

Worship Material
Love in action
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 11th June

Begin with an opening prayer

Merciful God who welcomes us all,
no matter who we are,
no matter where we are from,
no matter what we have done,
no matter what our successes
or failures in life so far have been,
we come together before you, as your children,
knowing we are welcome.

Amen.

Read Matthew 9:9-13,18-26

Bible notes

The action in this section of Matthew is frenetic. He tells the same story that Mark does in Mark 5:21-43 but in far fewer words, and with the call of Matthew thrown in for good measure. The picture that emerges is that Jesus is busy in the mission God has given him; there is no time to waste. That is why he quotes Hosea 6:6 to the religious leaders. It is not a time to sit around debating theology; it is a time to show God's mercy to people of all kinds.

So, Jesus has invited a tax collector into his ramshackle band of travelling companions and then gone to dinner with all of Matthew's mates, people the Pharisees would not have crossed the street to kick. He is doing this because, like a physician, he needs to be spending his time with the sick, hence the Hosea quote. Then as if to prove it, a father with a sick daughter turns up and a woman with chronic illness interrupts his journey to the man's house. In Mark, the ruler is named – Jairus – and the daughter is ill. In Matthew, the focus is on both the urgency and enormity of the man's request – and his daughter is already dead! Jesus doesn't hesitate and they set off to the man's house. On the way, an unnamed woman interrupts his journey by touching his cloak. This anonymous sick person receives healing and a word of love and encouragement from Jesus. He calls her 'daughter'. Perhaps, like the woman bent double in Luke 13, he wanted to emphasise that this woman, for all her ritual uncleanness, is a daughter of Abraham as much as anyone else in Israel. Then they are at the leader's house where the mourning rituals have begun. The mourners laugh at Jesus when he says the girl is sleeping. What Jesus is suggesting and is about to do seems so absurd that laughing is the only response. But the girl is raised, and Matthew says news of this spread around the whole district. You bet it did! Jesus had interrupted death with life, and Matthew intends us to see this as an example of

what the Gospel does in people's lives: God has come to have mercy, and the story invites us to be people caught up in this, who live merciful lives in the wake of our Lord.

Prayer

A prayer of praise

We live our lives, O merciful God, seeking to serve you and our neighbours; seeking and searching to know the best way to share all that you are and all that you mean to us.

We give thanks to you that, as we seek, you inspire us.

As we search, you help us discover.

As we listen, you speak.

As we look, you reveal yourself.

As we breathe, your spirit breathes within us.

We praise you for coming to us even when we don't know we are in need.

We praise you for never excluding or neglecting us, for never abandoning or rejecting us.

We praise you that you know our needs without us explaining them to you.

We praise you that in life and in death, you are our God and we can always trust you.

We praise you for the promise of eternal life, that in due course we may rest in peace and rise in glory.

We praise you that you are an understanding and compassionate God, far beyond our deserving, far beyond our imagining and far beyond our understanding.

Thanks and praise be to you, O God, now and for ever.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

God of mercy and justice,
as we walk alongside those in our communities
who seek mercy, kindness, or forgiveness,
open our eyes to see them
and our minds and hearts to reach out to them,
that we may be moved to share your love and compassion
in practical ways – and in Jesus' name.

Amen.