



2nd July 2023



5th Sunday in Pentecost

When a cup of cold water really matters!

Main verses: Matthew 10:40-42

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Jesus said,

“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

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Main Point:

What we often regard as seemingly insignificant, God the Father deems important! After warning the disciples of the persecution that awaited them, Jesus finishes his message by telling them about the enormous rewards that come from following him.

If we receive and welcome a follower of Jesus, we are actually receiving and welcoming Jesus! Let us be alert to welcoming those the world deems ‘little and insignificant’, for we may just find we are receiving one who is significant in the eyes of God.

Intro |

In the last two weeks I have read two drastically different stories about what can happen when someone asked for a cup of cold water.

The first is a sad story.

On my mission trip I was introduced to a young mother from India. Her name was Princy and she was my team member as we ministered in Seago.

Princy was the daughter of Archbishop Abraham, who, when he was a young man of 20, ventured from Southern India to Northern India as a missionary.

He arrived in the year 1984, and despite being known for its spiritual dryness and hostility to the Gospel, settled in a place called Bihar. Their clothing, language and eating habits were completely foreign to him, and their living spaces were completely disgusting.

Whenever he tried to share the Gospel, he was treated harshly. Because of its strict caste hierarchy, Christians were among the lowest, deemed an untouchable.

On one hot afternoon, Abraham was returning home after visiting a nearby village. His intense thirst forced him to knock on the door of one of the houses.

A young man opened the door and Abraham asked for a cup of water.

However, upon discovering Abraham was a Christian, exploded in angry abuse, causing Abraham to run for his life.

Abraham later discovered that because he was a Christian, regarded as an untouchable, when he touched the door of this man's house, the man now believed his whole house had been made impure.

The story sure gives new meaning to Jesus words!

So, let's return to the Gospel passage and see where we are up to.

Last week we heard Jesus give his disciples instructions before they embarked on their first mission trip.

After warning them repeatedly of the trouble they could expect, Jesus does what any good leader does:

He answers a question that was almost certainly on the minds of all his disciples (but none dared say aloud):

The question? "Why, oh why would anyone sign up for this? When rejection, beatings, arrest, even death is almost certainly guaranteed?"

"What's the reward for living like this?"

It's a fair question.

Following Jesus sure doesn't win you any praise even today.

In fact, if you dare to take a strong stand on any moral issue because of your Christian faith, you may lose your job, and you will certainly be attacked on social media.

That happened to my close friend just the other day.

And we are vividly aware that around the world, our brothers and sisters do face the threat of arrest, physical violence, and often death itself.

So, is it worth it to follow Jesus?

Maybe we'd be better off keeping our head down, our mouth shut, and not making any waves. Why risk your reputation (even your life) when you could just "go along to get along?"

In today's three verses Jesus makes three promises to those who follow him.

Point 1 | Followers of Jesus Christ will be a bridge that connects people with God

In verse 40, Jesus says,

"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."

Notice the connection here:

First, people welcome you.

Second, by welcoming you, they welcome Christ.

Third, by welcoming Christ, they welcome the Father.

This verse tells us plainly the way to the Father is through the Son.

In today's multicultural world where we have enshrined tolerance, diversity and pluralism as a secular trinity, statements like that don't fit in.

They are seen as too narrow. "One way to God? How dare you say such a thing!"

But we don't get to pick and choose which statements of Jesus we will follow. The Bible teaches clearly (and repeatedly) that there is one God, and the only way to know him is through Jesus Christ.

Let's move on.

Point 2 | Followers of Jesus will become a source of blessing to others

In verse 41, Jesus says,

"Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. And anyone who welcomes a righteous person because he's righteous will receive a righteous person's reward."

We are not all called to walk in the office of a prophet.

Nor are we all called to be an apostle or overseas missionary.

We can't all be church leaders, nor can we all teach.

Not every minister leads a megachurch.

Not every prophet, speaks to nations or regions.

Not every evangelist speaks to crowded stadiums.

Jesus alluded to this when he talked about some who have one talent, some who have two talents, and some who have five talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

We don't all have the same gifts, callings, or opportunities.

Some have more; some have less.

God isn't obligated to treat me the way he treats anyone else.

Rather, Jesus promises to "level the playing field" in a way different than we expect.

Here is the amazing promise Jesus makes.

Those who "stand and serve in the shadows" receive the same reward as the one who receives all the public acclaim.

The prophets in Jesus' day were very public, they stood in the marketplace – the equivalent of a shopping centre - and declared God's word.

Public ... but not at all popular.

Remember, John the baptiser? The religious establishment hated him.

When we look at all the prophets in the Old Testament, none of them were respected when they told God's people the truth.

Why? Because the prophets were usually called to warn of God's judgement ... and no one wants to hear about God's judgement.

So, to receive a prophet, is to receive one highly esteemed by God, but not often esteemed very highly by the world.

In that little village of Bihar, a prophet named Abraham knocked on the door of that higher-caste Hindu man – and he was turned away.

He did not welcome Jesus. He did not receive a reward.

But then Jesus ends his message with a stunning final promise:

Point 3 | Jesus followers are called to show seemingly insignificant gestures of generosity to pave the way for the Gospel to be proclaimed

Verse 42 Jesus says,

“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

Stepping through this verse we see there are no limits to this promise.

You don't need to be a church leader, nor a missionary, nor a Bible scholar. You don't need to be ordained, and you certainly don't need a bible college degree to qualify for this promise.

Do you have a cup of cold water? Then you're qualified.

When Jesus said, “one of these little ones,” he is talking about the least among his followers.

You know there are “little ones” everywhere.

If you reach out to the hurting, to the forgotten, to the marginalized, to the poor, to the homeless, to the abused, to one who can't pay for their shopping at the check-out in Woolies or Coles, Jesus sees your heart.

And what action is required?

“Give a cup of cold water.”

Simple. Inexpensive. Unseen. It requires very little preparation.

How insignificant? How can a cup of cold water matter?

Well in the year 1962 in Africa, a young Hindu boy named Mahesh Chavda, was searching for the truth, in all the wrong places.

One day a Baptist missionary's wife, from West Texas, knocked on his door to ask for a cup of cold water.

Mahesh happened to answer the door. He received her in, gave her a cup of water. She gave him a Bible.

Little did she know that their little exchange of water for the Word would result in Mahesh finding Jesus, following God's call, which resulted in the conversion of more than 700,000 people in the years to come.

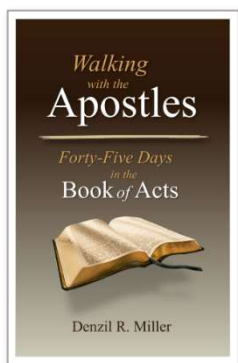
That little Baptist missionary's wife got her reward!

So, let us be on alert, with eyes to see those who need a cup of cold water.

Let us stop and take the time.

You may think nothing of it. But Jesus remembers it forever.

Optional Devotional - Walking with the Apostles



Those who have been journeying through the Pentecost devotional may like to continue working through the book of Acts using a devotional called: *Walking with the Apostles*.

This resource is written by Denzil Miller, a missionary in Africa, who also has a doctorate in ministry from the Assemblies of God Seminary.

This is a 45 day devotional.

This resource is available from the Church office.