That is, they showed their false piety by being “perfect” in their offering of sacrifices, in their temple worship, and in keeping their code, but they paid no mind to the poor and needy all around them. They had fulfilled the letter of the Law but not the spirit of it. The moral Law takes precedence, that is, ***to love the Lord with all of one's heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love one's neighbour as one loves himself***. This is the summary of the Ten Commandments. The Pharisees were not doing this, and

neither do we. We know that love for one another is fulfilling the Law<sup>2</sup>, but have we only come here today *to do our duty and nothing more*? Do we care about what is spoken and sung in the liturgy, reciting words effortlessly but not knowing or caring what these words say? Do we ignore the Word of God from the lectern and the pulpit because we do not like what we hear? Do we avoid coming to God's house to be served by the Lord simply because we don't like the pastor or disagree with his actions, even if he upholds the Word of God and the Confessions of the Church to which he made a promise to do? It's much easier to criticise him than God. Incidentally, those who do this must surely realise that their hardened hearts are rejecting God's free gifts distributed in worship. Shame on them! Do we stay away from God's house because of the grudge we hold in our hearts toward a fellow brother or sister in Christ? Do we pray to the Lord, begging Him to show mercy, while thinking, "*Why am I wasting my time praying for people I don't know and don't care about one bit?*" Again, shame on any who do! The Lord desires mercy, not sacrifice, but we desire the ritual aspect of sacrifice while showing no mercy or compassion toward those in need of our assistance and prayers. While we pretend to be righteous as the Pharisees did, we have shown ourselves to be no better than the "**disreputable people**" they ridiculed, and we show contempt.

**"It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick... For I have not come to call righteous people, but sinners."** What wonderful news for Matthew and all who ate in his house that day. The Lord had come to them! He called Matthew, a sinner and a tax collector, to follow Him.

This same Lord comes to us today, at this very moment! He calls sinners to follow Him. He first extended this call at our baptism to become children of God. This is the call He continues to extend to us in the public reading and proclamation of the Word. We cannot answer this call by and of ourselves; this is the call the Holy Spirit leads us to answer, just as He did with Matthew. The Lord had invited Matthew to follow Him, and Matthew heeded that call, leaving behind his former way of life. The Lord calls us to follow Him, leaving our former way of life behind. This is what repentance is all about. We confess our sins, as the Lord invites us to do, and we vow to turn our backs on our sinful lives. Being sorry for our sins, we want to do better. Because the Lord dearly

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 13:8, 10

loves us and desires to eat with us in heaven into all eternity, He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts to create, sustain, and strengthen our faith so that we may also be overjoyed at the Lord's desire to be with us, to be with us here in His house and in our homes. The Lord wants to be intimately involved with our lives, so that we may believe and have eternal life with Him. This is why He comes to heal us. This is why He comes to call us. This is why He comes to feed us. This is why He came to die for us. The Lord has shown His mercy by sacrificing Himself on the cross for us, for the forgiveness of all our sins. Jesus has healed us by giving His life for us. Our bodies should have been on the cross and in the tomb. But the Lord, in His mercy, sacrificed Himself to heal us of the disease of sin, so that sin may no longer have power over us. The Lord, in His might, rose from the dead on the third day, that He may call us to the glory He has won for us, that we may dine with Him in our heavenly home when He calls us to Himself. He eats with sinners today, whenever His Word is preached in all its truth and purity and when His Sacraments are administered according to His Gospel. We are called by the name of Christ. Through faith in Christ, we are children of God. Our lives should show that we are God's children by reflecting God's qualities. Jesus taught His disciples this when He said, "*Love your enemies! Do good and lend, without expecting to get anything back! Then your reward will be great, and you will be the children of the Most High, because He is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. Be merciful, as your Father also is merciful!*" (Luke 6:35-36). The apostle Paul likewise exhorts Christians to be merciful when he says, "*Be kind to one another and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you!*" (Ephesians 4:32). Peter also writes, "*All of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another*" (1 Peter 3:8).

Dear friends, remember the mercy God has shown you so that you may be merciful in your conduct toward others. Forgive those who sin against you, for God has forgiven you all your sins for the sake of Jesus, who has given His life for you. Be kind to others, for God has been kind to you. Be tender-hearted toward others, for God cares about you. He has numbered the hairs of your head. His ears are open to your cries when you pray to Him. Be generous and willing to give and share what you have, for God gives generously, even to the unthankful and evil, and especially to us His children. Our merciful God delights in showing mercy. Let us then show that we are His children by showing mercy. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, our strength and our stay, we praise You for creating all things by Your power, and for sustaining the earth and all who live on it. Help us to hear the witness of Your creation and to see the wonder of Your glory.

Father, we praise You for revealing Yourself to us in Your Word, and for showing us Your holy will. We thank You for the inspired writers of Your wise and true Word, for through them You have shown us Your forgiving love and given us rich promises of hope. We praise You for Your grace in Christ Jesus, by which You have provided us our escape from Your judgment on all disobedience. Pour out Your Spirit on us so that we may grow in knowing You.

We praise You for leading us from death to life through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Je-sus Your Son. We praise You for our freedom from the condemnation of Your Law, and for delivering us from the ceremonial shadows of the Old Testament Law. By Your love for us, move us to the love and mercy that is the concern of Your moral Law, so that we may not love in mere words but in deed and truth. Give us sympathetic hearts for those in need, that we may share with them the things You have given us. Grant that through our love they may learn to know Your love, and praise You.

We thank You that You have prepared for all people the rest of eternal salvation, and that through the Gospel You invite all to it. Enable us faithfully to spread the good news of this great relief to all whom we meet in our lives, that they also may respond to Your mercy with happy and thankful hearts. Grant that the spiritually poor may taste and see that You are merciful and good.

Almighty Lord, rule over our nation, and guide all to whom You have given authority. Bless our society with pure motives, noble goals, and moral strength. Give all Australians the desire to live before You in loving trust and obedience.

Bless our homes, and make them places of true learning and love, that all who live in them may find peace and joy in harmony with You and with one another.

We pray for Your special protection and help for the sick, the sorrowful, the aged, and the lonely. Meet their needs with Your mercy, and show them the wonderful things You have prepared for all Your children. Father, hear our prayers, and if there is anything else we should have asked for, grant it for the sake of Jesus Christ who has saved us and pleads for us. Amen.



**Article: The Long Haul**

How often does any one thing make a big difference in a person's life? Little things are always making little differences. But big things that make big differences are few and far between. Most big differences are accumulations of little differences.

A major crisis is rare. If crises were happening constantly, there would be too much history to write. Actual turning points for people or groups of people occur seldom enough that they can be isolated and analysed.

Crises are critical. But they are not the whole story. Short steps cover long miles. Many little turns outweigh spectacular events. Most important work is dull. Progress occurs inch by inch.

In Christianity, conversion is important. But perseverance is just as important. "*By your endurance, you will gain your lives*" said Jesus (Luke 21:19). We commemorate birth, but once born we need daily bread. We remember baptism, the washing of regeneration (John 3:5; Titus 3:5). But having been born again, we need the Word of God and the Lord's Supper frequently to nourish spiritual life.

The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. For some people, it may be a short dash to the finish line (a deathbed convert, the penitent thief on the cross, the Christian child the heavenly Father takes home). But for most of us, endurance is more important than speed. "*The race is not to the swift*" (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

The Christian life is a war, not a battle. It is more than one fight or confrontation that is soon done. It is a long series of battles, some large, many small. All are mortal combat.

A soldier's last battle is no less frightful than his first. It may be news to some people, but the struggle with the devil, the world, and the flesh does not get easier. It often gets harder and more complicated, like the long-distance runner's battle with fatigue.

The old Adam in us should, as Luther's Small Catechism says, "be drowned and die" through daily application of Law and Gospel. But as someone said about the old Adam, "That guy can swim!" A lifeguard will tell of the strength and violence of a drowning man.

Many young Christians are idealistic. Their spiritual energy seems as boundless as their physical energy. They have yet to face prolonged trial, trouble, tribulation, and temptation. Some fall away when the going gets tough (*“which for a while believe”* Luke 8:13).

But are we not supposed to grow better and stronger in our faith? Should that not be part of maturity? Well, yes, but many Christians feel worse and weaker as they grow older or some severe temptation grows longer. They are not weaker, only wearier like the long-distance runner approaching the end of the race. The last mile, the last lap, is the hardest.

The middle of the race is hard enough. Many a believer wonders how he can go on. The weariness is not evil. Some coaches say about workouts, “No pain, no gain.” There is some truth to that. The work that wears a person out is necessary if he is to be built up. But it must be combined with proper nourishment. Spiritual exercise does not make us stronger. It puts to use the strength we received from Word and Sacrament. It also teaches us the uselessness of any other supposed source of strength.

Veterans of the cross may have more, not fewer, spiritual aches and pains. They may carry many scars from many wounds. Total healing is not here but there! Health is in heaven. Old soldiers are not worse soldiers; they are no less brave and loyal for all they suffer. They are closer to the heavenly retirement, which God knows when to grant. We shall not be overstressed (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The point is to keep the eyes of faith fixed on the heavenly goal. The only way to do that is through the Gospel, the message of full pardon and free forgiveness of all our sins because of the life and death of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, in our place. Because of Jesus, we are assured of crossing the finish line, winning the war, and going to heaven.

That is not at all because of our efforts. That is entirely because of Christ’s efforts on our behalf. When the angels usher us into glory, we shall know why we had to face such wearying warfare, such agony of endurance (Acts 14:22). We shall know then, better than ever, that our salvation is entirely God’s doing. Yet we shall not regret the fear and trembling along the way (Philippians 2:12-13).

**Children's Message:**

Look at our picture to the left of some people all talking together. Do you think they're enjoying themselves? How can you tell? What about that person in our picture below? Is he having a good time?

What makes you think not? What do think is making him feel sad? I think you're right. That person is left out. It hurts to be left out. It makes us feel sad. Can you think of some reasons he might be left out?

Do you know we can be like the person left out? Sometimes we do things that are wrong.

Sometimes we're mean to someone else. Maybe a friend told you a secret that she wanted to keep a secret, but you told somebody else anyway. Do you think that person would want to talk to you very much anymore? Or maybe you took something that belonged to a friend. Do you think that friend would want to play with you and let you use his stuff anymore? We do the same thing with God. He gives us good things every day, loves us, and takes care of us, but then we don't always thank Him, and maybe we are selfish with those good things. So that means God should avoid us, and leave us out of His family.



But does God do that? No! Of course not. Jesus welcomes us back with His forgiveness. He was left all alone on the cross so we would be included in God's family. He rose from the dead to be with us always. In today's Gospel, Jesus came to Matthew and said, "*Follow Me!*" (Matthew 9:9). That was a gracious invitation from Jesus to Matthew and us! Everyone is included in this message. That's the way it is with Jesus. He always comes to be with us and invites us to be with Him. *Thank You Jesus, for Your gracious invitation to follow You. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>18 June 3 Pentecost</b>	<b>25 June 4 Pentecost</b>	<b>2 July 5 Pentecost</b>
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.30am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC (Baptism)	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
<b>Sunday, 18 June</b>		
READINGS: Exodus 19:2-8;                      Romans 5:6-15;                      Matthew 9:35-10:8-20		
HYMNS: 347 852 456 (326 51) 451		
<b>Sunday, 25 June</b>		
READINGS: Jeremiah 20:7-13;                      Romans 6:12-23;                      Matthew 10:5a, 21-33		
HYMNS: 36 199 200 171                      MARBURG: 276 199 200 848 291 171		

Tomorrow, 10.30am. Lionel Hausler's funeral will be held at St Paul's Greenwood. Could those planning on attending please bring a plate for a shared lunch?

Tuesday, 13 June, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Oakey. Opening devotion: Jeff.

Wednesday, 14 June 10.00am. Women's Guild at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Opening devotion: Jeanette. Choose a Bible verse from Leviticus 17-20. Item of Interest: a bag or handbag.

Saturday, 8 July, 10.00am. CoC/Sem meeting at Bethlehem Toowoomba.

**BIBLE STUDIES:**

Thursday, 15 June, 10.00am LOWOOD.

Thursday, 15 June, 7.30pm GRN.

Sunday, 18 June, 8.00am TMBA.

Friday, 23 June, 7.30pm. OAK/AUB at Oakey.

Sunday, 25 June, MARBURG after service.