

Sunday Update
28th June 2020

Matthew 10:40-42

40 'He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. 41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.'

There is a wonderful variety of ways by which people greet each other across the world. Apparently, Tibetan monks stick out their tongues to greet each other – try doing that here and see what happens! In Japan people bow as the way of greeting each other. The traditional Maori greeting is for the men to press their foreheads together and look into each other's eyes. In Malaysia you would stretch out your hand and touch the other person's fingertips, then bring your hands to your heart as a sign that your greeting is heartfelt. In Cambodia, you would simply put your hands together and bow, but you put your hands at different levels for people of different ages and stages in life; you might also say "Choom Reap Sour".

The Church is called to be a welcoming community, making people feel at home amongst us. That starts by being friendly and open-hearted when we meet people for the first time. Let's imagine the person who comes through the front door of our church building when it is open again and they have come on their own, without an invitation. They may feel terrified, simply because they don't know what they will find inside the door. The church is called to be a welcoming community, so they should be greeted with a warm "good morning" and a smile, and maybe also once more with a handshake! Highs might go too far for someone at the first meeting. Once inside, our visitor should be greeted by people who continue to say "good morning" and be made to feel at home. Sadly, the story of the church is littered with so many stories of people who were ignored by everybody and left to feel decidedly unwelcome.

Jesus has been teaching His disciples about life "on the road!" They have visited the towns and villages on the mission-project that he had set for them and they have discovered what life can be like for the messenger of God's kingdom. We saw last week something of the difficulties that these disciples might face in their relationships with people they meet, from being scared of people to being thought mad! Who would want to be a disciple if that was all it was about? Who would want to be a messenger of God's kingdom if it was just about being scared and laughed at all of the time?

In these last three verses of His teaching about life "on the road" Jesus shows them the other side of the coin. Here is the privilege of being the messenger. *"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me."* (v.40) We talked last week about there being a solidarity between Jesus and His disciples; they stood together. That is never more true than here. The disciples had been going to the towns and villages of the area; they had been charged with telling people the good news of God's kingdom, and they had been charged with acting out that good news in healing people and helping those who were in need. They go in Jesus' name and with His authority; but here is one more step – Jesus goes with them, in a sense. "God Himself enters the house with Jesus' messengers. What a statement!" (J Jeremias)

When the disciple walks into the village square, in a place he doesn't know and where nobody knows him, it is as if Jesus walks into that village square. That is the privilege of his mission. When the disciple knocks on the door of the house in the town where he is visiting, it is as if Jesus is knocking on the door of that house. When we are out and about on the streets of Juniper Green or Baberton or the other parts of the city, it is as if Jesus is out and about in the streets. He goes with us everywhere we go. Now that can be a weighty responsibility, but it is also an enormous privilege for us. There are three steps in the chain: we are welcomed and so Jesus is welcomed; when Jesus is made welcome, God is made welcome. There is something quite remarkable going on here.

This is about welcome and hospitality. Imagine you are the 'welcomer': someone comes to your door, visiting you on behalf of the church and in Jesus' name. What do you do? You can either be very warm-hearted and welcoming and even invite your visitor to come in (in the days before Covid-19 when that social contact was allowed!), or you can send the visitor away packing. Some of you have been the visitors and have knocked on the doors of church members to say "hello" knowing that they are inside but get no response! Awful. These words about reward are slightly obscure, but the whole thrust of them is all about the reward of showing hospitality to people who are messengers of God's kingdom. There will be a reward for people who welcome Jesus' messengers, even down to the person who offers us a cup of cold water.

There is a story from the life of Elijah where he is hungry and looking for a morsel of food. He finds a widow who herself has next to nothing and asks her for a little water and some bread. There is a famine in the land and she is on her way home to use up the last of her flour and oil to make some bread for her and her son, but the Middle-Eastern instinct for hospitality kicks in and she gives Elijah the food he needs. From that day onwards till the day the famine ended, there was flour in the jar and oil in the jug; the woman and her son were provided for, their reward for looking after the prophet, the messenger of God's kingdom. (You can read the whole story in 1 Kings 17)

Jesus goes with us everywhere we go. *"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* (Deuteronomy 31:8) That's the enormous privilege of our Christian faith. He is with us always and everywhere, to help us when we're weak, to give us grace when we flounder. Whenever people welcome us, Jesus comes with us and He is welcomed too! The other side of the coin – welcome and hospitality is a wonderful thing to offer. Obviously we can't do it just now because we are still remaining socially distant, but we can still be open-hearted towards other people, towards our fellow-Christians, towards everyone with whom we have contact – *"some people have entertained angels without knowing it."* (Hebrews 13:2)

Prayer: Father, thank you that Jesus goes with us everywhere we go; thank You that He is able to help us and give us grace; thank you for those who offer us hospitality and are generous and kind to us in these lockdown days. Help us to be open-hearted to others, to offer welcome and hospitality in the name of Jesus, to be kind to everyone and to help people in need.

*Day by day, dear Lord of you
Three things I pray:
To see you more clearly,
To love you more dearly,
To follow you more nearly,
Day by day.*

Pray for:

- The Church as a welcoming community: our local church, churches across Scotland, churches across the world, to be welcoming, open-hearted and generous, to be hospitable; forgive us when we forget and appear to be mean-spirited.
- People who are weak and vulnerable today, those who mourn, those who are sick, those who are isolated and lonely; those in hospital and families who can't visit; pray for people you know by name.
- NHS staff, care home staff, those caring in the community – God keep them safe.
- The opening up of lockdown, to be done carefully and not recklessly; for people to be wise in the way we behave, to observe social distancing and to take notice of people who may be weaker and more vulnerable.
- For our schools, now on holiday but with a new target for August 11th; for Head Teachers, management teams and teachers, to be able to have time off while still trying to find a way that meets the needs of our children and young people as much as possible.
- For the virus to go away completely; pray that science will find a vaccine.
- People whose hearts and minds are feeling “shut-in”, for whom the physical lockdown is affecting their mental health and sense of well-being and freedom. For victims of domestic violence, with nowhere to escape to.
- Children and young people at home, missing friends from school, missing the contact with other people. Parents working, looking after children, trying to care for other family members.
- Businesses told that they can open again, but not sure of their future. Those who are furloughed from work and those who have lost their jobs and have no prospect of a new job soon pray for a sense of purpose when they are away from paid employment.
- Our community, caring for vulnerable people, helping those in need, for resilience and strength.
- Our political leaders, trying to make difficult decisions in the right way.
- Other parts of the world: Kenya suffering under a plague of locusts; Zimbabwe suffering the worst drought in years, towns and cities using unclean water; Syria and Yemen still suffering with civil war.
- Scripture Union: finding new ways of engaging with children and young people in place of camps and holidays: online groups; the biggest holiday club ever online; discipleship groups for young people at home.
- For one another, sustaining our faith when there is nothing of the outward life of the church.

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love; go and have a listen.

To God be the glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-15v9iworAU>

Meekness and Majesty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXggFYQQTJ0>

Yet not I but through Christ in me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zundjUFazfg>

A Touching place

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTlwZ3XNyEY&t=27s>

From my knees to my nose

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgYuXJDX7DY>

Heather's A-Z of videos: the latest is P <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXRZCuon7b0>

Favourite Bible passage:

Do you have a favourite Bible passage? Why not tell us what it is. Here's what to do: pick your favourite Bible passage, then video yourself reading it and in a sentence explain why you picked it. E-mail the video to me and we'll collect them on the Youtube channel or the church website. Give it a go! You can see the latest of these at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtAet-tORqo&t=1s>

Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – www.jgpc.org.uk
- If you have a smartphone, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#
- There will be a service on BBC1 at some time on Sunday morning.

DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS The next issue of “ **EVERY DAY WITH JESUS**” Booklet for July and August 2020 is now available. Ian Aitken has the Booklets for July and August. Other **Bible Study materials** to give you a choice are available by contacting either Ian Aitken or Michael Merriman who will be delighted to arrange regular copies for you of any of the Bible Reading material. **Let the Bible feed you.**

In the name of...

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Pray

Jesus says: "Welcome, all are welcome."

That includes me and you and everyone.

Thank you, God,

that you welcome us all.

Thank you

that you love each of us,
every one of us.

You are truly awesome.

Your love is awesome,
making me awesome.

Thank you, God.

Amen.



Question...



How many ways can you think of to greet someone? All around the world people greet each other in different ways. Here's a few examples:

- Tibetan monks stick their tongues out to greet people.
- In Japan people bow.
- In Oman, men greet each other by pressing their noses together.
- The traditional Maori greeting in New Zealand is to press foreheads together and look into each other's eyes.
- In Malaysia you would stretch out your hand and touch the other person's fingertips, and then bring your hands to your heart as a sign that your greeting is heartfelt.
- In Kenya you will be in for a treat when tribal warriors perform a magnificent jumping dance!

Read the Bible...

Read Matthew 10:40-42. Every time you hear the word 'welcomes' stand up and wave your arms then sit down again.



Praise together...



Everybody's welcome:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvV8qoYtDbc>

Talk together...



- What does it mean to welcome someone?
- What do you expect to happen when you arrive at someone's front door (imagine there are no lockdown restrictions in place!)? How do their actions make you feel? How do you feel if they don't happen?
- How would you welcome someone who comes into your home?
- How do you feel when someone knocks on your door and you're not sure who it is?
- What could you do to welcome someone who is new to your school, church or a club/sport you go to?
- Describe the best welcome you've ever received.

Jesus says it's important that when we are his followers we should reflect him, in our words and our actions. We go in "the name of Jesus". How will people recognise that we belong to Jesus?



Pray together...

You'll need: 3 small building blocks for each person, all a different colour.

Hold each brick in your hand one at a time and pray for:

- One person who has been kind or welcoming to you this past week.
- One person you have helped or welcomed in the past week.
- One person who needs help or to feel welcomed.

Then join your prayers together by building your bricks into a shape or tower. Then pray:

Father God, we are welcomed in the name of Jesus. Help us to welcome others in your name, so that we all join together as your family. Amen.

Do something...

Plan a tea party for the people in your house (or invite someone to your garden or an outdoor space for a socially distanced tea party together!). How can you make sure everyone feels welcomed and cared for? Could you make or do something special and different for each person to let them know you care about them?