

2nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST June 7, 2026 Matthew 9: 9-13, 18-26

Genesis 12: 1-9 Psalm 33:1-12 Romans 4: 13-25 Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

St. Edmund's Anglican Church, Tobermory, Lutheran and Anglican Mission of the Bruce

The language and the theological framework from the **FIRST NATIONS VERSION: AN INDIGENOUS TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT** (Intervarsity Press, 2021) was used in preparing this sermon. This translation of the Greek Scriptures attempts to follow the oral traditions of storytelling among First Nations Peoples and to communicate biblical texts in culturally meaningful language. Names for the subjects of these good news stories describe their intentions and character. Spirit Names among Original Peoples give direction to individuals who as Human Beings find fulfilment in living into these names, connecting with Creator/Divine Mystery/Great Spirit and walking the good road in peace and harmony.

What caught your attention in Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26?

Creator Sets Free Jesus returns to the western side of the Sea of Galilee with a host of his followers to the village where he was staying. Crowds of people seek Creator Sets Free Jesus, wanting to listen to his teachings and to watch him bring healing to the most vulnerable in their midst. Jesus spots a man in this crowd and observes how others give him some space and look at him. This man sits at his table where he collects taxes for Caesar Augustus and King Herod. Surprising everyone, Creator Sets Free Jesus walks up to this man's table in the shade of his temporary shelter and calls him by name, **"Gift from Creator Matthew, come and walk the road with me."** (Matthew 9:9) Gift from Creator Matthew stands up and leaves everything behind. What has Gift from Creator heard from others in the village and the crowd assembled in front of him? What has Gift from Creator Matthew heard about the teachings of Creator Sets Free Jesus? What has Gift from Creator Matthew seen Creator Sets Free Jesus do?

Gift from Creator Matthew rises from his table and walks to his own home. Yet, it is Creator Sets Free Jesus who follows the tax collector and enters the tax-collector's home. Creator Sets Free Jesus joins with other tax collectors, taking along the crowds who want to listen to him and to watch what he will do next. Even the religious authorities follow Gift of Creator Matthew and Creator Sets Free Jesus. Upon arrival at the home of Gift of Creator Matthew, the religious authorities become angry and challenge Creator Sets Free Jesus. At this meal, Creator Sets Free Jesus engages other tax collectors and outcasts from their community, demonstrating his affection and enthusiasm for their company.

What is God saying to you in this good news story?

At this meal, the religious authorities confront Creator Sets Free Jesus. These religious authorities believe that a member of the People of God lives according to the commandments of Scriptures and keeps separate from those whom they believe are impure and bear the marks of being separated from the Creator of the Universe. These religious authorities object to the teachings of Creator Sets Free Jesus. These religious authorities create a hierarchical social structure, believing themselves to be at the top of this hierarchy.

When Europeans crossed the oceans and began to explore these newly found lands, these Europeans planted the flags of their monarchs in the soil on the shorelines or crosses on top of hills overlooking the land, claiming these lands for their respective monarchs and for Christianity. The Indigenous Peoples who lived here for thousands of years were made invisible. In spite of the presence of Original Peoples who had established complicated trading relationships among themselves as well as large cities rivalling the size of cities in Europe, these lands were considered to be empty. It did not matter that these Original Peoples had complex relationships among their citizens in which responsibilities were shared in caring for each other as well as in caring for the lands and waters given to them by Creator to sustain themselves for generations into the future. It did not matter that Original Peoples maintained treaties among themselves based on well-established cultural and spiritual practices. At worst, the Indigenous Peoples were considered to be "savages" to be conquered and subjugated. At best, Indigenous Peoples were considered to be "uncivilized" or "children" to be educated as wards of the Crown and made Christian.

As waves and waves of Europeans arrived and grew in number on the northern part of the New World, treaties changed. Peace and Friendship Treaties like the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 and the Niagara Treaty of 1764 were agreed upon after weeks of ceremonies, discussions, and feasting. These Peace and Friendship Treaties respected Original Peoples as members of sovereign Nations who were willing to share the land and waters with Settlers and Newcomers. However, through subsequent treaties, Indigenous Peoples were confined to much smaller plots of land while Settlers and Newcomers claimed vast portions of this continent for themselves and their descendants. The Crown sought to provide land for veterans and civil servants as well as for Clergy Reserves. Settlers and Newcomers sought to obtain land for private ownership, making a future which was not possible for them in Europe. From the wealth of the land and waters, Settlers and Newcomers sought to establish farms and ranches, harvest the vast forests, feast on the fish and crustations from fresh waters and salty oceans, and take minerals from below the surface of the planet. Treaties negotiated on

behalf of the Crown pushed the Original Peoples into smaller and smaller pieces of land unwanted by Settlers and Newcomers. In 1836, as a representative of the Crown in Upper Canada, Sir Francis Bond Head negotiated with the Three Fires Confederacy. Some Indigenous participants remembered the terms and conditions of the Niagara Treaty of 1764 and had honoured that treaty by fighting against the invading American army as allies in the War of 1812. However, the Treaty of 1836 greatly benefitted the Crown, gaining 2 ¼ million acres for settlement and giving the Saugeen Peninsula to the First Nations. However, the Crown did not honour the terms of this Treaty. Through the subsequent Treaty of 1854, further restrictions were placed on the Saugeen People and the Chippewas of Nawash. Smaller portions of land were given to these Original Peoples, and the waters open for fishing off the shores of the Saugeen Peninsula were reduced. Further treaties with First Nations on Manitoulin Island and along the north shores of Georgian Bay were also negotiated. Recently, the courts have made rulings to hold federal and provincial governments to the terms of these treaties. When Indigenous Peoples faced more and more waves of Settlers and Newcomers on their traditional territories, Treaties continued to be negotiated with ceremonies, much discussion, and feasting. However, representatives of the Crown and politicians increasingly viewed Treaties differently than by Original Peoples. Treaties were identified as historical documents, providing Settlers and Newcomers access to large swaths of surrendered lands and waters. Politicians and leaders in the churches sought out a multitude of ways to assimilate the Original Peoples. As a result, the well-established balance of power between Indigenous males and females were destroyed, replaced with male dominated political and social relationships. Families were taken apart so that children were separated from their parents and extended family networks and placed in residential schools. Politicians and religious leaders forbid cultural and spiritual practices based on the Teachings and Ceremonies of Indigenous Ancestors over thousands of years. Religious authorities and members of churches communicated that Original Peoples lived in Hell and needed to convert to Christianity. However, religious authorities and members of the churches also believed that Original Peoples could never be equals with European Settlers and their descendants, even after being baptised and taught theological truths important to their understanding of Christianity. There is so much documentation by politicians and religious authorities available now to the public. Residential school survivors as well as Indigenous Peoples who were placed in foster homes and put up for adoption as Crown Wards also have shared their stories and these testimonies are also public knowledge. More recently, Newcomers from many places around the world have left behind their homes and come to Canada to start over and make a new life here. These Newcomers as well as Settler-descendants need a better and more comprehensive understanding about the history of Canada with Original Peoples.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Creator of the Universe makes promises with Abram and Sarai to provide as many descendants as there are sands on the seashore or stars in the night sky. Creator of the Universe also promises Abram and Sarai to provide them and all these descendants this Promised Land until the end of time. It is appropriate for Abram and Sarai to express their gratitude for these gifts and to give praise to Creator. This land and these waters belong to Creator. The cultural and spiritual practices of Original Peoples acknowledge that all of this planet belongs to Creator/Divine Mystery/Great Spirit. These gifts of Creation bear the identity of Creator and need to be respected as Living Beings still involved in the ongoing work of creating new life. For Original Peoples, Creator sends a host of Teachers to give Human Beings direction on caring for this planet and the most vulnerable among us.

In the Greek Scriptures, the apostle Paul reinforces that a living relationship of trust with the Creator depends on the ongoing presence of the Wisdom of the Universe as well as the teachings of Creator Sets Free Jesus. Through these teachings, Creator Sets Free Jesus speaks about the character and intentions of the One who created the universe out of nothing and sent him into the world as a Human Being. Creator of the Universe loves this world and is steadfast in lovingly bringing new life into being. Through the life and death of Creator Sets Free Jesus, Human Beings come to know that not only did Creator send him into this world but also raised him from a cruel death on a wooden cross.

Creator, Wisdom of the Universe, and Creator Sets Free Jesus have the same power and authority to make possible what seems to be utterly impossible. Out of nothing, all of creation comes into being. Abram and Sarai are well beyond childbearing years yet they receive the gift of a son. Out of this one child, a host of peoples will come into being. As a scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures, Saul participates in the stoning of an early Christian Stephen and then encounters Creator Sets Free Jesus raised from the dead on the road to Damascus. His heart and mind are changed. Paul begins to journey and to share this new life with those whom he meets.

The religious authorities challenge Creator Sets Free Jesus and those closest to him for eating and making friends with tax collectors, those who extorted others for their own personal gain, prostitutes, the ones who ate and drank too much, the ones with diseases that made them ceremonially unclean, outcasts from communities, and anyone who was not a descendant of the twelve tribes of Israel. These religious authorities determined who belonged to their worshipping communities and who did not belong. Anyone who challenged their authority challenged their understanding of how to live out their understanding of their theologies and their expectations for behaviours of their followers. Anyone who challenged their authority also challenged the character and intentions of the god whom they obeyed. Creator Sets Free Jesus avoided escalating a struggle for power with these religious authorities but at the same time maintained his understanding of the character and intentions of the Creator of the Universe...the One who sent him into this world...the Source of All Life and Love.

As Gift of Creator Matthew tells the Good Story, Creator Sets Free Jesus escalates the power struggle with the religious authorities through two encounters with two children. The first child of Creator is the child of a leader of the worshipping community in the village where he is staying. This child was ill and has died. The leader of the synagogue has listened to the teachings Creator Sets Free Jesus and has watched him heal people of a host of afflictions. The leader of the synagogue trusts Creator Sets Free Jesus. This father humbled himself before this Wisdomkeeper, asking Creator Sets Free Jesus to come to his daughter's deathbed, to take her hand, and to raise her to new life. According to the expectations and practices of the religious authorities, those who prepare the deceased body for burial need to participate in ceremonies of purification before being accepted back into their families and communities. However, the religious authorities would have much more difficulty than having someone touch a dead body. The leader of the synagogue trusted Creator Sets Free Jesus to do much more. This father believed that Creator Sets Free Jesus had the power and authority to raise his daughter to new life. In so doing, Creator Sets Free directly challenges the power and authority of the religious leaders in his generation. The second child of Creator is a full-grown woman who has been hemorrhaging for twelve years and no one could heal her. She was identified by the religious authorities as being an outcast, cursed not blessed according to their theology of prosperity. She knew the expectations and theological underpinnings used by the religious authorities of her generation. She had been separated from others in her family and in her worshipping community. She knew that touching the hem of the garment worn by Creator Sets Free Jesus would unleash intense, heated discussion among religious authorities. She was not asking Creator Sets Free Jesus to reach out and touch her, becoming ceremonial unclean. She too trusted that Creator Sets Free Jesus had the power and authority to make her well. She longed to be accepted back among her family and to be able to return to worship in her community. Once healed, she would need to convince the religious authorities that Creator Sets Free Jesus had made her whole again.

As Gift of Creator Matthew tells these Good News Stories, we learn about the character and Intentions of Creator and the Wisdom of the Universe as well as Creator Sets Free Jesus. The good news is that the Source of All Life and Love continues to love and to bring new life into being.

What does God call us to be and do in this good news story?

We live in a very chaotic and terrible time. Just like in the time of Creator Sets Free Jesus, religious authorities continue to use theologies and expectations for behaviours, demanding acceptance of their beliefs and obedience.

We are being called to ground our understanding of God in theologies based on the height and depth and breadth of the love of Creator and the Wisdom of the Universe. With discernment, we are being called to bear witness to Creator/Divine Mystery/Great Spirit giving us guidance in decision-making and taking action in circumstances which seem impossible. We are being called to celebrate the ongoing activity of Creator, Wisdom of the Universe, and Creator Sets Free Jesus in this generation, bringing healing and new life into being.

I ask these questions of myself on my walk on the good road: what stories of Creator Sets Free Jesus have connected with me over the years? What stories of Creator Sets Free Jesus do I tell others whom I meet on my own journey of faith? What stories of Creator/Divine Mystery/Great Spirit do others hear from me about caring for the most vulnerable among us as well as caring for this planet? What will it be like for my grandchildren's grandchildren in living on this planet?

Let us trust in the power and authority of God to make what seems impossible possible, beyond what we can ask or imagine. We have much to learn from our Indigenous brothers and sisters not only to survive but to thrive amid the chaos and destruction present in this world now.

On June 21, consider joining the Chippewas of Nawash at Cape Croker Park to celebrate National Indigenous Day between 10 am and 4 pm.

Wherever you are on June 21, how will the Original Peoples closest to you be celebrating National Indigenous Day?