

## Juniper Green Sermon 5

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Matthew 10:40-42

### **Sermon - Welcoming Jesus, Welcoming Others**

**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.”*

### **Sermon:**

#### **Intro**

I've found myself hitting a bit of good fortune today.

Tonight I'm also preaching at my home congregation, Holy Trinity Wester Hailes, And the topic for this evening is 'Welcoming God in our Daily Lives,' specifically focusing on the gift of hospitality.

When I say good fortune, I of course mean the strong link between what Jesus is talking about in today's passage and hospitality - welcoming others.

Today's passage finds us in the conclusion to Christ's missionary discourse.

Up until now, Jesus has called His disciples to ministry, He has prepared them for the inevitable opposition in a fallen world. He's just been talking about the persecution believers would face, and that even families would be split up on account of His Name.

All of this would be the consequence, the cost of following Christ, He repeatedly said "don't fear." He said He would be with them, that God cares for them and would never leave or forsake them.

Now He finishes this section by speaking about caring for others, about welcoming followers of Jesus. He speaks about welcoming prophets, about welcoming a righteous person, and He speaks about the rewards for even a cup of cold water. Perhaps most of all, though, and hidden behind the scenes, was the authority Jesus gives to His disciples.

As followers they would represent Him - re-present if you will, so much, that as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, to receive another follower, was to receive Jesus Himself. Christ's disciples bear His message and authority.

So this is where we're going today.  
This is what we're thinking about -  
we're looking at what it means to welcome Jesus into our lives,  
to offer all of ourselves to all of Him,  
and welcoming others into our lives,  
so that we may bear much fruit  
From there we find the rewards are endless,  
and the blessings are as numerous as the stars in heaven!

### **Cold Water?**

And I'd like to start off at the verse that has probably caught our attention more than the others, if we're honest: "the cup of cold water."

*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.*

Have you ever properly thought about the rewards of giving someone a glass of cold water? PAUSE.

How many of us think about the simplicity of offering a cup of cold water, or a tea or coffee with eternal rewards in heaven?

Well the reality is its true!

It's about welcoming God in our every day lives.

It's the simplicity of the Gospel,

of showing the light and displaying the love of Jesus Christ,

who we remember "came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)."

It's about re-presenting Jesus,

of showing the light,

and doing so with grace and love.

What is Jesus talking about here?

In this passage here, in the context,

what Jesus is referring to here is accepting people, especially missionaries and followers of Christ into our homes, our lives - as believers.

At the time of Jesus, a cup of cold water might have been all that a peasant could offer, but hospitality given with true faith would be rewarded.

## **The Spiritual Aspect of Hospitality - OT & NT**

I don't know about you,

but I think it's easy to think of welcoming others in as something quite ordinary, but the truth is hospitality is a spiritual gift.

Where do we find this in the Bible?

It is part of the service gifts in Romans 12,

the other listings are found in Ephesians 4 and in 1 Corinthians 12.

It is important to remember that there is a spiritual aspect to offering hospitality.

It is not just an ordinary thing.

And here we see this concept littered throughout scripture.

In the Old Testament we find a particular example of this.

In 2 Kings 4, Elisha is welcomed in to the home of a Shunammite woman where he ate some food whenever he passed there.

She also made a small room with a bed, a chair and a lamp for him, so that Elisha would have somewhere to rest his head.

What does he say in response to this hospitality?

*"see, you have taken all this trouble for us; what is to be done for you? would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?"*

Elisha offers the Shunammite woman benefits from two of the most powerful people in the land.

It is then noted that she had no son and her husband was old.

And what happened? She had a son.

This is no the end of the story, though!

The child had grown, and hurt his head when he was among the reapers.

He died.

But Elisha came into the house, and seeing this child lying dead on the bed, shut the door of the room he normally stayed in, praying to God.

He laid on the child, and the child came back to life!

All of this because she simply offered him some hospitality.

The atmosphere changed, in fact, miracles occurred because she did this.

What about the Beatitudes?

I just came across it this morning in my devotional reading,

Matthew 5:16 - *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

A godly life - filled with hospitality, is one that God blesses!

One more story - one of many we could tell from the Gospels.

Do you remember the widow who gave her last penny?

Let's read Mark 12:41-44:

*'Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."*

Jesus is talking about money here, about giving, and welcoming people and welcoming Jesus isn't all about money of course, but the link here is important - its the importance of giving all of our lives as a sacrifice to Jesus. Jesus is saying that her devotion to Him was what was the most amazing thing. She offered in service her money.

This is just one aspect,  
But really she was offering her whole life.  
This was true worship.

It's as Paul writes in Romans 12:1:

*"offer your bodies as a living sacrifice...this is your spiritual worship."*

It's the invite of Jesus - to give all of ourselves to all of Him.

If we in the West who have so much more, what is stopping us?

As Matthew Henry says, Christ values the aid offered to His people *"not according to the cost of the gift, but according to the love and affection of the giver."*

### **Personal Thoughts**

I don't know what your experience is of hospitality,  
I don't know how it makes you feel.

Maybe it makes you shudder or gives you the creeps -  
you remember that first job where customers were rude to you,  
Or maybe it brings back a bad experience where someone was rude to you in Church.  
Maybe the first thing you think of is **hospital** because that just happens to be part of the word 'hospitality' and you think of hospital food!

Maybe you feel uncomfortable - you're an introvert so you like your space.

Or perhaps you immediately think of good things - people who have been kind to you,  
Who have a particular gift in this area and heart to serve others.

For some of us, this is the sermon where we go, "At last! This is something that God has put in my heart!"

For you, this is where you feel most at home - helping others.

This week I had the pleasure of going to the Soup lunch on Friday,  
and I watched as I saw people serving others,  
welcoming others from the community in.

This is worship.

This is Kingdom work.

It's not just serving soup - This is what Jesus is talking about!

It's not just a jolly up with our own friends - its a call to offer hospitality to others.

Listen to the words of the Church father Origen:

*"We are not just to receive the stranger when he comes to us, but actually to enquire after, and look carefully for, strangers, to pursue them and search them out everywhere, lest perchance somewhere they may sit in the streets or lie without a roof over their heads."*

### **Food Banks & The "More" of God**

I came across an article on Sky News this week about food banks.

Here's what it said: "four in five food bank users have skipped meals and go hungry several times a year, according to new research.

Price rises and insecure incomes are the biggest reasons people turn to food banks for essential supplies.

Over half of households turning to food banks include a disabled person, while one in three include someone with a mental health condition.

Half the people questioned said they also struggle to pay for toiletries and heating."

This is in the UK.

What is our role as Christians?

How does this challenge our hearts for reaching people with the Gospel?

Does this mean that we all have to invite people over to our house more?

No, not necessarily, because not everyone can offer that.

It means to give all of ourselves to the mission of God.

To care for the needs of others.

To practice hospitality.

To support missionaries.

Yes, we've see good things happening,

like the Soup lunch and other things in this Church,

but if we want to see the community of Juniper Green won for Jesus,

are we believing for more?

Are we content where we are or are we stirred to further action?

What does Jesus say in v40 -

"welcome" - he says it four times.

This is our task, too - to welcome others as we would Jesus.

### **What about the Apostle Paul?**

How do we tie this all together though?

To finish up, lets look at what the Apostle Paul says.

He writes in Romans 12:13:

*“Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”*

He’s writing this on the back of telling the Church in Rome to cling to what is good, to have love at the centre,

to be faithful believers, to be devoted, to honour one another, to be zealous in the faith, to always keep up spiritual fervour in serving the Lord, no matter what season of life they are in.

In addition to this, he tells them to be joyful, hope-filled, patient - especially when trials come around, faithful in prayer, to share with the Lord’s people who are in need.

And he finishes with two words - “practice hospitality.”

It’s the culmination of his exhortation - if you love well - if you get that right, you’ll be able to practice hospitality without thinking about it.

All of ourselves to all of Jesus.

This is our worship.

We can only give what we ourselves have received.

Hospitality is one of the most important gifts. **WHY? Listen to this:**

Without it, it’s harder to build relationships with people.

Without it, it’s harder to share Jesus.

Without it’s harder to see spiritual fruit in our own lives.

But with it, and with love at the centre,

It offers something of the fragrance of Jesus,

it demonstrates the love of God in simple action,

It quickly opens the doors to sharing the Gospel,

It helps people who serve become joyful

It enables the recipient to receive joy that wasn’t there previously,

It encourages people to be faithful believers,

to welcome in those who are outcast,

to come alongside the broken hearted,

to care for those in need,

to honour those to whom honour has never been shown,

it helps us become more zealous in our faith,

it takes us out of our comfort zone

it helps us want to continue to serve the Lord,

it has the power to take us out of our darkness,

whether we be the one serving,

or whether we be the one inviting.

It helps us be patient - whether we are cooking for a multitude of people or whether we have had a long day and need our introvert space!

It makes our trials seem not as big,

It helps us share community with the Lord’s people and with people who have no contact with the Church.

If we get this right - people can come to Church and stay here.  
Hospitality can be the make or break for people on whether they come to Church,  
come back to Church,  
or decide to enter a Church building.

### **Conclusion**

We have to give away what God has given to us.  
He's given us Jesus,  
He's given us authority to re-present Him here on earth.  
This means not just having a minister preach sermons,  
this is not about a future families worker doing the hard work,  
it means all the people of God,  
offering all of their bodies as spiritual worship - as a sacrifice to God.  
It's welcoming God into our every situation of our daily lives,  
welcoming the people of God,  
welcoming the disciples of Jesus,  
and having the courage to welcome those on the fringes of society and Church,  
into this building and beyond,  
so that the great Gospel of Jesus Christ would be made known.  
So whether you can only offer a cup of cold water,  
or much more,  
let love be the drive, people be the concern, and Christ be the centre.

Let's pray.