

## **Sermon Given at the Anglican Parish of Kingscliff -St James Kingscliff and St Mark's Pottsville, Pentecost Sunday 3.**

**Bible Texts:** Genesis 18: 1-15; Psalm 116: 1-2, 11-18, Romans 5: 1-11, Matthew 9: 35-10.8

**Title:** The Open Door of Heaven

### **Introduction**

Friends, if you had 30 seconds to change someone's life, would you do it? Often, we think ministry is about grand programs or theological degrees. But today, our readings from Genesis and Matthew tell us it is about something far simpler: noticing the person in front of you, and showing hospitality and compassion.

### **The Hospitality of Abraham (Genesis 18)**

In Genesis 18. Abraham is sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. He is 99 years old, recovering from surgery, and it is siesta time. Yet, when he sees three strangers standing nearby, he runs to them. He bows low and begs them, "Please, do not pass me by."

This wasn't a casual 'come and have a cuppa' moment. Abraham offered water to wash their dusty feet. He rushed to Sarah to bake bread. He chose a tender calf to prepare a feast. Why? Because in that culture, to ignore a stranger was to insult God.

Here is the lesson: Abraham didn't know these men were divine messengers. He thought they were just nomads. *Hospitality is what you do before you know who someone is.* Abraham treated the stranger like royalty, and in doing so, he entertained angels unaware.

### **The Compassion of Jesus (Matthew 9)**

Now fast forward to Matthew 9. Jesus is walking through the crowds. Unlike Abraham who was sitting, Jesus is constantly moving. But he stops. The text says, "*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them*" (Matthew 9:36).

Not judgment. Not frustration. Compassion. A visceral passion for their needs. Jesus saw them as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." And then he says: "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few*" (Matthew 9.37–38).

Usually, we hear that as a guilt trip: "Go work harder!" But look at the context. Jesus says this right after healing a bleeding woman and raising a dead girl. He is showing that the harvest isn't a field of wheat; the harvest is people. And the reason the labourers are few isn't because God lacks power—it is because labourers lack compassion.

Abraham had the compassion to feed the hungry. Jesus had the compassion to heal the hurting. But how do we learn to see that need in everyone?

### **The Rabbi and the Abbot**

There is a beautiful old story about an Abbot in a monastery that was falling apart. The brothers were old and bitter. Desperate, the Abbot went to a wise Rabbi for advice. The Rabbi said to him: "One of you is the Messiah."

The Abbot was shocked. "What? I know my monks. They are lazy, angry, and tired."  
The Rabbi simply repeated: "One of you is the Messiah."

The Abbot returned to the monastery. He told the brothers, "The Rabbi said something strange: That one of us is the Messiah." From that day on, the monks began to look at each other differently. They started treating the grumpy brother with respect—what if it's him? They started serving the ill brother with joy—what if it's him? They cleaned the floors and sang the prayers not out of duty, but because they were living with a secret King.

### **Application: What does it mean for us?**

My friends, that is the Gospel. That is the intersection of Abraham and Jesus. Abraham looked for the stranger. Jesus saw the suffering. And the Rabbi taught us to expect God in the other person.

But why do we do this? Is it a chore? Is it a test? No. We do it because of people like Ossie.

### **Ossie's Revelation – Unconditional Love**

Let me tell you about a man named Ossie Cruz. Ossie grew up in church but walked away. He thought God was a scorekeeper. He messed up his marriage, his finances, and his health because of alcohol. One night, broken and drunk, he fell to his knees and expected lightning to strike him. Instead, someone handed him a bible and he opened it at Jeremiah 31:3 *"I have loved you with an everlasting love, and I will not withdraw my faithfulness from you."*

That is unconditional love. St Paul reminds us today: *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)*. God does not love you because you are a good laborer. God loves you because He is a good Father. We cannot earn or lose God's love, we pray for the grace to accept it.

### **Conclusion**

So here is the chain: Because God loves us unconditionally, we are safe. Because we are safe, we can be like the Rabbi and see the Messiah in the annoying person next to us. Because we see the Messiah in them, we can have the compassion of Jesus. And because we have that compassion, we will offer the hospitality of Abraham—not a fancy meal, but a cold drink, a listening ear, a moment of grace.

The harvest is rich. The laborers are few. But you are here. Go and open your door of heaven to others through your compassion and hospitality. Amen.

*The Reverend Constantine Osuchukwu, AMDG 13 June 2026*