

A diamond-shaped sign with a dark border and a light background. The word "Welcome" is written across the sign in a dark, elegant cursive script. The sign is slightly tilted and appears to be outdoors, with a blurred background of trees and a building.

Matthew 10:40–42

40 “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 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. 42 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.”

Reflection

(Today’s talk is given by Justin Moffatt)

Well, I’ve drunk the Kool-Aid of western culture. And I know the rewards inherent in the Protestant work ethic. I know the saying: ‘High risk, high reward.’ I know that one has to work hard to gain more. So here I am thinking that one has to do ‘great things’ to gain ‘great rewards’.

But Jesus says: Just ‘a cup of cold water’ to ‘one of these little ones who is my disciple’, and you ‘will not lose your reward’. A cup of cold water! That’s it.

So the most obvious application to this text today is this: Who ought I to give a cup of cold water to today?

What do we make of these verses? Every now and then you hear a Christian person distance themselves from other Christians. They do it for many reasons. Other Christians embarrass them, or they think the 'other Christians' are wrong. Or they've been burned in some way. They want Jesus, but not Jesus' people. So they say 'I don't like the church, but I believe in Jesus'.

What is interesting about Jesus is that he doesn't let people do that. Welcoming other followers of Jesus is at the heart of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Welcoming a wandering apostle. Welcoming

a prophet. Welcoming a 'righteous one'. And 'even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple.' Jesus is painting a picture here. In fact, I believe several pictures:

First: it's a picture of the gospel. Jesus says that mere 'welcoming' is enough to get God. You don't get God by 'earning your way to him.' You don't get God by working harder. You don't get God by being a great one. You get God by embracing a great one. The Apostle welcomed Jesus, the great one. And Jesus says:

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

You take in a despised apostle, you take in Jesus. And when you take in Jesus, you get the Father. Genius.

It is by grace we have been saved. Grace to sinners like me. God welcomed me in. So I show grace to others. I welcome others. I think that's what's behind verse 41:

41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet [Not as something less] will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person [Not as something less] will receive a righteous person's reward.

Do you want a prophet's reward? You don't have to become a prophet. Just welcome the prophet. That's all. Want a righteous

person's reward? Just welcome righteous person. That's all.

The whole point of a 'cold cup of water' is that it isn't much. We are saved by faith, not by works.

Second, it's a picture of family. We are to welcome the disciple, the prophet, and the righteous one as family. We identify a new family in the blood of christ. Offering them a cup of water for healing and refreshment is to identify with them and bring them into your home. If you belong to Christ, you have family all over the world. I find it amazing that upon entering a new city anywhere in the world, across all cultures and socio economic divides, when I find a follower of Jesus, I find a brother or a sister. If you read or listened to last Fri-

day's devotion, you heard about the poor Ethiopian family that took my wife in when she was in a dangerous part of Paris. That sort of thing ought to happen all the time!

Third, it is a picture of a gospel inspired social revolution. Don't worry; I'm not going Marxist. The cup of water offered to the 'little one', the disciple, is a social revolution inherent in the gospel. One might have been tempted to welcome only the prophet and the righteous one. But Jesus says: 'A cup of water' to 'a little one', not just 'great ones'.

In the early church, many followers of Jesus stayed in a city around during times of plague because they were like their Messiah. They were willing to give up their lives because they believed in a resurrection to

come. They ‘offered cold water’ to those who were dying – little ones who’d been abandoned. And that water was enough to keep them going along the road to recovery.

James picks this up in his epistle:

5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

These little ones here aren’t just anyone. They are ‘little’ (not important), but they are disciples of Jesus. A cup of water on their journey, and yours is the reward.

Fourth, then, it's picture of mission. How did the gospel spread? Answer: Followers of Jesus housed, welcomed, financed, and encouraged evangelists as they spread the gospel all over the world. Let's find followers of Jesus and 'send them on their way refreshed'. One commentary: "Implicit in the 'cup of water', is for Matthew, an embrace of all that the christian mission stands for."

Can you name your missionaries at our church? Can you name one thing that's going on for them right now? Have you touched their lives recently? At Church Hill, all our linked missionaries are on Facebook. They all have email addresses. They all are contactable. Can you welcome them in some way? Pray for them? Write to them? That's a great thing to do

today. Email me if you want their details. I'll make sure you touch their lives.

Fifth, it is a picture of the future. Jesus finishes his section on mission and discipleship by talking about rewards. And the rewards aren't: 'you've been good, so you've earned heaven.' They aren't: 'you've worked hard, so you can have a good seat in the new heavens and the new earth.'

What are they? God notices when you welcome the apostles' message. John writes:

3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We

write this to make our joy complete.

God notices when you side with his people, even when they are persecuted and mocked. You didn't get embarrassed. You stayed the course. You strengthened the cause. Even in the smallest of ways. God notices, and will vindicate your choice at his coming.

Here is a thought: go to www.opendoors.org.au and pray for brothers and sisters who are being persecuted. Ask yourself who you can offer a cup of cold water too: healing and refreshment for a brother or sister today. Pray for the opportunity.