

Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 5)

June 7, 2026

Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26



By faith, by faith, by faith ...
From the story of Abram's faith in God's promises in Genesis 12, to Paul's reflection on Abraham's faith in Romans 4, to Matthew's accounts of healing that arise from faith, our passages in

today's lectionary are all about faith. This kind of faith believes in the impossible, like an elderly man becoming a father to many or a young girl being raised from the dead. Faith in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles? In these difficult days, that'll preach.

Genesis 12:1-9 and Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26 show us faith in action, so look to contemporary examples of the same to offer encouragement. Or maybe the need is to mine the depths of despair, to find glimmers of faith and hope even in those times and places where they are utterly imperceivable.



Paul's letter to the church in Rome wrestles with faith on a more theological level. He looks at the relationship between grace and the law, an apparent dichotomy often used interchangeably with faith and works. At the heart of that tension is the question of righteousness. What is righteousness, and how do we

attain it?

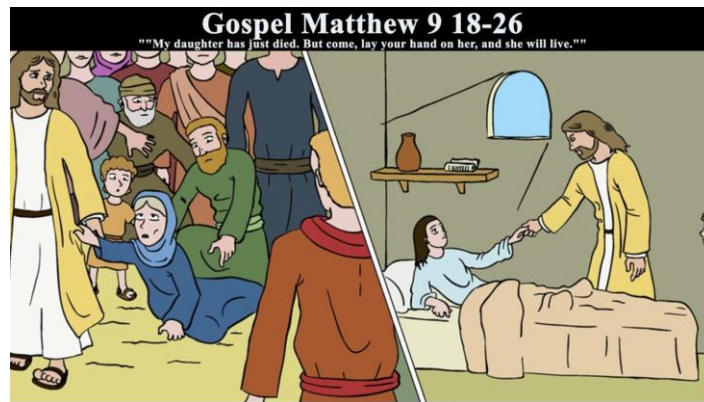
The word “righteousness” comes to us from the Old English word rihtwis, which literally means the right way. Whatever definition one might use, righteousness is usually measured against some way, path, law or code — implicit or explicit. Righteousness according to the law is easy to measure, even if it is ultimately impossible to attain.

But we grade on a curve, right? Paul points out that Abraham was judged to be righteous, even before the law was given. His righteousness was measured by faith, which, in turn, rests on grace. In other words, Paul would say that God’s grace precedes and supersedes the law, and it is freely available to all.

It’s natural to read Romans and Genesis in conversation with each other, but the stories of healing and reconciliation in Matthew might also be interpreted in a new light when looking through Paul’s lens. I love the stories of Jesus keeping scandalous company. He really sticks it to the man, doesn’t he? “The man,” in this case, is anyone who thinks they are more worthy or righteous than others. True righteousness is reckoned by God. Self-righteousness is not a good look.

This glimpse into Jesus’s dinner parties touches on themes of hospitality, God’s inclusivity, and the nature of mercy and grace. That will also preach. It’s also a healing story, which Jesus alludes to in his response. Tax collectors and sinners found healing and wholeness in a relationship with Jesus, as well as restoration and reconciliation within the larger community. The story of Zacchaeus is only found in Luke’s gospel, but we might imagine him at this table, too.

This is also a story of faith. The tax collectors and sinners knew they weren’t welcome company at most tables. But when Jesus issued the invitation and told them they were worthy dinner guests, it took some faith on their part to believe him. When others came and told the tired story of worth and value, when they declared these dinner guests to be unrighteous, Jesus rewrote the script. Their righteousness was an act of grace and mercy, and by faith, they claimed that mantle.



Try to focus on the last two healing stories, of a woman healed from bleeding and a young girl brought back to life. In texts as thoroughly shaped by patriarchal contexts as these, it's especially important to pay attention to the women in the stories. When was the last time you heard the words "period," "menstruation," or "endometriosis" from your preacher? Yet, it shows up here. Jesus takes the pain and suffering seriously, which is more than many women can say of doctors today. It's pretty amazing. And raising a young girl back to life? Wow.

The woman who was bleeding had faith that Jesus would bypass the concerns of ritual purity to offer healing, and the leader who begged Jesus to come and heal his daughter had faith that Jesus was able to do so, and would do so, even if he wasn't part of the inner circle. Tax collectors, sinners, a bleeding woman, and a grieving father all had faith that Jesus's grace operated outside the constrictions of cultural norms. They had faith, and because of it, they were reckoned as righteous. And that, friends, will preach.

Questions for reflection on Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

1. Who do you see stepping out in faith in your local community and beyond?
2. Laws have been and are continuing to be rewritten in ways that further marginalize and question the worth of certain groups of people, including immigrants and asylum seekers from many nations,

and the LGBTQIA+ community. How do today's readings speak to our current reality?

3. While we don't know the precise ailment of the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, it might be something like endometriosis, a condition that afflicts about 10% of potentially impacted populations, according to the World Health Organization, or Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (formerly PCOS), with a similar portion of the population impacted. While both can cause great suffering, they are often not named, and too often the severity of symptoms is dismissed, even by doctors. How might this healing story be used to name these or other invisible or chronic illnesses? What do we learn from Jesus's example?