

## 070223 Sermon "Certainly Not Lose Your Reward" Matthew 10:40-42

At a party, a young wife admonished her husband, "That's the fourth time you've gone back for ice cream and cake. Doesn't it embarrass you?"

"Why should it?" answered her spouse. "I keep telling them it's for you."

Perhaps this young husband is over-enjoying a treat for himself in his wife's name. If you look at the end of Matthew 10, which is given to us today, it says that God will reward you when you serve others in the name of a prophet, a righteous one, or a disciple of Jesus.

Matthew 10 records what Jesus instructed as he sent the twelve disciples to the world to proclaim the Gospel. It tells us what Jesus' discipleship should be, what to watch out for, and what to do, especially when persecuted. This is a valuable lesson not only to the twelve disciples of Jesus at the time, but to all Christians who live today, that is, to all who live as disciples of Jesus.

Matthew 10:40-42 might be to focus our attention on what it means to be sent. We are not being sent to be wandering missionaries, depending on others for shelter and sustenance, but that doesn't mean that we are off the hook. We as Christians are sent into the world to tell and embody the good news of Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of this story, Jesus sent his disciples in mission without any means of support or defense – no money, no bag, no change of clothes, not even a staff or sandals. They were completely dependent, first on God and then on the hospitality of the communities that received them. Dependence is contrary to American cultural values, but dependence on God is crucial to the

followers of Jesus Christ.

“You can measure what you would do for the Lord by what you do.”—T. C. Horton, quoted in *Christian Life*

Jesus speaks of “reward” of those who receive his disciples. Especially, citing the prophets, the righteous, and the least of these as examples.

Looking back on our daily lives, there are many rewards in front of us, and we often are motivated because of them. For example, when I buy something, I am more interested in 1+1 or Buy 1 Get 50% off. It is difficult to just be satisfied for paying a fair price. Even if you exercise, it's more fun to have a reward, and I feel that it's hard to do my best and there's no fun in a friendly match.

When I was a child, I would get \$1 for organizing my room, \$1 for cleaning dad’s dress shoes. The reward incentivized me to do the chores. How about you? Whether we are playing sports or buying things, we can do well if rewards are given. A visible and tangible reward makes us do those things.

However, if we think in our faith journey, even those who know that reading the Bible and praying and worshipping on a regular basis and participating in the spiritual life with sincere heart are certainly good for the soul, there are rarely any who would read the Bible all night and pray all night and singing hymns all night. Why is that? It is because the corresponding reward is not given right away. Our lives are too busy for that.

### **Seven miles for me**

Leaving a store, I returned to my car only to find that I’d locked my keys and

cell phone inside. A teenager riding his bike saw me kick a tire and say a few choice words. "What's wrong?" he asked. I explained my situation. "But even if I could call my wife," I said, "she can't bring me her car key, since this is our only car." He handed me his cell phone. "Call your wife and tell her I'm coming to get her key." "That's seven miles round trip." "Don't worry about it." An hour later, he returned with my key. I offered him some money, but he refused. "Let's just say I needed the exercise," he said. Then, like a cowboy in the movies, he rode off into the sunset. —*Clarence W. Stephens, Nicholasville, Kentucky*

He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. We can share in the reward of God's servants by supporting them in their work. Even seemingly insignificant works of kindness – a cup of cold water – performed for God's people are meaningful in God's eyes. Note, that God looks more to the pious mind of the giver, than to the abundance of the thing given.

The story about giving a cup of cold water to one of these little ones points ahead to the parable of the judgment in Matthew 25. Here the Son of Man says to the righteous, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink" (25:35), and "truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me" (25:40). The righteous who attend to the needs of the "littlest ones" are told: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (25:34).

The word "reward" [misthos] in Matthew 10 carries connotations of something earned, but this word is not used in the parable of judgment in Matthew 25. Here Jesus says to the righteous, "Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Those who welcome and care for the needs of "little ones" welcome and

care for Jesus himself. To receive Jesus is to receive the one who sent him, and to become heirs to all that the Father has to give.

“The highest reward for a man’s toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it.”—John Ruskin (The Lord said that these people would be heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.)

### **The man at the market**

When the supermarket clerk tallied up my groceries, it was \$12 over what I had on me. I began to remove items from the bags when another shopper handed me a \$20 bill. “Please don’t put yourself out,” I told him. “Let me tell you a story,” he said. “My mother is in the hospital with cancer. I visit her every day and bring her flowers. I went this morning, and she got mad at me for spending my money on more flowers. She demanded that I do something else with that money. So, here, please accept this. It is my mother’s flowers.”  
—Leslie Wagner, *Peel, Arkansas*

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, a theologian named Trapp once said, “Of Midas it is fabled, that whatever he touched turned into gold. Sure it is that whatsoever the hand of charity touch, be it but a cup of cold water, it turns the same, not into gold, but into heaven itself.” Please join in the joy of God while you live on this earth. And I hope you will keep the kingdom of God within you. And I believe that you will enter the kingdom of God on the day you leave this world. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, with your family, with your business, with your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.