

Trinity 1 2026

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace, may I speak in the name of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus walks through the streets and encounters need. So much need. There is a whole crowd following him, pressing in on him, calling out for help. And Jesus sees their needs, the ones they cry out loud to him, as well as the ones they don't dare voice, maybe don't even dare to admit to themselves. What would you be crying out for to Jesus, if you were part of that crowd? Would you be crying out, hoping to be heard, would you just quietly hope for a miracle or would you maybe just turn away, knowing that Jesus will certainly not care for someone like you, so it's better to not even try?

We are all in need. None of us are an island. We all in one way or another know pain, fear or despair and the need for help, for someone to reach out and care, for healing and rebuilding. The crowd around Jesus is full of people just like us, people in need. In our gospel reading today we heard the story of three people in need and how Jesus meets them.

There is a leader of the synagogue, he is well-respected with considerable influence in the community. But he is desperate, his daughter has died and he is willing to do whatever it takes to get her back. He's heard of Jesus and his miracles. So he decides to humble himself before this strange carpenter turned Rabbi, who is eating with tax collectors. He comes to Jesus, kneels down and begs him to come and lay his hand on his daughter, so that she may live. And Jesus does and the girl lives.

On the way though, there is a woman, who has been losing blood continuously for twelve years. She is desperate too. The constant blood loss has weakened her; she is exhausted. The purity laws mean that she is separated from her community, because those laws say that a woman on her period is impure and should therefore keep herself separate until the end of her period, when she can rejoin the whole community after going through a cleansing ritual.

Now, while it can be quite nice to get away for a few days, being separated from her community for years has made her painfully lonely. She is impure, no one can touch her and she is not allowed to touch others. No hugs, no hand taking hers letting her know she is not alone. She cannot possibly ask Jesus to touch and heal her. But maybe, she could touch just his cloak, just a little, in this crowd he wouldn't even notice, would he? So she dares to reach out. But to her great shock, Jesus turns around and sees her and speaks to her, breaking through her loneliness and isolation:

Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.

Jesus sees her deepest needs. She has not the confidence of the synagogue leader to kneel and ask for what she needs. But Jesus sees her, he turns around and draws her close by calling her daughter.

Before all this happens though, Jesus called Matthew the tax collector. Being a tax collector was lucrative, Matthew certainly didn't lack anything that money could buy. But we all know that money can't buy everything. Matthew was despised. As a tax collector he was collaborating with the brutal and oppressive Roman Empire, which was occupying Israel. Rather than resisting, he was getting rich off his fellow Israelites on behalf of the Romans. And the Romans would have found him useful, but he was not one of them. So when Jesus comes past Matthew in his booth, Matthew is despised by all, respected by none,

the scum of society and he knows it. But there is no way out, no way back. He will forever remain a despicable collaborator. Rich, but unlovable. He sees Jesus, sees the love and compassion he shows to all those people in the crowd and he wishes he could be part of that crowd. But Jesus could not possibly want him. But then Jesus looks up, he looks straight at Matthew and he says to him: "Follow me." And Matthew can't believe it, Jesus doesn't look at him with disgust, but with love and compassion. Jesus loves him unconditionally and he wants him. And without a second thought he gets up immediately and follows him.

We are all in need. Some of us are confident enough to voice our need out loud before Jesus, like the leader of the synagogue. Some of us are just confident enough to break the rules and reach out to Jesus secretly, like the bleeding woman. And some are convinced that Jesus could never want them, so they won't bother, like Matthew. But we are all in need and Jesus sees us in our need and meets us with unconditional love and compassion.

How does coming to know God's unconditional love and compassion for us, change how we see ourselves, how we understand God, and how we encounter others in their need?

Amen.