

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
June 28, 2020- 4th Sunday after Pentecost- 8A
Given at St. Mark's Church, Bridgewater, CT

Gen 22. 1-14; Psalm 13; Romans 6. 12-23; Matthew 10:40-42

'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.' †

Today's Scriptures speak of grace poured out to those who are God's followers... to those who trust, like Abraham, 'God will provide,' and this grace, as St Paul warns us, is not to be taken for granted...

What I find most compelling is today's very short Gospel passage: 'whoever welcomes you welcomes me.'

Jesus' words are addressed to disciples at the 'Great Commission,' and seem to be about those he sends out in the world. While it stresses the importance of accepting God's servants this is true, and of welcoming new ministers (like Stephen, who will meet the Vestry on this morning) into our community, I think Jesus is promoting something broader.

Consider that verse 42, 'whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple' will find reward... its meant to remind us of a greater teaching, which we find later in Mt 25.40, 'Just as you did it [fed, quenched, clothed, nursed, or visited] to one of the least of these... you did it to me.'

As per the story I told you at Easter (some of you weren't with us on Zoom)... I was raised by a Presbyterian father and Roman Catholic mother, and shortly after college, I could not decide if I should pursue ministry in the Church, or Medical school... and I was given the opportunity to serve at a seminarian intern, living in the rectory of a parish with two priests in Fayetteville, NC. For those who don't know the town, it is a large city along the I-95 Corridor and hosts two of the largest military bases in our country, Fort Bragg Army Base and Pope Air Force Base. The parish was a very large and busy place and was located directly in the middle of the route between the bases and the interstate.

The Rector, who was a former Benedictine monk, always insisted that one of us be present to answer calls or the door for someone in need... because, 'You never knew when Jesus might drop by.' I grew to hate that phrase, because it usually meant I had to stay home.

On one evening, after a hard Sunday services, I remember it as if it was yesterday... One of the priests and I were eating ham sandwiches in the upstairs den, exhausted from the days events... when the doorbell (which was hooked to a fire alarm bell, to be sure no one slept through it) rang. I got up, and the priest seemed worried... 'Don't worry, I said, I'll get it. And I went down to discover someone in need... I went back upstairs to get my wallet and keys and I must have had a grin, because the priest asked, 'Well, who is it? Tell me, who's at the door?' I responded, 'It's Jesus... and he's drunk!'

So together we went down and dealt with our visitor and over the course of several hours got him fed and a place to stay for the night... AND, I will never forget that experience... 'Whoever welcomes one of the least of these welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.' Jesus commanded us to welcome those members of his family, not just the talented and successful ones... also those who are struggling, and marginalized and in need. 'You never know when Jesus will stop by.'

I learned on that night something that I am trying to share with you now... we are all disciples. You don't have to be ordained or have a job in the Church to be God's servant. St Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians makes it clear that the Body of Christ is composed of many diverse members and all have different and distinct roles... As the hand is different from the mouth and the mouth from the brain, we each have unique roles in the Body of Christ.

Sometimes we give more credit to, or take for granted, those who are in ordained ministry... they're the ones who should go out and spread the Gospel... they're charged with promoting the mission of God! Yet, St Paul's analogy to the Body demonstrates that we all, each one of us, has a role in God's mission in our world.

All of you go out daily and 'preach' the Gospel, you spread the 'good news' by your thoughts, words, and deeds in our community... Though not all of you are performing 'missionary work' like helping in soup kitchens, or bringing the homeless shelter, or counseling those in need...

you are supporting those who do—through your prayer, your financial support, and assistance in planning and collecting food and supplies.

The Great Commission is given to all the Body of Christ; never forget that you too are sent! And remember, you never know when Jesus might come by...

'Whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.'

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