

RECTOR'S MESSAGE – SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2026

“I DESIRE MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE” (Matthew 9:13)

Friends, in our Gospel reading this Sunday from Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26, Jesus begins with calling Matthew (the tax collector) to be one of His disciples. To be a tax collector at that time is one of the most challenging jobs one can ever think of. Why? Tax collectors are regarded as "sinners and unclean" whose lives are not worthy of any emulation because they are reputed to engage in acts of corrupt practices. But Jesus came to disrupt this system to show many that His desire is to have "mercy" on *all* not a "sacrifice" regardless of the unworthiness of anyone caught in any societal unwelcomed practices. So may I ask you, who's that "**Matthew**" in your life? The coworker who's too messy? The family member who's too political and nasty? That church member who always feels to be recognized and calling for attention and accolades for every good deed? That child who is off the cause of doing things wrongly or not getting things right? That addictive spouse or a family member you have given up hope of? But Jesus didn't wait for them to 'clean up.' Like for Matthew Jesus joined them messy where they are to prove that humanity in all of us often fails us, but we all need the "**mercy**" of God to be saved (Psalm 130:1-5)

As 21st century believers in the teachings of Jesus Christ, the word "**Unclean**" still falls in the categories we use against people whom we hardly know their story: That homeless fellow, that ex-con, that single mom trying hard to look after her family, that divorced human who is struggling with the pieces of his/her/their life, that mentally ill person on your street looking for help? The list is just endless... In all this "**What Would Jesus Do?**" Jesus touches the untouchable, and reaches out to the outcast/misjudged, the condemned, and the same in our response too as His followers with Marks 3 and 4 of our Marks of Mission: "to respond to human need by loving service" and "to transform systems that dehumanize people and to pursue peace and reconciliation with every human being." Still Jesus looked and touched "unclean" people. Churches that won't touch addiction, depression, those who suffer injustice, these churches are missing the point here! We can tie this theology up with John's Gospel "**Word became flesh**" (John 1:14). Jesus didn't stay "clean" in heaven. He left everything behind and embodies our humanity on earth to touch lepers, blind, broken, and the vulnerable. And if He's risen and alive and reigns, He's still touching us today in every area of our shortcomings.

Now with the woman "who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years" (Matthew 9:20), who's your "bleeding woman"? That coworker/family or friend battling with cancer, that neighbor with grief, the teen with doubts as a result of a society that refuses to validate their human feelings? Just remember, these are not projects - they're people Jesus still touches and/or would touch through you and your actions! That is what makes us His.

Finally, with the dead girl awaiting life through the "Touch" of Jesus, who's "dead" around you? Grieving, oppressed, despairing? Jesus wants us to speak of resurrection and life with faith in Him to those dead issues in our lives. From Mark 5 of 5 Marks of our Mission, when we care for all God's creation we bring life to dead spaces around us. We need to get this clear, that the 21st century church is either a hospital for the "sick" or a club for the "clean" where Jesus founded for Himself and for all to find healing and restoration. Let's join Him (The Founder)

there. And I pray that may He make us contagious with His "*mercy*" in our walk with Him.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

With every blessing,

The Reverend Wilson Akinwale
Rector