

Matthew 10:20-22: A Cup of Water

Trinity 4, 2nd July May 2023

Is anyone here thirsty? Would anyone like a drink (... of water!)? Put your hand up!

I am going to ask the children to bring round a few cups of water. Not enough cups for everyone, I am afraid.

Was that difficult? Did it take a lot of effort? Was it an expensive gift? No. Pretty small, a fairly trivial act of kindness.

It is a fairly commonplace act. When we lived in Nepal, we were in the plains near India, and it was pretty hot, as it would have been much of the year in Palestine where Jesus was. When someone came your house, you gave them some water. You knew they needed it. Here it might be a cup of tea.

Jesus says that even when you do something as simple as giving someone a drink of water, it will not be forgotten; you will be rewarded.

Our gospel reading from Matthew 10 is at the end of a long passage where Jesus sends out the twelve disciples and tells them to proclaim the good news. What prompted this talk was the verse: *whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple—truly I tell you, that person will surely not lose their reward*. In this instance the reward is specifically for recognising someone who is serving Jesus, and helping them. But in other passages, like the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt 25v31-46), Jesus says that anyone who look after others will be rewarded. *I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink*. And when people said, but Jesus, we never gave you a drink, he says, no, but whenever you did this for the least of my brothers or sisters, you did it for me. In another passage, Jesus says *Do to others as you would have them do to you* (Luke 6v31).

Kindness is at the heart of Jesus' message. For more serious things than giving a cup of water, we call it love. Or giving, or caring, or generosity, or sacrifice.

Just giving a cup of water to someone once is not the end of it. I would not want to say that, just because you have given someone a cup of water today, that's it, your place in heaven is now guaranteed. Jesus is giving an illustration of what it means to be in his kingdom. It is a start.

Jesus is encouraging an attitude, a habit, copying God, who is love. It is seeing a need, and helping, not turning away. It is caring for people, whoever they are. Looking after those who are popular, leaders, well off, is OK, but we can do it for mixed motives. Helping the little people, the misfits, the unpopular, those from whom we can expect nothing back, this we do out of simple kindness.

Jesus tells us that God loves us, whatever we do. We are to do likewise, looking outwards, helping people, being kind. It is a way of life.

So, start by giving someone a cup of water. And then do something else that is kind, And keep going.

Jeremy Thake
St. John & St. Stephen.

Matthew 10

Rewards

40 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; 42 and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'