



07 – 13 June 2026

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Every person of faith must ultimately make one central, defining choice about what they will believe and how they will practice their spirituality. And that choice is at the heart of this week's theme.

If you attend worship this Sunday, you may hear Jesus say in the Gospel reading from Matthew: "Go and learn what this means: I want mercy and not sacrifice." And that is the choice we must make: will we make our faith and lives about religious sacrifices, getting doctrine right, focussing on personal purity, and bending over backward to observe every letter of the Law, or will we choose mercy, compassion, grace, inclusion, and love as the basis for how we live and what we believe?

This week we shift from the first half of the Church Calendar, which focusses on *God's story* of salvation, to the second half which highlights *our story* of following Christ in our lives and world. And how we answer the question of whether we choose mercy or (religious) sacrifice will shape what we believe, how we live, and how we treat the people around us. And that's why it is one of the most important choices we will ever make.

This week, our meditations challenge us to release our legalism and self-righteousness and choose mercy and love as our guiding values.

SUNDAY 07 JUNE 2026

Read: Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Reflect: Today's reading, which sets the theme for the week, shows Jesus relating to three different kinds of unclean people. Firstly, he goes to the house of Matthew the tax-collector. Tax collectors were hated for collaborating with Rome and getting rich through coercive and corrupt collection methods. And clearly Matthew's friends

weren't upright, socially acceptable people either. By entering Matthew's home and eating with his friends, Jesus made himself unclean. Then when the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years touched him, she made him unclean. Then finally, by touching the hand of the dead little girl, he became unclean. Clearly the laws of religious purity didn't matter much to Jesus.

Jesus reveals the nature of God to us, so if Jesus didn't care about becoming unclean, God is obviously far less concerned about laws of purity than we are. For Jesus the primary concern was to connect with people, offer them grace and restoration, and help them to live their most abundant and compassionate lives. For Jesus the only command was that we should love God, others, and ourselves. Because when love is our only law, it leads us to our best lives and compels us to seek a better world for all.

It's sad that religions, which are meant to be channels of grace for flawed human beings like us too often end up being more focused on personal purity and doctrinal correctness. This is exactly the opposite of how Jesus lived and the way he called us to follow.

What can you do today to share grace and love with someone who may seem to be 'unclean' to you?

Do: Jesus made welcoming, restoring, and liberating others his life's work. He went out of his way to connect with 'unclean' people and show them God's grace and love. When he calls us to serve those around us, this is what he means. A life of service does not always have to be about grand actions. Usually, it's about small acts of grace and kindness in our daily interactions. Today seek out as many opportunities as possible to serve others in this way.

Pray: Teach me to serve others with the same grace and love that you show me, O God.

MONDAY 08 JUNE 2026

Read: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:2

Reflect: Today's reading may seem to completely contradict this week's theme. At first glance, Paul seems to be promoting personal purity and religious correctness over kindness and grace. His language sounds very judgemental and unkind toward those who

don't follow his teachings. But if we look more closely at what he's saying and put it in context another picture emerges.

Firstly, Paul started from a place of legalistic correctness and purity. But after his Emmaus Road experience, he began to prioritise grace and love. He went to people who were considered unclean according to Hebrew law, and he often 'broke the rules' to share love and grace with others. Secondly, Paul is not talking about separating ourselves from people, but from the things that rob us of life—the idols that lead us away from Jesus' way of mercy and justice. This is confirmed because Paul and the Corinthians had a very difficult relationship, and yet Paul still stayed connected with them even though he disagreed with them in many ways.

One of the greatest challenges we must face as followers of Christ is how to love all people without compromising our own integrity and values—and how to stay true to our convictions without judging others in the process. How can you balance your authenticity with loving others unconditionally today?

Do: We will never avoid disagreements and conflicts with others. And we will always be tempted to try and impose our views and values on others. But love requires that we give people the space to make their own choices even if we think they're wrong. And the best thing we can do when we're struggling with other people is to pray for them and for the capacity to love them as they are. Who needs you to pray in this way today?

Pray: O God, may I love myself enough to be true to myself and love others enough to allow them to make their own choices—even when I think they're wrong.

TUESDAY 09 JUNE 2026

Read: Hebrews 13:1-16

Reflect: The Book of Hebrews can be difficult to read. It is filled with references to Jewish traditions, worship practices, and beliefs. It seeks to explain who Jesus was and what Jesus did in terms of Jewish temple worship and sacrifices, and it can sometimes be difficult to grasp what the writer is saying. But at the end of this deep and challenging book, the writer calls his readers to live out their

faith with commitment and courage. And the specific practices he lists are surprisingly simple and ordinary.

When it comes to follow Christ, everything we do is to be rooted in love, grace, welcome, and kindness. We are called to show hospitality to others, to put ourselves in the shoes of the suffering and care for them, to be faithful in our relationships, and to resist greed. Once again, the Christ-following life boils down to the simple, but difficult, choice to love God, ourselves, and others—and to put that love into simple, practical actions on a daily basis. In the terms of the book of Hebrews, one word to sum up the writer's call would be 'hospitality'.

Who needs you to show them practical hospitality today?

Do: We often think of hospitality as welcoming people into our homes—and it is. But it is also welcoming people into our hearts. When we open our hearts to really see others as they are and do what we can in small but significant ways to make them feel safe and comfortable, we are showing them hospitality. How can you show hospitality in this way to the people in your life today?

Pray: As you have welcomed me into your heart, O God, may I welcome others in your name.

WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2026

Read: Matthew 12:1-8

Reflect: The problem with legalism is that is impossible to maintain. The stricter we become about rules of religious purity and righteousness, the harder it becomes to live up to them ourselves. In today's reading, the Pharisees tried to discredit Jesus by demonstrating how he was breaking the Sabbath law. But all Jesus had to do was point out examples from their own Scriptures that the Sabbath was not nearly as rigid as they made it out to be.

We may think that we are pleasing God by trying to fulfil the letter of the Law. We may feel that God is impressed by our commitment to obey what we believe God has commanded. But it isn't hard to see that most our rules and laws are of our own making and God isn't impressed by self-righteousness, legalism, or personal purity. In fact, prioritising strict obedience to a set of laws is the opposite of

what God asks of us. As Jesus reminded the religious leaders, God desires mercy, not religious sacrifice.

The only command that Jesus ever gave was the new commandment to love. And yet we struggle to accept this as our only law, and we struggle to live it out. Following rules is easy. Love is messy, difficult, and requires lots of listening and work. But, in the end, love is what God asks of us above all. How can you release any legalistic tendencies you may have and choose love instead today?

Do: We are often reminded that prayer is not just about speaking but should also include listening. The same is true in our relationships. One of the best ways we can love another person in Christ's name is to listen to them—not to reply or counter what they're saying, but to understand and step into their world. How can you practice attentive, caring listening with the people around you today?

Pray: Give me ears to listen openly, attentively, and lovingly to the people around me, O God.

THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2026

Read: Hebrews 3:1-6

Reflect: This Sunday the focus in all the readings is on how God chooses people to partner with God in the work of bringing God's reign into being in the world. This sense of calling and choosing is a wonderful gift. But it is important to remember that it's not just for us. When we are called it is always for the sake of others.

Today the writer to the Hebrews refers to believers like you and me as partners in "the heavenly calling." What does it mean to you to think of yourself in that way? The writer then draws our attention to Christ as the prime example of living out this heavenly calling. Jesus was faithful to God's calling. The Gospels reveal this on every page, and they report Jesus saying that he only taught what his Divine Parent told him to say, and he only did what his Divine Parent instructed him to do. The writer then calls us to be equally faithful, trusting that we are the household of God, and being confident in God's choosing of us and love for us.

When we investigate what the calling actually was to which Jesus was faithful, we discover it was a calling to be self-giving, loving, and compassionate. It was a calling to uplift the poor, to care for the vulnerable, and to challenge injustice. This is the work to which God calls us too—because this is the work of God's heart.

How can you be faithful to God's calling on your life today?

Do: A commitment to Christ is often seen as a once-off event. We can never be faithful to God's call if that's how we see it. Rather our commitment should be a daily decision to partner with God in the work of love and justice. Before we make that commitment, though, we should check what's happening in the world around us. Our commitment must entail contributing in some small way to bringing goodness, truth, and beauty into our world. What commitment can you make today?

Pray: As you were faithful to God's calling, Jesus, help me to be faithful in bring love and justice into my world.

FRIDAY 12 JUNE 2026

Read: Acts 7:35-43

Reflect: On Sunday one of the Old Testament readings refers to God's covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, just after they had escaped from Egypt. This was when Moses explained to this ragtag group of freed slaves that their best way of living would be to follow God's direction. He called them to a faithful commitment to God's ways, and at that point they were eager to comply.

The picture is very different in today's reading. Here we read an excerpt from Stephen's last sermon to the religious leaders before he was martyred. He describes how the Israelites strayed from God's ways and turned to idols. They rejected Moses' leadership and questioned his authority and trusted their own desires and insecurities. Stephen dared to suggest that the religious leaders of his day were guilty of the same mistake, which is what got him killed.

Ultimately, we all have to decide for ourselves how we will respond to God's call. Some of us choose to reject spirituality all together and go our own way. Some will choose to embrace a shallow spirituality that claims the name of Christ with none of the responsibilities or

sacrifices. Neither of these ways will lead us to life or empower us to bring life to others. It is only when we are willing to follow the way of Jesus, the way of beauty, truth, and goodness, the way of love and justice, that we can experience the most vibrant and meaningful life. What choice will you make today?

Do: To receive God's wisdom and life we need to recognise where we are tempted to put ourselves and our preferences and insecurities first, the way the Israelites did. We need to be willing to lay aside our brokenness and change to be more serving and loving as Jesus was. We cannot avoid the work of confession if we are to find our way into a deeper experience of God's life. Make some time for confession today.

Pray: Show me where my stubbornness, self-centredness, and fear keep me from following you Jesus, and help me to change.

SATURDAY 13 JUNE 2026

Read: Mark 7:1-13

Reflect: The tendency that Jesus observed in the religious people of his day continue in our time. You don't have to look far to find religious people who claim to know God's "true" thoughts and commands. They impose all sorts of laws on others, and they find all manner of ways to avoid and ignore the call of God to love and justice. The religious leaders had found a way to keep their wealth for themselves and to avoid the requirement of the law that they should care for their parents. While they may have claimed that the support they should be giving to their parents was a gift for God, that didn't mean they actually gave God anything. It was just a way to keep it for themselves but hide it behind religious language.

Religion can offer many wonderful gifts to the world when those who practice it do so with a genuine desire to become more loving, compassionate, generous, and just. Unfortunately, religions do not seem to produce those kinds of people primarily. Too many wars have been fought in the name of religion when the actual motive was the desire for power, control, or resources. Too many unscrupulous religious leaders have grown wealthy by finding ways to discard the call to justice in Scripture and twist the Scriptures to their own benefit. The prosperity Gospel is one prominent example.

In a less obvious way we all have times when we are tempted to ignore or distort what Jesus taught to avoid the difficult call to follow him.

If we contrast these leaders with the calling Jesus gave his disciples in tomorrow's Gospel reading, we cannot miss the truth that being faithful to God's call is not about us being healthy, wealthy, and happy. It's about contributing to a world of love and justice. What contribution can you make today?

Do: Giving is one of the three main spiritual practices taught in all religions. To be generous does not just mean that we give money to those in need. It is an attitude of spirit in which we make ourselves available to others and seek to use whatever resources we have to bring life to those around us. What act of generosity can you perform today?

Pray: As you have been generous toward me, O God, so I choose to be generous to those around me.