

## Sermon and Readings 14<sup>th</sup> June 2026 3rd Sunday of Pentecost

### Genesis 18:1-15

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup>He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them and bowed down to the ground. <sup>3</sup>He said, 'My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup>Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. <sup>5</sup>Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' <sup>6</sup>And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' <sup>7</sup>Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. <sup>8</sup>Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. <sup>9</sup>They said to him, 'Where is your wife, Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' <sup>10</sup>Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. <sup>11</sup>Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. <sup>12</sup>So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' <sup>13</sup>The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" <sup>14</sup>Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.' <sup>15</sup>But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'Oh yes, you did laugh.'

### Psalm 116: 1-2, 11-18

1 I love the Lord, because he heard my voice:

the voice of my supplication;

2 Because he inclined his ear to me:

in the day that I called to him.

11 How shall I repay the Lord:

for all his benefits to me?

12 I will take up the cup of salvation:

and call upon the name of the Lord.

13 I will pay my vows to the Lord:

in the presence of all his people.

14 Grievous in the sight of the Lord:

is the death of his faithful ones.

15 O Lord, I am your servant, your servant and the child of your handmaid:

you have unloosed my bonds.

16 I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving:

and call upon the name of the Lord.

17 I will pay my vows to the Lord:

in the presence of all his people,

18 In the courts of the house of the Lord:

even in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord.

### **New Testament - Romans 5:1-11**

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. <sup>6</sup>For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

### **Gospel -Matthew 9:35-10:8**

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them,

because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

<sup>2</sup>These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. <sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup>but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." <sup>8</sup>Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

### **Sermon**

The readings this week see us visiting Abraham and Sarah as the Lord appears to them by the oaks of Mamre, in a passage from Genesis that flows through the story of Abraham and Sarah's calling and journey. In the Psalm we are reminded that God moves towards us – inclining an ear to us to hear our voice. In our Romans text we are reminded of God's love for us amid affliction and that through Jesus we have obtained access to grace and peace with God. The Gospel reading in Matthew centres around the sending of the twelve and their commission to go and do as Jesus does.

Throughout the readings there is intriguing imagery that can help us to be creative in our worship; phrases that allow us to ask questions together and uncover the gifts within these texts. There are also patterns and principles that can be understood that will help us as we live out our call to be the priesthood of all believers and those who make God and God's love visible and real in the world. Despite how challenging things feel right now, we have a God who is faithful through the generations, who journeys with us and empowers and gifts us to heal, to make peace and to build a kingdom like no other. Our readings also invite us to think about the nature of blessing: what it means to bless and to be blessed.

In our reading from the Genesis, we see God delivering the promise God made to Abraham by giving Sarah and Abraham a child, even in their very, very old age. It seems that this child is an answer to prayer—a sign of God’s faithfulness. And, as children often are, Isaac is a blessing. He seems to be a sign that the couple has found favour with God. Except. . . does that mean that any couple who has struggled to conceive is *out* of favour with God?

The story is often read too simply—and therein lies the: childlessness—and God’s answer, God’s presence, God’s favour is manifested in the “solution” to this problem: Sarah conceives and bears a son.

Several of us know folk who have tried and been unable to have children of their own. Maybe it was you, or a close friend, or a family member. Odds are, in this congregation, someone has considered IVF; someone has prayed intensely that God would help them conceive. Someone might even be in the middle of that struggle. And, so, this interpretation is important to understand as an interpretation, not as the story’s one meaning. While it is a possible reading to see that God’s blessing and favour as connected with Abraham and Sarah being given a child, that is not the only reading. God’s presence is not always revealed by a simple answer to our complex longings. Receiving God’s blessing—being blessed—is more robust and meaningful than just getting our own way. God is not a wish-granting shop.

The complex nature of God—and God’s way of giving—is disclosed in our gospel. After telling the apostles that there will be a lot of work to do, Jesus tells them, “You received without payment, give without payment.”

Think how opposing that runs to the way of the world! The world runs on gaining and worth. Australia, in its idea of itself, has a belief that you get what you deserve based on your own merit. If you work hard enough, you should be able to have a good life. You earn your way forward.

But if a good life is earned, by our logic, then is a bad one earned, as well? If you have a hard life—if you’re struggling to pay your bills, or you can’t get along with your kids, or you got fired from your job—do you deserve it?

We do know that at times, life isn’t fair. Bad things happen to good people, and sometimes good things happens to people who we feel don’t deserve it. In fact, deserving seems to have very little to do with any of it. And neither does ability. Neither does hard work.

What Jesus teaches the disciples doesn't so much deal with deserving and undeserving—who earns what—rather, it introduces a completely different economic system. Jesus is talking about *gifts*. He teaches about receiving God's love and God's presence as a gift. Not because we earned it, not because we deserve it, not because we are good, but because God is good.

This brings us back to the idea of blessing. Blessing isn't about having our prayers answered the way we hope for. It's not about receiving something wonderful. Blessing is about God's goodness—God's faithfulness—in our lives.

God's blessing is God's presence with us. And that presence is here when we get our way and when all the chips are down. God blesses us right where we are, on great days and on crappy days, because God is with us always.

So, maybe the blessing that Abraham and Sarah receive isn't in Isaac being given to them; it is in God walking with them through years of longing.

We are blessed by that same presence, a gift we received before we even knew how to ask for it. God is with us when we struggle and when we succeed. God is with us as we pray in frustration and as we lift our voices in praise. God's very presence with us offers us a blessing—not by changing our circumstances, but by accompanying us in them. We are not alone, no matter what lies ahead of us.

So, this morning, no matter where you are, may you be blessed.

May you come into the understanding that God is here with you, right now, no matter what. May you receive the gift of God's immense grace and unchanging love. May the eyes of your heart be opened to see that God is blessing, and blessing, and blessing us. Amen.