**Second Presbyterian Church**
**June 7, 2026 || Year A – Second Sunday after Pentecost**
**Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26**

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

‘As Jesus was walking along,
he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax-collection station,
and he said to him, “Follow me.”
And he got up and followed him.

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

While he was saying these things to them,
suddenly a leader came in and knelt before him,
saying, “My daughter has just died,
but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”
And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples.
Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak,
for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.”
Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter;
your faith has made you well.”
And the woman was made well from that moment.
When Jesus came to the leader’s house
and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion,
he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.”
And they laughed at him.
But when the crowd had been put outside,
he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.
And the report of this spread through all of that district.’

For the word of God in scripture,
for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us.
**Thanks be to God.**

"If you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all."

Stunningly beautiful words that we just sang together while gathering for worship.

Stunningly beautiful words that I first heard sung in 2003 by my high school youth group's worship band at Germantown Baptist Church.

Words that broke open my 17-year-old soul and made me weep.

Words that still make me weep as a 40-year-old woman.

Words that free us from shame's grip.

Words that welcome confession.

If we tarry at the tax-collection station, we will never come at all.

If we linger in our sin – sit in our shame – fearful of confessing how it actually is with our lives, we will never come at all.

And y'all – we are not well.

We are all recovering from sin – we are all hiding from our Creator[1] – sitting in flimsy stations of self-created worth.

Jesus sees us in our flimsy stations – in our booths that shore up our fragile egos – and calls us to follow.

> Will we tarry or will we follow the one who calls us?
>
> Will we claim to be well and in no need of a soul-physician or will we follow the one who sees us sitting in sin and calls us anyway?

Jesus sees us and calls us to recline and feast in a house with many tax collectors and sinners.

> A wonder of wonders that baffles the righteous – baffles those who claim to be well.
>
> And the name for this wonder of wonders is steadfast love.
>
> > The name is mercy.

Steadfast, merciful love sees us – calls us to feast – and we will never be the same.

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[1] "A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)", Line 33.

In this long season after Pentecost, we enter the season of learning how to be disciples of this steadfast, merciful love.

At this halfway mark in our liturgical calendar, we have heard the fullness of Jesus' story – birth; life; death; resurrection; ascension.

We have heard the mystery of our faith.

What shall we do now?

The prophet Hosea implores us to press on to know the Lord.

The rabbi Jesus tells us to go and learn what mercy means.

Pressing on to know the Lord and learning what mercy means requires us to begin with vulnerability.

To leave our tax-collection stations and follow Jesus.

To recline and feast with fellow sinners recently freed from binding shame.

A feast in which we witness and learn how to state our needs and ask for help – in which we learn what it looks like to trust Jesus' steadfast, merciful love to touch our lives.

A person of power suddenly comes and kneels before Jesus.

The need – a dead daughter.

The ask – lay your hand on her, and she will live.

A woman touches the tassels of Jesus' cloak.

The need – hemorrhaging for twelve years.

The ask – if I only touch Jesus' cloak, I will be made well.

Our needs and asks layer upon each other, and steadfast, merciful love moves and responds.

A woman comes up behind Jesus.

She touches the fringe of Jesus' cloak and states her need.

Jesus turns. Sees her.

Courage in adversity is yours, daughter. Your faith has saved you.

Will courage in adversity be ours?

Will we reach for Jesus' cloak as we bleed?

Will our faith in Jesus' steadfast, merciful love make us well from the moment we ask for healing?

This unnamed woman shows us it will be so.

The girl is not dead, but sleeping.

The grieving crowd laughs at these words as Jesus enters a death-tinged house.

Jesus grasps the girl's hand.

The girl is called back to life.

Will steadfast, merciful love enter our death-tinged houses?

Will steadfast, merciful love grasp our dead hands?

Will we be called back to life?

This unnamed girl shows us it will be so.

The Seattle-based artist, Alexandra Blakely, has a song titled "Shame Song"[2] on her album Wails (Songs for Grief).

This song's steady drumbeat propels us forward as three verses meditatively repeat.

*If I'm gonna fall*

*And if I'm gonna change*

*May it serve the whole*

*May it turn a page*

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixJPzAD-_S4

*And if I'm gonna fail*

*And if I'm gonna learn*

*May it serve the whole*

*May it serve the Future Ones*

*I too deserve belonging*

*I too deserve to heal*

*I too deserve aliveness*

*I deserve to court the shadows here*

If we tarry till we are better, we will never come at all.

If we do not state our needs and ask for help, we may never experience the touch of Jesus' steadfast, merciful love.

We deserve belonging. We deserve healing. We deserve aliveness.

Belonging. Healing. Aliveness.

May we press on to know the Lord and learn what mercy means.

May we get up from the sin and shame in which we sit to follow Jesus into belonging.

May we touch Jesus' cloak and receive healing.

May we feel Jesus raise us up into aliveness.

And when we find ourselves tarrying, may we remember that Christ's belonging, healing, and aliveness wait to meet our wounded souls.