

Sermon and Readings 11th Sunday After Pentecost 9th August 2026

Genesis 37.1–4, 37.12–28

¹ Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. ² This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. ⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. ¹² Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, 'Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.' He answered, 'Here I am.' ¹⁴ So he said to him, 'Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me.' So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. He came to Shechem, ¹⁵ and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, 'What are you seeking?' ¹⁶ 'I am seeking my brothers,' he said; 'tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock.' ¹⁷ The man said, 'They have gone away, for I heard them say, "Let us go to Dothan."' So, Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. ¹⁸ They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. ¹⁹ They said to one another, 'Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.' ²¹ But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, 'Let us not take his life.' ²² Reuben said to them, 'Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him'—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵ Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ Then Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites,

and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.’ And his brothers agreed. ²⁸ When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Psalm 105.1–6, 105.16–22

¹ O give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name:
tell among the peoples what things he has done.
² Sing to him, O sing praises:
and be telling of all his marvellous works.
³ Exult in his holy name:
and let those that seek the Lord be joyful in heart.
⁴ Seek the Lord and his strength:
O seek his face continually.
⁵ Call to mind what wonders he has done:
his marvellous acts, and the judgements of his mouth,
⁶ O seed of Abraham his servant:
O children of Jacob his chosen one.
¹⁶ Then he called down a famine on the land:
and destroyed the bread that was their stay.
¹⁷ But he had sent a man ahead of them:
Joseph who was sold into slavery,
¹⁸ Whose feet they fastened with fetters:
and thrust his neck into a hoop of iron.
¹⁹ Till the time that his words proved true:
he was tested by the Lord’s command.
²⁰ Then the king sent and loosed him:
the ruler of nations set him free;
²¹ He made him master of his household:
and ruler over all his possessions,
²² To rebuke his officers at will:
and to teach his counsellors wisdom.

Romans 10.4–15

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. ⁵ Moses writes concerning the righteousness that

comes from the law, that ‘the person who does these things will live by them.’⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith says, ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?”’ (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷ ‘or “Who will descend into the abyss?”’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);⁹ because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.¹¹ The scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame.’¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.¹³ For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?¹⁵ And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’

Matthew 14.22–36

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake.²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear.²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’²⁸ Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’²⁹ He said, ‘Come.’ So, Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus.³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.³³ And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’³⁴ When they had crossed over, they came to land at

Gennesaret. ³⁵ After the people of that place recognized him, they sent word throughout the region and brought all who were sick to him, ³⁶ and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Sermon

“And Joseph went looking for his brothers.”

Joseph went searching for his brothers. In today’s reading from Genesis, Jacob’s command to Joseph means, in Hebrew, “See how your brothers are”—or more deeply, “Seek their peace and integrity.” Joseph’s search, like God’s search for us and our search for one another, is not simply about finding someone. It is about seeking the other’s peace, wholeness, and well-being.

As God goes searching, looking for us, so we must look and search for God and for one another, for our brothers and sisters. As Joseph went looking for his brothers, so must we.

A stranger appears in the story—often understood in Hebrew interpretation as an angel of God—and asks Joseph, “What are you looking for?” Joseph’s search is not solitary; it is guided by God. Without that brief encounter, would Joseph have found his brothers, allowing God’s providence to unfold in salvation history? Might we, too, become the chance encounter that helps another find God’s will? And when God places guidance in our path, perhaps through a stranger, do we listen?

The Joseph saga begins in hatred, prejudice, and blinding jealousy. It is no gentle family portrait. Joseph’s brothers want to kill the beloved, favoured son, wounding their father as much as Joseph himself. It is a violent story: the urge to murder, the plan to conceal the crime, the casting of the beloved into a well, and finally, in a cruel compromise, his sale into slavery.

Yet this story is more than family dysfunction, hatred, and division. It reveals God at work in human lives—even in people who falter, fail, and sin grievously. It is a story of divine intervention, salvation history, and God’s provision.

The brothers had no idea their actions would one day lead to their own provision and survival. Their deeds were evil. Yet even through the world's evil, God brings forth goodness and wonder. God is the Restorer, the one who transforms death into resurrection.

Joseph became an instrument of God's love and provision. Because he had risen to a position of power in Egypt, he could help his whole family when famine came. This help went beyond understanding; it was rooted in love, forgiveness, and mercy.

God's help came through human hands, human love, and human forgiveness. Joseph moved beyond the impulse to judge or reject those who had harmed him.

Fear is one of the greatest obstacles to God's work through us and to our own faith in God's providential love during hardship. Our world is awash with fear, and it easily takes hold of our hearts and minds. We see it in the oil crisis and rising fuel costs, in the cost and loss of housing, in grocery prices climbing before our eyes, in global terror, nuclear threats, illness in ourselves or those we love, the word "cancer," and countless broken relationships.

The psalmist cries out in Psalm 69:

"Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters and the flood sweeps over me."

In today's gospel, Peter tries to walk on water. The disciples are alone in the boat as a fierce storm rises; Jesus comes toward them across the water, like an apparition, and they are filled with fear. The storm is real, and in that small boat they have every reason to be afraid. Seeing their beloved Jesus walking across the lake in the dark, amid the violence of the storm, doing what is humanly impossible, must have terrified them. Trying to do the humanly impossible on our own, without God, is always frightening.

Peter listens to Jesus say simply, "Come," and he gets out of the boat in a response that defies all logic. Our boats are symbols of false security, often reflected in our bank accounts, our materialism, our huge and unnecessary houses. What is the boat in your life that you are afraid to get out of? What is

the boat in your life that prevents you from following God's call to come? What is the fear that imprisons you?

Peter could not keep walking on the water for one reason: fear. Instead of keeping his eyes fixed on Jesus, he looked at the raging wind, the crashing waves, and the impossible reality of what he was attempting. The storm seemed more real than the One who had called him. Fear took hold of his heart, and he began to sink.

But then Peter did the one thing every disciple must do. He cried out, "Lord, save me!"

That simple prayer is the prayer of every Christian. When we are overwhelmed by fear, grief, failure, temptation, or uncertainty, we cry, "Lord, save me." And immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

The reading from Romans points us to the same truth. Salvation is not something we earn; it is something we receive by faith. We call upon the Lord. We believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead. We confess with our mouths that "Jesus is Lord." As Paul reminds us, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

When fear threatens to overwhelm us, when life's storms seem stronger than our faith, we are invited to do what Peter did: call upon Jesus. Our confidence is not in our ability to walk on water but in Christ's ability to hold us when we begin to sink.

The waters that threaten us may be fear, anxiety, illness, grief, disappointment, or doubt. Left to ourselves, they would pull us under. But Jesus is Lord even over the storm. He lifts us above the waters that seek to drown us and leads us safely through them.

So let Peter's prayer become our own:

"Lord, save me."

And let Paul's confession become our daily declaration:

"Jesus is Lord."

For when we trust him, we discover that the One who calls us onto the water is also the One who never lets us go. Amen.