

ANGLICAN CHAPLAINCY OF ALL SAINTS' MARSEILLE
WITH AIX-EN-PROVENCE AND THE LUBERON
Sermons – August 2026

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1/ Sermon – Nineth Sunday after Trinity - 2nd August 2026

All Saints' Marseille

The Revd Roxana Tenea Teleman, Assistant Chaplain

This week, the news has carried reports of a surge of migrants attempting to reach the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, on the North African coast. They came from different places and for different reasons, but what they share is a desire for safety, for freedom, for a future in which a better life might be possible. Spain and the rest of the European Union quickly did their maths: the small enclave could not sustain such a crowd, and there was no way to allow them to cross to the continent. Army and civil officers were sent to secure the borders – as far away as Finland.

I am not in a position to suggest either a short-term or a long-term solution. But the event made me think about what drives us to leave what is familiar, to endure hardship, and to seek something we believe we cannot live without. It even made me think about hunger.

Much of the time, our hunger is metaphorical: we hunger for success, recognition, pleasure, freedom. Physical hunger is something most of us can readily deal with. But for millions of people, hunger is not a metaphor. It is a stark reality – and sometimes a matter of life and death. And, of course, for some, the hunger for freedom itself is a matter of life and death. But we are sitting in – and I am preaching from – a comfortable place.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is not in a comfortable place. When news reaches him of the execution of John the Baptist, Jesus withdraws to a deserted place. But the crowds follow him on foot. They have come a long way, and they have come into the wilderness, where there is nothing to sustain them.

In the Bible, the wilderness is a place of testing, danger and uncertainty; but it is also the place where God meets his people and provides for them. Israel wandered in the wilderness after fleeing Egypt, and there God gave them bread from heaven. Now, in another wilderness, another hungry crowd gathers around Jesus – and again God provides.

Here, in a place of apparent scarcity, Jesus makes visible something of God's promised future: a world in which God's people are fed, satisfied and invited to the feast. For a moment, the wilderness becomes a place of abundance.

Matthew is showing us a God whose generosity is greater than our scarcity. And this takes us back to the words of Isaiah: "Come, eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food." The invitation is offered "without money and without price." The life God offers is abundant because it rests not on what we can earn or achieve, but on God's grace and love. God gives because God is generous and compassionate.

Compassion is the lens through which Jesus sees people. Matthew tells us that Jesus “had compassion on them.” He does not see the crowd as a problem to be solved, or an inconvenience interrupting his plans. He sees human beings in need, and their need touches him.

The word itself is worth pausing over. Compassion means, literally, to suffer with, to allow another person’s suffering to touch us, to become, in some measure, our own. This is the extraordinary thing we see in Jesus: God does not remain distant from human suffering. In Christ, God comes close to it.

In Jesus, divine compassion becomes visible and tangible. He embodies it. He heals the sick. He welcomes those who are pushed to the margins. He feeds those who are hungry. God’s compassion is not an abstract benevolence. It takes flesh in acts of mercy.

And that is why the five loaves and two fish are not, for Jesus, simply a calculation of what is insufficient. Where the disciples see a crowd that cannot possibly be fed, Jesus sees people who need to be fed. Compassion changes what he sees. He is not first asking, “Is there enough?” He is asking, “What can we do for these people?”

If compassion is the way Jesus sees the world, then his compassion is meant to become ours.

Jesus has compassion on the crowd, but then he turns to his disciples and says: “You give them something to eat.”

Their response is understandable. They look at their resources and do the maths: five loaves and two fish for thousands of people. It is not enough. The problem is simply too big, the resources too small. “Send the crowds away” is the only solution they can see – the solution most compatible with their quasi-managerial thinking.

A few years ago, a priest, who is a friend of mine, found people occasionally arriving at his church door asking for help – for food, for shelter, or simply because they had nowhere else to turn. He asked the church council to approve a small discretionary fund, so that he could offer a little help when such requests arose. They did their own mental maths and told him that this would only bring more people to the church door. Just imagine if there were a queue outside! He should send them away. The resources of the church, he was told, were simply not sufficient.

My friend continued to help people, using his own money, without doing the maths first. He acted according to the maths of God's compassion.

Meister Eckhart, the thirteenth-century mystic, reflected that "Not only bread but all things necessary for sustenance in this life are given on loan to us with others and because of others and for others and to others through us."

That is a very different way of looking at what we have. What if our resources are not really ours to keep for ourselves? What if the things we have – our money and possessions, certainly, but also our time, our energy, our abilities, our experience, our skills – have been entrusted to us so that, through us, they can become gifts to others?

Jesus does not ask his disciples to produce what they do not have. He asks them to bring what they do have. And when they place their meagre resources in Jesus' hands, something happens that they could not have achieved by themselves. The people are fed – and abundantly so.

This is where the story becomes a story about discipleship. There will always be reasons to say that what we have is not enough. The needs are too great. The problem is too complicated. We are too few. Our resources are too limited. Someone else is better equipped to deal with it.

Yet the disciples are not meant to be spectators watching Jesus perform a wondrous deed. They are to be involved in it.

When we see a hungry world – literally or metaphorically – will we stand back and calculate what we do not have? Or will we bring to Christ what we do have – food, time, practical help, a particular skill, a listening ear, a welcome, a prayer - trusting him to do with it what we cannot do by ourselves?

God, whom Jesus reveals in the wilderness, is the God whose compassion is greater than our fear, whose abundance is not exhausted by our calculations. The feast is God's. The abundance is God's. The miracle is God's.

But the bread is placed into our hands to be carried, broken and given. So perhaps we should stop doing the maths – and start setting the table.

2/ Sermon – Tenth Sunday after Trinity - 9th August 2026

Oppède - Christine Portman, Reader

Elijah answered: *‘I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.’*

I suppose, fleeing across the desert from murderous enemies, when he emerged from his cave Elijah’s feet weren’t too pretty. But after his encounter with God, in one sense, they did become *beautiful*. At the end of today’s reading from Romans, Paul quoted Isaiah:

How beautiful on the mountains

*are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,*

“Your God reigns! ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’

Into a chaotic and hostile world, against all the odds, Elijah re-established God’s covenant with the faithful few.

Today’s readings are going to challenge us to look at our own feet and our own feelings regarding the spreading of God’s Good News. But first, here’s a question for you. How hopeful are you about the future of humanity and our planet? Would you count yourself among the Frazer types from Dad’s Army: *We’re all doomed!?* Or are you like the tech company CEO recently talking about the bright and wonderful future that Artificial Intelligence holds before us? So many jobs will be

done by AI, he said. Most people won't have to work! Does that excite – or worry you?

As Christians, trusting in God's future, we shouldn't fall into either camp. What the tech boss went on to say was that in his AI future there would no longer be any need for *Lower grade human capital*. Yes, that's you and me: *Lower grade human capital*. There was an outcry. He did apologise. He couldn't risk damage to the stock price, could he? I wonder if you've read Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* where a few lucky and extraordinarily rich Alphas preside over a world of Epsilon minors.

Many ethicists are now alarmed by the rising power of AI. So where will God now find new Elijahs to bring our world back to its senses, understand that it exists through God's grace and God's grace alone, realise that should we break the covenant, we are, as Frazer would say, *All doomed!* This needs to be said out loud and clear by *all* of us. These last few weeks have seen the arrival of the world's first trillionaires, but God is not mocked when the rich and powerful show such profound contempt for human life.

Our faith tells us that the forces of evil will *not* triumph: God's peace, mercy, truth, and righteousness will be the final word. Today's psalm gives us that hope.

*Truth shall spring up from the earth
and righteousness look down from heaven.
The Lord will indeed give all that is good,
and our land will yield its increase.*

Everything depends upon putting our hope and trust in God. In the Gospel reading we heard that Peter was initially excited to follow Jesus' call across the water. But very soon *he became frightened* and began

sinking into the lake. What saved him at this point? *'He cried out, 'Lord, save me!'* As soon as he trusted Jesus, *'Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'* And as soon as *'they got into the boat, the wind ceased'*. Jesus brought calm. His peace stills the storm.

'On the mountain before the Lord', Elijah met that same peace: *'Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.'*

Like Elijah, we have to keep faith, even when the world seems in chaos. Like him, through faith we can weather the storm, stand firm and be attentive to God's voice. In *sheer silence* that *still, small voice of calm* can be heard. And when we hear him, we can, as St Paul says, *call on him*. In sincere prayer, simple silence and attention are enough. It gave Elijah courage to carry on in a dangerous world. Just as earlier generations have blessed us with faith in God, spreading the Good News is *our* job now. Daily attention to God's still small voice gives us the assurance Christ wants to see in his witnesses now. Jesus didn't only send out the first disciples.

We may think it's not our business to do the same thing – that we have no right to share our faith with those who don't know about the gospels or who don't understand Jesus' Way. But we're living in days when showing our faith is urgent. We can't sit back and ask God what he's doing to solve the problems in our world. We are the living hands and feet, the eyes and ears of Jesus today. And he expects us to take our discipleship seriously. That doesn't mean that we have to preach on street corners, or offend people who clearly have no interest in his message. When he sent out his twelve apostles he warned them that

they'd be *'like sheep among wolves', that they'd need to be 'as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves'*. They should be on their *guard*. In Matthew 10, verse 14, he says, *'If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet'*.

But there *is* fertile ground out there. John spoke to us several months ago about the worrying rise of anomie in our western societies, a general malaise which leaves some people feeling lost and believing that their lives lack real meaning or purpose. It's not surprising that so many people have disengaged from democracy or put their faith in dubious politicians. The sense of being disconnected can be connected to the breakdown of old values. It's no wonder we're seeing a sharp resurgence in astrology, fortune telling, tarot and witchcraft. The multi-billion dollar industry in wellbeing products, the spectacular growth of online influencers – all this should be warning us loud and clear that there's much ground where good seed can be sown.

This might be through gentle planting of ideas. For example pointing out that love, kindness and justice are the bedrock of Jesus' preaching and the moral ground which formed the basic values of Europe. It might be that, rather than stepping back from conversations where people express views that are clearly contrary to God's word, we challenge those ideas or that behaviour. But above all, as we'll hear in the Prayer after Communion, let's make sure that *'we who follow the path of (God's) will may never wander from the way of life'*. We are called to be God's bringers of hope and faith in his future.

I'll leave you with an extract from the letter to the Romans. Paul couldn't be clearer. *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? 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!'

Amen

3/ Sermon – Eleventh Sunday after Trinity - 16th August 2026

All Saints', Marseille - *Jane Quarmby, Licensed Lay Minister*

Do you find it irritating when you have your schedule all mapped out, for the day, the week, or even your life, only to have it thrown up in the air and completely disrupted? I find it very annoying when it happens to me. There I am, all set, with my list of jobs to do, people to contact, and then something happens and throws it all out of kilter.

It's what happens to Jesus to some extent, in our Gospel reading from Matthew. He has his timetable of the work he has been sent to do by God. His priority was to rescue the lost sheep of Israel, bring them back to God with open and honest hearts, lead them into the right paths to follow, return them to their special status as God's chosen people. Opening that up to the rest of humanity was going to come in due time, but not for a while yet despite earlier prophecies - Isaiah for example was very clear that foreigners would be welcome – God's house would be a house of prayer for all peoples, not just the chosen ones eventually. However real life and real people don't follow nice tidy timetables and to a distraught mother, all these niceties are beside the point. Her daughter was ill and her mother was intent of getting help for her, no matter what. She would beg on bended knee if that was what it would take.

Somehow, despite being a foreigner, this nameless woman from Canaan, which had a long and bloody history with Israel, knew exactly who Jesus was and that he could cure her daughter. Her faith was astonishing – how could she know? She wouldn't have had access to the teaching or the worship of the Israelites. But deep down she knew, and she knew, well ahead of the disciples even, that Jesus was the Son of David, i.e. the Messiah.

And so we get this little snapshot of an interaction between a devout Jewish teacher and a Canaanite woman, which on the face of it, doesn't by our modern standards, show Jesus in a very becoming light. He seems to ignore her to start with, and it isn't until she makes a real nuisance of herself that his disciples get exasperated with her and ask Jesus to do something, to send her away. Then Jesus seems to be really rude to her - or is he? You could look at this passage and think he is calling her a dog. Now even today that's not a compliment even among those of us in the west who adore our pampered dogs – our fur babies! 2000 years ago, it was a common insult used by the Jews for any foreigner, implying that they were dirty creatures, like the stray dogs that roamed the streets which were mangy and flea ridden. Why? We know from archaeology that the Romans were very advanced in their hygiene, with complex plumbing arrangements, bath houses and washing facilities in their houses. So, they were pretty clean, and they ruled the whole area.

So why were even they considered unclean by the Jews? We have to go back into history to realise that the Jews had long memories of being the people whom God had chosen to be his own, who would produce the Messiah who would save them and their world from the evil that surrounds them. They were so convinced of their special status that they had woven a net of rules and regulations for living their lives. Part of that was to keep themselves separate from foreigners and pagans. To even talk to someone outside of their own race would be taboo, making them ritually unclean. God's chosen people must stay pure.

Jesus himself had been born into this chosen race, he grew up surrounded by the others also born into the chosen race, he studied their language, history and religion, worshipped God with them in the temple. As he grew up, he taught the meaning and interpretation of the Jewish holy writings – what we know as the Old Testament. He

recruited his disciples from his own people, and he ate and drank and made friends all within those perimeters.

But Jesus also travelled widely. He and his message were not always welcomed at home— people were of course happy to be healed of all their illnesses and diseases, loved seeing him perform miracles, but those higher up the social ladder and the religious ladder, weren't so happy with him. They had no time for a wandering preacher promoting love – they were waiting for a military hero who would raise up an army and lead it into glorious victory against all the foreigners who now occupied Israel, who ignored God's words and God's ways, and ruled with violence and cruelty. At the same time, under those same scribes and the Pharisees real worship of God was drifting into manmade petty restrictions and rituals.

Now Jesus knew he had a short timeframe in which to bring his people back to God, and that was his number one priority. He knew the scale of the problem and how far they had drifted from their original faith in God. They had adopted foreign ways, married pagans, ignored the commandments which God had given them. He knew his message of returning to God wasn't being well received by the people in power, but he was undaunted. Things were getting difficult for him and his followers at home, hence we find him abroad, in the region of Tyre and Sidon, where this very determined mother found him. And was a match for him.

She turned on its head the timetable he had for himself, persisting in asking for help. Let's unpick what he actually says. He doesn't outright refuse to help her but says "it isn't fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Now, no parent would take a child's plate of food away and put it on the floor for the house pets to eat, would they? Although the dog would get the scraps left over if they were lucky. All dogs know instinctively that if there is a child in the house, they are a

wonderful source of food, especially if that child is a picky eater. Or even better, a doting owner, busy slipping bits of meat under the table to their dog.

Jesus isn't of course talking about meat and two veg, or pizza – he is referring to spiritual food. So, he obliquely says to this persistent woman that he hadn't come to help her, but only his own people – the children he refers to. She wasn't having any of that and smartly responds that she doesn't want the whole plate – just the crumbs that are brushed off the table after the meal would be more than enough for her. Very humble, demonstrating a belief so strong that even the leftovers of Jesus's power in healing and salvation would be enough for her. And Jesus, impressed by her faith in him, relents and heals her daughter.

And this little story marks a big turning point in Jesus's ministry, when ahead of schedule, he welcomes foreigners to his table – to worship equally alongside the Israelites, God's chosen people. Happily, for all of us across the world, salvation was opened up to us as well. Providing we have faith, like the lady from Canaan. So, if you have pets, next time you feed them at your table – remember this short story which had world-wide impact. And the value of persistence when you ask God for help. It is there for all of us regardless of background, race, colour or any other label we put on each other. Faith really does work miracles.

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4/ Sermon - Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity – 30th August 2026

All Saints' Marseille - *Jane Quarmby, Licensed Lay Minister*

A few months ago, my stepson announced that he was going to climb Kilimanjaro for charity. He's 58 years old, and whilst he enjoys walking his dog in the woods of Leicestershire in the middle of England, he's no mountaineer. Whilst the younger members of the family thought it all very exciting and cheerfully signed up to sponsor him, the older members became more worried the more they learnt. It was to be a fully guided trip, but overnight stops would be in tents, on the hard ground. Temperatures at the bottom would be tropical, hot and humid, whilst at the top there would be snow. Ice, and a danger of frostbite and altitude sickness. Up until now, his idea of a good holiday was a hotel with a bar in the swimming pool and hot and cold running cocktails. What to do? In the end we wished him well, sponsored him, and prayed hard that he would come to no harm. He got to the top, and arrived home with tales to tell a much relieved family.

He didn't need to do that climb, he could just as easily have sponsored someone else to do it or donated the same amount of money to the charity. And his father and I could have tried to talk him out of it – but we knew he had something to prove to himself so we kept quiet.

Unlike Peter when Jesus told him and the other disciples he was going to suffer, be tortured and killed in the most degrading and shameful way. Peter loved Jesus, admired him, was the first to believe he was the long-awaited Messiah, but like most of us who love someone, he couldn't bear the thought of him suffering in any way. So having risen to the top of the class with his assertion that Jesus was the Messiah a few moments before, he then displayed a complete lack of awareness of how Jesus was to continue his mission of salvation for all of us. Peter appears to have been impetuous, unguarded, a man who loved deeply and was used to speaking whatever came into his head. A fisherman

with little or no education. Becoming a disciple of a man like Jesus, was never a career option for him. So, when he was called by Jesus, it was a huge honour, and Peter with all his humanity and his faults, followed obediently and with all his heart.

He was a strong personality, and protective of those he loved. He wasn't going to stand by and let Jesus walk into danger – much better to plan how they were going to march into Jerusalem, picking up supporters along the way, fight a battle and take over the Temple, and crown Jesus King. Peter for all his loyalty and the teaching Jesus had given him, didn't get it. And he wasn't alone and still isn't alone in not realising that God does not think as humans do. Our ways are not his ways. Often God does things we haven't remotely considered and don't understand, totally opposite to what we plan or think. And so, it is here. Yes, they are going to Jerusalem, and Jesus will usher in the new kingdom so often foretold, will become King after confronting the existing rulers and chief priests, the legal experts in Jerusalem. But it will seem as though they win in the short term – Jesus would be tortured and killed. It was all very well to say that he would be raised from the dead, but Peter didn't have a clue what that meant. It may be that he didn't really hear that part or take it on board. I found in the magistrates' courts that when someone was found guilty and sentenced, they only really took in the first part of that ruling. All the trimmings of why they were receiving that sentence, what had been taken into account, what went for them or against, went straight over their heads. And I wonder if like them, Peter only really heard the words about suffering and dying?

Jesus didn't want to suffer and die but was grimly following God's plan. The last thing he needed was Peter trying and dissuade him. It was akin to the Devil, Satan, tempting him in the wilderness at the start of his ministry. And so, Peter got a sharp rebuke. Perhaps all the sharper because Peter was to be the foundation of Christ's church and needed to get it right. The greater the responsibility, the greater the pressure.

And then Jesus goes on to say how it will be for people who want to follow him – they too will have their crosses to bear. He doesn't mean an actual wooden cross (although some would meet their death on a cross) but his followers will need to change their lives in so many respects – and it will be hard, difficult, no easy ride. His way is about heart and soul, mind and strength, all combining to be a Christian. And all vying to win out against the day-to-day pressures and temptations of human lives.

We are drawn to accumulate more and more possessions, to crave recognition and influence, to work towards making ourselves and our families secure financially; in some extreme cases, to amass more wealth than a small country. But does it make us happy? Does it make us feel good deep down, in our inner being?

I was struck by reading the reports of Dolly Parton's death this week, of how she came from a dirt-poor family of 12, living in a 2-roomed cabin, and through her strong business sense and talent built herself up into a world famous and very wealthy lady. She designed her public image carefully. As she put it herself "I'm not offended by all the dumb blonde jokes because I know I'm not dumb – and I'm not blonde either". "It costs a lot of money to look this cheap." But she also said, "Don't get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life." She gave a lot of her wealth away and affected many lives. For example, in 1991 she offered every 7th and 8th year student in Sevier County where she grew up, \$500 each if they graduated High School. The drop-out rate went from 35% to 6%. She set up the Imagination Library, a charity which sends a free book every month to children around the world until they turn 5. More than 300 million have been sent out. In 2016, her Dollywood Foundation gave out \$12 million to Sevier County families who lost their homes due to wildfires. She gave \$2 million to a local children's hospital, and a million to help develop the Covid vaccine. She had no plan, as she put it, she just gave from her heart.

How many of us would be so generous? But she knew what life was like for the very poor, she had the money to put it right and she gave generously. When Jesus said the “son of man ... will reward everyone for the work they have done”, I’m sure her generosity will count in Dolly’s favour. But what of all the other people who have wealth and like to keep it safe, or use it to make even more? What of their consciences?

Jesus explains that anyone wanting to follow him must lose their old life to gain a new one, to keep their soul intact and to understand that their soul is just as important as their bodies. We tend not to talk about our souls much nowadays, perhaps referring instead to our true self or our true lives. Thinking about our souls, recognising that we have a soul, is however vital, otherwise we become shallow, self-indulgent, ignorant of the needs of others because we are too busy thinking about what we want. This shallow superficial life with all the trappings of wealth and status will soon pass – and then what? What price will we have to pay for trampling underfoot our true inner self, our soul? Not becoming the best person we could be in the eyes of Jesus will cost us more dearly than many imagine.

Jesus knew our deepest lives are not to be found in possessing more, but in becoming more capable of giving love, even to those we dislike or despise. The crosses that we bear are things like difficult relationships, heavy family responsibilities, demanding duty, painful memories, doubts or seemingly unanswered prayers. When God’s plans for us aren’t clear to us it’s important to remain faithful, asking Him not for an escape from whatever cross we are carrying, but more “Lord, help me carry this”. If we say we love Christ then we have to follow his example and expect sacrifice and suffering along the way. There aren’t any shortcuts for us, any more than for Jesus who had to face his own horrific Cross. We need to ask ourselves sometimes “Am

I following Jesus as he is? Or as I want him to be? Do I want him to fit into my plan – or should I be fitting into his?

And what of Jesus saying – “if someone wants to save their life, they must lose it”? How could that possibly work? He is talking about a new way of living, a new life – and that means losing the old one; without that dying away, we can’t move forwards. It does seem counter-intuitive, dying to find a new life but there are examples to follow, not least Jesus who gave his life for us – but regained it in his resurrection three days later. A seed will only sprout if it is buried in the earth, and you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs! But only when we say goodbye to our old lives, might we see the line from Our Lord’s Prayer come true – Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

And if you need a guide – have another look at Paul’s letter to the Romans that we have as our New Testament reading today.