

Devotional – June 28, 2020

GOSPEL: Matthew 10: 40-42



About Matthew

In the second century a.d., the Gospel of Matthew was placed at the very beginning of the New Testament. It was believed to be the first Gospel written, though we now know that the Gospel of Mark dates earlier. Because it is the Gospel most intensely concerned with issues related to Judaism, it provides an appropriate transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament in the Christian Bible. Matthew became the most important of all Gospel texts for first- and second-century Christians because it contains all the elements important to the early church: the story about Jesus's miraculous conception; an explanation of the importance of liturgy, law, discipleship, and teaching; and an account of Jesus's life and death. The Gospel of Matthew has long been considered the most important of the four Gospels. (*Excerpts from sparknotes.com/lit/newtestament/section1/*)

Summary

Up to this point, Jesus has been talking about what the disciples should do and the difficulties that they will face - what others will do to them because of their witness for Christ. Jesus teaches them about hospitality in the context of discipleship. (*Excerpts from <https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/113821-matthew-1040-42-hospitality-the-heart-of-discipleship>*)

Gospel Reading

"We are intimately linked in this harvest work. Anyone who accepts what you do, accepts me, the One who sent you. Anyone who accepts what I do accepts my Father, who sent me. Accepting a messenger of God is as good as being God's messenger. Accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help. This is a large work I've called you into, but don't

be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing." *The Message (MSG)*

What It Could Mean?

"The chapters in between (8-9) narrate various episodes in Jesus' ministry of teaching, healing, casting out demons, and raising the dead. At the end of chapter 9, Jesus looks at the crowds and has compassion on them because they are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36). So he tells his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (9:37-38).

Jesus evidently intends his disciples to be the answer to their own prayer, for at the beginning of chapter 10, he is sending them out, giving them "authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness" (10:1). Jesus instructs the twelve to "go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and to "proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons" (10:5-8).

The disciples are to act as envoys of Jesus, extending his ministry, proclaiming the same good news and performing the same works of healing that he is doing. Jesus' further instructions make clear that the disciples are also to share in his poverty and homelessness, taking with them no money or extra clothing, and depending solely on the hospitality of others for shelter and sustenance (10:8b-13).

They will not be welcomed everywhere (10:14-15), and they can expect to experience the same hostility Jesus often does, for he is sending them out "like sheep into the midst of wolves" (10:16). They can expect to encounter persecution and trials (10:17-23), for "a disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave

above the master" (10:24-25). They need also be prepared for painful division within families, and to be willing to put Jesus' mission above family loyalties (10:34-38). For all of this risk and suffering, Jesus promises, "those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (10:39).

The sent church: Sent by God, Jesus sends his disciples to participate in his mission of proclaiming in word and deed the good news of God's kingdom drawing near. Matthew assumes that the church is a "sent" church, a missionary church (Matthew 28:18-20). There is simply no other way to be the church! This understanding is being recovered in our own day with the missional church movement. There is growing awareness that mission is not just a program of the church; it is (or ought to be) the defining purpose of everything the church does.

An approach to preaching Matthew 10:40-42 might be to focus a congregation's attention on what it means to be sent. Perhaps not all are sent to be wandering missionaries, depending on others for shelter and sustenance, but that doesn't mean we are off the hook. The entire baptized are sent into the world to tell and embody the good news of Jesus Christ. All are sent to bear Christ to others with humility and vulnerability, being willing to risk rejection.

What would happen if we stopped expecting people to come on their own initiative through our church doors, and instead took seriously our calling to bring the gospel to them? What would happen if we truly believed that we bear the presence of Christ to every person we encounter, in every home, workplace, or neighborhood we enter? What would happen if we saw every conversation as an opportunity to speak words of grace, every interaction as an opportunity to embody Christ's love for the neighbor?...Lest we forget what we have to offer, we have Jesus' promise: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me."

(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4482 by Elizabeth Johnson)

Readings for Further Study

- **Jeremiah 28: 5-9**
"prophets ... stand out like a sore thumb."
- **Psalms 89: 1-4; 15-18**
"blessed are those ... who walk in the light of your presence, Lord."
- **Romans 6: 12-23**
"you're living in the freedom of God."

Noteworthy Christians

Francis Jane ("Fanny") Crosby wrote more than 9,000 hymns, some of which are among the most popular in every Christian denomination. She wrote so many that she was forced to use pen names lest the hymnals be filled with her name above all others. And, for most people, the most remarkable thing about her was that she had done so in spite of her blindness. "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I was born blind?" said the poet, who had been able to see only for her first six weeks of life. "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior." (Excerpts from christianitytoday.com/history/people/poets/fanny-crosby.html)

Thought for the Day

"God doesn't waste your sorrows and your difficulties. He uses them to make you better." (Dr. David Jeremiah)

A Prayer

A Irish Prayer: May God give you, for every storm, a rainbow, for every tear, a smile, for every care, a promise, and a blessing in each trial. For every problem life sends, a faithful friend to share, for every sigh, a sweet song, and an answer for each each prayer. **Amen.** (Unknown)

