

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 8

June 28, 2020

Year A RCL

Jeremiah 28:5-9; Psalm 89:1-4,15-18; Matthew 10:40-42

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes Me”

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Today we conclude reading chapter 10 of Matthew’s gospel. The last three Sundays, we have heard how Jesus called and instructed the twelve disciples. We can say that the entire chapter is about the mission that the disciples are expected to accomplish, and the obstacles and priorities that the proclamation of the “Good News” requires of all Christians.

The last two verses in chapter 10, show hospitality or welcoming and generosity or giving as two characteristics of the mission of the church. Jesus, after choosing or calling and instructing the twelve, sent them to continue the proclamation of God’s love and the closeness of His Kingdom.

Being sent by the Father, Jesus understands in obedience His total trust in God. Jesus’ mission on earth is to share and to communicate the relationship of love that He has with God the Father. Jesus invites and welcomes the twelve into this transforming and inclusive experience. The disciples are not students of a new doctrine, they are not followers of a new master; they are in fact first of all Jesus’

friends, and in being friends with Him, they become witnesses of the relationship He has with God.

It is in this context of relationship with God that we can hear today's Gospel:

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” Mathew 10:40

In welcoming those who are sent by Jesus, we actually welcome Jesus, and in welcoming Jesus we welcome the Father.

A temptation for Christians to overcome in reading this gospel verse is to reduce our being sent, to being sent only to those in Holy Orders or professional ministry. Throughout the years, many have depended upon and transferred the task of proclaiming the gospel and sharing God's news to those officially recognized as preachers.

In my opinion, we have a serious failure when the majority of Christians in their personal life think there is no need to be proclaimers and witnesses of their relationship with God, and some have even reduced their relationship as a private, exclusive and disincarnated one.

As believers in Jesus, everyone who confesses the Christian faith needs to step up to their baptismal responsibilities and proclaim the gospel in boldness and

truth in our actions and words. All of society needs to know and hear always anew the wonderful works of God. Men and women in every culture and nation are invited into this welcoming relationship with God.

The task of welcoming, calling, preaching, witnessing, and sharing the gospel is what makes us Christians. Part of our Christian identity is to communicate and connect people with God. Each time we avoid being sent or avoid welcoming others, we neglect the gospel and diminish the testimony of God's love only into a personal experience, thus denying the sense of community.

Let me be clear, that the mission of the church is our mission. As baptized members of the Body of Christ we are the "Community of the New Covenant" (BCP 854) that is called to "restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ" (Catechism, BCP 855).

In welcoming someone, we open ourselves and make space to allow the other to receive what is our own hospitality. Those who welcome us when we are preaching the "Good News" of the love of God are welcoming God himself and receive His love. In the end, both the hosts and the guests depend totally on the generosity of God who sends and receives. The relationship with God is a dynamic movement where we humans constantly take and give back to Him.

The faithful accomplishments of the mission will bring the rewards that God has established according to His wisdom. The prophet, the righteous person, and the little ones are all those who strive to live and share the gospel. They will receive a reward because although their lives are full of obstacles and limitations, they are true disciples in a society that repeatedly denies God.

“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.” Mathew 10:42

Being generous even with the small gesture to offer a cup of cold water to one of Jesus disciples is refreshing enough and appreciated by God to the point of being rewarded. This obviously is because God knows the human heart; He promises that any action, which for us may seem insignificant, has consequences in the eschatological times. The gospel of Matthew is anticipating here the Parable of the Judgment of chapter 25, when God will separate the sheep from the goats and reward those who feed, clothe, visit, help, or offer something to drink to the “little ones”.

In welcoming and being generous with others, we are imitating God Himself, who is always open and abundant with us. As we accomplish our mission, we need to recognize that we are also responsible for the lives and destiny of the “little ones” of our society and that the restoration of their lives requires us to

“strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being” (Baptismal Covenant, BCP 305). If we want to inherit the Kingdom “prepared for us from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34), we need to be obedient and accomplish the mission that God entrusted us in our Baptism. Amen.