

Trinity 2, 2026

Sermon: “Held by love, sent with compassion” (Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35 – 10:8)

*May I speak in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

There are seasons in life when people grow tired. Not only physically tired, but tired in the soul. There can be weariness that comes from carrying worry for too long, from trying to hold a family together, from grieving the loss of someone we love, from feeling uncertain about the future, or from trying to be strong when strength feels far away.

Perhaps some of us come today carrying or experiencing one of these forms of tiredness or weariness, or perhaps more than one. And if we do, then today’s Scripture readings meet us gently.

Our Gospel passage describes Jesus going through towns and villages, teaching, healing, and proclaiming good news. Matthew tells us, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Jesus saw them. This very short description sounds simple, but it matters deeply. Jesus did not pass by too quickly to notice. He did not see a problem to be solved or a burden to avoid. He saw people – people with stories, carrying pain, trying to survive and make sense of life. And his response was ... compassion.

Compassion is a significant word. It is more than pity because pity looks from a distance while compassion moves closer. Matthew deliberately uses a vivid onomatopoeic word in Greek for compassion – *esplagchnisthē*. For the ancient Greeks, this word was related to the inward organs – the guts and entrails – which in their conception was the seat of deep emotion.

Matthew used the word *esplagchnisthē* to communicate that Jesus' compassion is not detached concern but it is visceral mercy. And perhaps what we need to hear today is this: Jesus sees us too. He sees what others cannot see, such as the grief we may hide, the fears we do not easily name, the prayers we have nearly stopped praying, or the burdens we have learnt to carry quietly.

Perhaps we think or imagine that God is disappointed with us because we are struggling or tired. We may think faith means having everything together. But the Gospel offers another picture.

We see that Jesus does not first turn towards the strong and impressive; he turns toward the weary. He sees the harassed and helpless, and his heart moves toward them.

We see this same tenderness echoing through Paul's words in our Romans passage. "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peace with God. Many of us long for peace, for peace in our homes, peace in our minds, peace in a troubled world. Yet Paul speaks of something much deeper when he speaks of peace with God, that our relationship with God does not rest on our success or spiritual performance, but on Christ.

Many people carry an invisible fear that they are somehow failing God because they think that they are not praying enough, not faithful enough, or not good enough.

But Paul speaks directly into that fear. He states clearly that we are justified by faith and not by proving ourselves worthy, nor by getting life perfectly right. We are justified by trusting the grace God has already given in Christ.

And then Paul says something extraordinary: “While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”

Notice the words “*while we were still weak*”. Christ met us in our weakness, not after we became stronger, nor after we fixed ourselves, and not after we finally deserved love.

There is something profoundly, something deeply comforting here. God loves us. God loves us as we are. God does not love an ideal version of us. God loves us in our unfinished lives, in our woundedness and longing, in our faith that is sometimes steady and sometimes trembling. This is amazing grace.

The cross is God's declaration that divine love does not wait for perfection. And perhaps that is why Paul can speak of hope even in suffering. He was not saying that suffering is good in itself. He was not glorifying or romanticizing pain. Paul knew firsthand about imprisonment, rejection and hardship.

Suffering is not good. Anyone who has sat beside illness or loss knows this. But suffering is never faced alone. The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

I love Paul's expressive way of writing. The love of God has been poured into our hearts. God's love is not rationed, not measured out sparingly. It is poured like rain on dry ground, like water offered to thirst. And when we begin to trust that we are held by such love, something within us begins to change.

And that brings us back to our Gospel passage. After Jesus sees the crowds and feels compassion, he does something unexpected. He calls his disciples and sends them.

The compassion of Jesus does not stop with Jesus. It flows through those who follow him. And notice whom Jesus sent. He sent his disciples, people who were not polished heroes or spiritual experts. Rather, they were people who were still learning, who sometimes doubted and misunderstood. They were ordinary people who were followers of Christ, which means there is hope for us.

Sometimes we hear words about mission and may feel inadequate or unqualified. We think, “Surely Jesus means someone holier, wiser, more capable.” But Jesus sends ordinary people carrying extraordinary grace. And often this mission is quieter than we imagine.

Most of us will not heal crowds or travel far to publicly proclaim the gospel message. But we can live compassionately. We can notice the lonely person others overlook. We can speak kindly in a harsh world. We can accompany someone through grief instead of rushing to fix them. We can pray. We can encourage. We can love. These things matter more than we know.

Jesus says, “You received without payment; give without payment.” We give what we have first received. And we received peace with God, mercy in our weakness, love poured into our hearts, and compassion that does not turn away.

So perhaps the invitation today is not first to do more, but to rest more, to rest deeply in the love of God, to allow ourselves to be among those crowds Jesus sees with compassion. Before we are sent, we are loved. Before we serve, we are held. Before we offer grace, we receive grace.

And from that place where we are held by love, we are sent into the world carrying the compassion of Christ.

May we know ourselves seen by Jesus, held by his peace, and gently sent to be signs of his love in the world. Amen.