

**Sunday 21 June 2026**  
**The Third Sunday after Trinity**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Jeremiah 20:7-13**  
**NT: Romans 6:1b-11**  
**Gp: Matthew 10: 24-39**

Today we celebrate Father's Day, and I know that can be difficult for some, but it brings joy for others. I love the month of June because as well as Father's Day it has lots of nice memories and occasions and also some sad. In June with sadness, I remember the birthdays of my maternal grandad- known as Nandad, paternal grandma and mother in law Rose, all sadly now no longer with us- but still in our hearts. The nice memories in June are: five years since being ordained deacon, four years since being ordained priest and celebrating my first Mass and my wedding Anniversary. 28 years this year! June is indeed a special month for several reasons. Also, a new memory will be made today, as Dean, a member of our congregation will be baptised after our Eucharist service.

Today's readings are not gentle readings. They do not offer us an easy faith or a comfortable discipleship. St Paul tells us that in baptism we have been buried with Christ into death. Jesus tells his disciples that following him may bring opposition, misunderstanding, division, and a cross. Yet beneath the challenge of both readings there is a deep and steady promise: in Christ, fear and sin no longer have the final word.

Paul begins with a question that sounds strange at first: "Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?" In other words, if God is so gracious, does it really matter how we live? Paul's answer is sharp and immediate: "By no means!" Grace is not permission to remain unchanged. Grace is the power of God that sets us free.

In Romans 6, Paul reminds us of what baptism means. Baptism is not only a beautiful ceremony, a family celebration, or a moment from the past. It is not simply the day when water was poured, promises were made, photographs were taken, and people gathered afterwards for tea and cake. All of that may be good and joyful, but Paul takes us much deeper. Baptism is a sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are joined to Christ so deeply that his story becomes our story. His death becomes the death of our old life, and his resurrection becomes the beginning of our new life.

That is why Paul's language is so strong: buried with Christ, united with him, crucified with him, alive with him. Baptism is the sign of belonging, but more than that, it is the beginning of a whole new way of belonging. We no longer belong first to our fears, our failures, our reputation, our achievements, or even to the old stories we tell about ourselves. We belong to Christ. Before we choose him, he has chosen us. Before we can prove ourselves, God has already named us as his own.

For some of us, baptism happened when we were too young to remember it. For others, it may have been a conscious step of faith later in life. But whether remembered vividly or received before memory began, baptism is not meant to remain trapped in the past. It is a present reality. Every day, we are invited to return to it: to turn again from sin, to receive again the mercy of God, and to walk again in newness of life. To remember our baptism is not merely to remember an event; it is to remember who we are.

That means Christian life is not simply about trying harder to be good. It is about learning to live from a new identity. Paul says, “Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” That word “consider” matters. Paul is asking us to reckon with what God has already done, to count it as true even when we do not always feel it. We may still struggle, we may still fail, and we may still need forgiveness every day; but sin is no longer our master. We belong to Christ.

This is why baptism is both gift and vocation. It is gift because we do not earn it. We do not baptise ourselves into worthiness. God acts first in grace. But it is vocation because the gift calls forth a life. The baptised life is a life of daily dying and rising: dying to pride, rising into humility; dying to bitterness, rising into forgiveness; dying to despair, rising into hope; dying to fear, rising into courage. The font points us towards the cross and the empty tomb and says: this is the pattern of your life now.

This is both comfort and challenge. It comforts us because our past does not define us. Our worst mistake is not the truest thing about us. The truest thing is that we are united with Christ. But it challenges us because we cannot use grace as an excuse to make peace with what destroys us. The life of Christ within us calls us to leave behind the patterns that keep us captive: bitterness, selfishness, dishonesty, fear, resentment, and despair. Baptism tells us that those powers may be loud, but they are not lord. Christ is Lord.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks to disciples who are being sent out into the world. He does not pretend their mission will be easy. He tells them plainly that if he, the teacher and master, has been opposed, then his followers should not be surprised if they face opposition too. The disciple is not above the teacher.

And yet, three times in this passage Jesus says, “Do not be afraid.” He does not say there is nothing frightening in the world. He does not say that discipleship will never cost us anything. He says, do not let fear become your lord. Do not let fear silence truth. Do not let fear shrink your love. Do not let fear decide who you will be.

Jesus gives a tender image: not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father, and even the hairs of our head are all counted. In other words, the God who calls us into costly discipleship is not distant or careless. God sees. God knows. God values. We are not forgotten in the struggle.

This matters because much of our lives is shaped by fear: fear of what others will think, fear of losing comfort, fear of standing out, fear of being rejected, fear of speaking when silence feels safer. But Jesus calls his people to a deeper freedom. If we have already died and risen with Christ, then we do not have to live as prisoners of fear. The water of baptism has already carried us, in Christ, through death into life; therefore, fear may still visit us, but it need not govern us.

Some of Jesus’ words today are among the hardest in the Gospel. He says he has not come to bring peace, but a sword. He speaks of division even within families. These words can trouble us, and rightly so. Jesus is not praising conflict for its own sake. He is not calling us to be harsh or arrogant. Rather, he is telling the truth: loyalty to the kingdom of God will sometimes bring us into conflict with the values of the world, and even with the expectations of those closest to us.

To take up the cross is not to seek suffering, but to follow Jesus faithfully when love becomes costly. It may mean refusing to join in cruelty when everyone else laughs. It may mean telling the truth when a lie would be easier. It may mean forgiving when resentment feels justified. It may mean choosing integrity over popularity, generosity over self-protection, and faithfulness over comfort.

Jesus says, "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." This is the great paradox of the Gospel. When we cling tightly to safety, status, control, and self-interest, life becomes smaller. But when we give ourselves to Christ, when we entrust ourselves to his way of love, we discover a life deeper than anything fear can offer.

That is why baptism and the cross belong together. Baptism is not a protective charm that keeps life easy. It is the sign that we have been joined to the crucified and risen Lord. The one who went down into the waters with us also sends us out into the world as witnesses. The courage Jesus asks for in Matthew 10 is not the courage of naturally brave people; it is the courage of baptised people, people whose lives are held by God more deeply than they are threatened by the world.

So, these two readings belong together. Paul tells us who we are: people baptised into Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus tells us how such people live: with courage, honesty, loyalty, and trust. Because we are alive to God, we can face the world without being ruled by fear. Because we have died to sin, we can resist the old habits that pull us away from love. Because Christ has been raised, we can risk losing the false life in order to receive the true one. Baptism gives us our deepest identity, and discipleship is the daily living out of that identity.

The question for us today is not only, "Do I believe these things?" The question is also, "Where is Christ calling me to live them?" What sin, habit, or fear needs to be left in the grave? What truth needs to be spoken? What cross needs to be carried? What act of faithful love is God placing before me?

Perhaps this week the invitation is very simple: to live as one who has been baptised. When tempted to believe that nothing can change, remember that you have been raised to new life. When tempted to hide your faith, remember that you have been named before heaven. When tempted to be ruled by guilt, remember that the old self has been taken to the cross. When tempted to be ruled by fear, remember the voice of Jesus: "Do not be afraid."

And as we ask those questions, we remember the promise: we do not go alone. The God who counts the hairs of our head walks with us. The Christ who calls us to take up the cross has already gone before us. The Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us now.

So let us consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let us hear again the words of Jesus: do not be afraid. Let us live as people whose deepest life is hidden with Christ, people whose hope is stronger than fear, and people who trust that whoever loses their life for Christ's sake will find it.

May we have the courage to leave behind what belongs to death, the faith to walk in newness of life, and the love to follow Christ wherever he leads.

**Mthr Jennifer Brady**