



2nd Sunday after Pentecost

7th June 2026



Faith that can say, "It is well ..."

Intro |

I want to begin this morning by telling you a story.

In 1873, a successful Chicago lawyer named Horatio Spafford decided to take his family on a trip to Europe. He had some business to finish first, so he sent his wife Anna and their four daughters ahead on a ship called the **Ville du Havre**, planning to follow shortly behind.

On the 22nd of November, somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, their ship was struck by an iron sailing vessel. It sank in twelve minutes. All four of Horatio's daughters drowned. His wife was found floating on a piece of wreckage, barely alive. When Anna arrived in Wales, she sent her husband a telegram. It read simply: "Saved alone."

Horatio Spafford boarded the next available ship to go to his wife. And as his vessel passed over the part of the ocean where his daughters had perished, he went to his cabin, took out a piece of paper, and wrote.

What he wrote became one of the most loved hymns in the history of the Christian church:

*"When peace like a river attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea-billows roll —
whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."*

Now, I want to ask you something this morning. What kind of faith produces words like that? Not faith that comes as the result of an easy life. Not faith that knows the answer to every question about life. But faith that holds onto something unseen — even when everything goes horribly wrong. That is the kind of faith the passages we read earlier are talking about. And it is the kind of faith that lies at the heart of what we are doing here today.

So, let's look at two of the passages together, and I promise I'll keep this brief. In our Gospel reading, we meet a man called Matthew. If you happened to have known Matthew, you wouldn't have liked him. He was a tax collector — which in first-century Israel meant he was considered a traitor, a thief, and a collaborator with the Roman occupiers. He was the last person you'd expect to be invited into anything good.

But when Jesus walked past his tax booth, He said two words: *"Follow me."* And Matthew just got up, left his money and followed Jesus.

The religious leaders were horrified. They pulled Jesus' disciples aside and asked, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered with a statement that should make every single one of us breathe a little easier: *"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Here's what that means for us this morning. None of us is here because we have it all together. None of us earned our place. That includes little Sophia and Ava, who are about to be baptised. They're not being welcomed by God because their family is perfect – 'if they only knew,' I hear their parents whisper – nor are they being welcomed because they've done something to deserve it. These little ones are being welcomed because this is the kind of God Jesus reveals — one who walks toward the unlikely, the undeserving, and says: *"You. Come with me."*

Point 1 | Jesus came to call the unlikely and undeserving, those who are sickly sinners, to repentance.

A little further on Jesus meets someone else. A woman who has been bleeding for twelve years. She's exhausted. She's spent everything she has on doctors. And by the religious rules of her day, she was considered unclean, untouchable, and a clear outsider. She heard that Jesus was passing by. And she thought to herself, 'If I can just touch the edge of his cloak — just that — I know I'll be healed.' (Matthew 9:21)

She didn't make a speech. She didn't have a theology degree. She didn't feel worthy of approaching Jesus. She simply reached out — and touched the hem of his garment. But that simple act made Jesus stop. He turned around. And he said to her, *"Take heart, daughter — your faith has made you well."* (Matthew 9:22)

Let's notice how her faith moved her to action. Even though she wasn't allowed to be anywhere near the crowds; Even though the religious establishment had called her unclean and a sinner; Even though she wasn't certain of what would happen; Her trust in what she had heard about Jesus, combined with her desperation, made her reach out — and that was enough.

Faith, you see, is not about having all the answers. It is not about being good enough, or religious enough, or attending church enough, or praying enough, or certain enough. Faith is the action of reaching out to Jesus — it's turning toward Him rather than away from him. It's saying — "I don't know everything, but based on what I do know, I'll trust you."

Point 2 | Faith can be defined as reaching towards Jesus in trust that he will hold you secure to the end

What these parents are doing today — bringing their daughters to be baptised — is an act of reaching. They're saying: "We want our girls to know this Jesus. We want them to grow up trusting him." And Jesus meets that reach, just as He met the woman all those years ago.

And then we heard Paul, writing to the Roman believers, hold up Abraham as the great example of faith. Abraham, he says, believed in a God who "gives life to the dead, and calls into existence the things that do not exist." (Romans 4:17)

Abraham and his wife Sarah were old — I'm allowed to say that, because that's how the Bible described them. There was no earthly reason for them to hope for the gift of a child. But Abraham didn't waver. He was — and I love this phrase — "fully persuaded" that God could do what he had promised. (Romans 4:21) That is the heartbeat of the Christian faith. Not a vague hope that things will work out somehow, somewhere. But a deep, settled trust in our Heavenly Father who has power and authority over death itself.

Which is exactly what baptism proclaims.

Point 3 | Baptism is a symbol that declares a person's life has been claimed by God, washed clean, and made brand new — they now belong to Jesus, and nothing can take that away.

When we baptise someone, we're not just getting them a little wet and giving them a certificate. We're declaring that these young girls will now bear the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We're saying that the same God who raised Jesus from the dead has claimed these lives as His own. Whatever else changes in their lives — and much will change — that truth does not.

Which brings me back to Horatio Spafford, standing on the deck of that ship, looking out at the water where he'd lost his four daughters. He didn't write "It is well" because the pain was gone. He wrote it because he believed — in his heart — in the God who gives life to the dead. He had reached out, like that woman, with nothing left to offer but his trust. And he found that Jesus met him there and held him.

That is what we are praying for these two little girls today. Not a life without hardship — none of us get that. But a faith that holds through it. A faith that one day, whatever storms they face, will teach them to say: "It is well with my soul."

That journey begins today.

Let us pray.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We have heard your Word today, and we thank you that it is not just ancient history — it is alive, and it speaks.

We thank you for the faith of Abraham, who believed when there was no earthly reason to hope. We thank you for that nameless woman who reached out with nothing to offer but her trust — and found that you were there. We thank you for Matthew, who walked away from everything because of two words from you. And we thank you that your Son is the same today as we read in the Gospels.

Some of us here today are confident in our faith. Some of us are unsure. Some of us haven't reached out yet. Would you meet us all, right where we are, just as you met that woman at the edge of the crowd?

Teach us all — whatever season of life we are in — to say: "It is well with my soul."

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ — the one who was delivered over to death for our sins, and raised to life for our salvation.

Amen.

Five Reflection Questions

1. The woman in Matthew 9 simply reached out — quietly, privately, with no certainty of the outcome. Is there something in your own life right now where you need to make that kind of reach toward God? What is holding you back?
2. Jesus said he came not for the righteous, but for sinners — and then he went to dinner with exactly the kind of people the religious crowd had written off. Who does that challenge you to think about differently — either in your community, or in how you see yourself?
3. The Apostle Paul describes Abraham as "fully persuaded" that God could do what he had promised — even when his circumstances said otherwise. Would you describe your own faith as "fully persuaded"? What would it take to get there?
4. Horatio Spafford wrote "It Is Well With My Soul" in one of the darkest moments a human can face. Think of a time when life was genuinely hard — did your faith hold? If not, what do you think was missing? If it did, what sustained you?
5. Baptism is described in the New Testament as dying and rising with Christ — a declaration that your old life is gone and a new one has begun. Whether or not you have been baptised, what would it mean for you to truly live as though you belong to the God who raises the dead?