

Sermon Title: Finding Ourselves in the Middle Way  
Readings: Exodus 19:2–8a, Romans 5:1–8, Matthew 9:35–10:8

Have you ever noticed how much of life is lived in the middle?

Life can sometimes feel like being stuck in a traffic jam. You're not parked—but you're not really going anywhere either. You move a few feet, stop again, and sit there wondering what's causing the delay and how long it's going to last. Or it's like moving house and living out of boxes. You know you've left your old place—but this new one doesn't quite feel like home yet. You're surrounded by things that belong to you... but you can't find anything. Somewhere there is a toaster—but at this point, it may never be seen again.

That's often what life feels like. Not where we used to be... But not quite where we want to be either.

We're somewhere in between—waiting, unsettled, and sometimes wondering if things will ever fully come together. And the question is: what does God do with people who find themselves in the middle like that?

In Exodus, the people of Israel are in the middle.

They are no longer slaves in Egypt—but they are not yet settled in the Promised Land.

They are free... but uncertain.

Called... but not established.

They are in-between

And it is right there—in the middle—that God speaks.

He says, "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

God doesn't wait until they reach their destination.

He speaks identity into them while they are still on the journey.

And that's important. Because we often think:

"I'll feel like the person God is calling me to be once I get there."

But God says: "No—you are becoming that person right here, right now, in the middle."

It's like being put in charge on your first day and thinking 'I don't even know where the kettle is'

God calls us before we feel ready.

Then we turn to Romans—and Paul describes what life in the middle actually feels like.

And let's be honest—it's not always comfortable.

He talks about:

suffering.

Perseverance. Character. Hope.

This is not the language of arrival. This is the language of process.

We're not at the beginning—but we're not at the finished version either.

It's just as much about the journey as it is the destination. But the process can be messy and slow

And here's the surprising part: Paul doesn't say, "Try to escape the middle."

He says, "God is at work in it." Especially in the difficult parts.

In our human nature though, we often want to skip the middle, to avoid the uncomfortable stuff.

Let's be honest, no one wakes up and says, "You know what I'd love today? A bit of character-building suffering!"

What we want is:

The results without the process

The confidence without the risk

The transformation without the discomfort

We want the outcome, the destination, without all the challenging stuff in-between.

But God is committed to working in the "in-between."

Because that's where character is formed.

That's where hope takes root.

That's where we truly meet with God and discover the love He has poured into our hearts—not when life is perfect, but when it's real.

It's exactly where we find Jesus in our Gospel reading - standing right in the middle of human need. He looks at the crowds—people who are described as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." That sounds like people in the middle, doesn't it?

Not completely lost—but not fully found either.

Searching. Struggling. Weighed down with the burdens of life.

And Jesus doesn't avoid them. He doesn't say, "Come back when you've sorted yourselves out."

He meets people where they are, and responds with compassion.

And then, He sends His disciples into that same middle space. Not when everything is neat and resolved. But right into the mess of real life.

Jesus sends ordinary people into the middle of real life.

And here's where this connects deeply with us.

Because most of us are not living in dramatic, mountaintop moments of faith.

We're living:

Between decisions

Between certainty and doubt

Between who we were and who we're becoming

We're in the middle. And sometimes we think that disqualifies us.

We think:

"I'm not spiritually strong enough yet."

"I don't have it all figured out."

"I'll get serious about faith later."

But what if the middle is not a problem to fix... but the very place where God meets us?

God does not wait at the finish line of our lives saying,

"Come back when you've sorted everything out."

He walks with us on the road.

In the confusion. In the growth. In the uncertainty.

And so the challenge for us today is:

Don't despise the middle. Don't rush past it. Don't pretend we're not in it. Or, make excuses because of it.

Because it's very easy to say:

"I'll serve when life settles down."

"I'll trust God when I feel stronger."

"I'll step out when I'm sure."

So..... basically never!

Life rarely ever becomes perfectly clear. And faith was never about having everything sorted.

It was always about trusting God in the middle bits. We should wait for God and not for perfect conditions.

So, what might it look like to live faithfully right where we are?

Not five years from now. Not when everything makes sense. But today.

Well, for starters it means: Stop trying to escape the middle and stop waiting for perfection

It might mean: Showing kindness when you feel stretched Praying even when you're unsure. Taking a small step of obedience. It most definitely means: Trusting that God is working, even when you can't see it

Because the truth is this:

We're not stuck in the middle. We're being formed there. God is shaping us. Strengthening us. Walking with us.

So instead of asking, "How do I get out of this in-between place?"

Maybe we begin to ask: "How is God meeting me here?"

And perhaps even: "Who is God calling me to serve while I'm here?"

Because the middle is not wasted space. It is holy ground. And it may be the very place where God is doing His deepest work in us. Amen.