

Sunday 28th June Trinity 3

Read Matthew 10.40-42

Revd Rich Henderson (Rector)

There is one thing that stands out for me over the last few months that I have found disturbing and unpleasant, there has been in our media, in our politics and in our nation a constant stream of criticism towards those making decisions or implementing guidance and rules. Let us be honest, I am sure there have been times during *Lockdown* that we have all grumbled about someone, about things imposed on us, that we have been critical.

What is the opposite of criticism? It is acceptance, support, encouragement.

Jesus, in today's Gospel, is encouraging the disciples to go out. Certainly, he knows that they will encounter opposition, persecution, many of them will suffer for being a disciple of Jesus – even be put to death for their faith and witness. But Jesus is encouraging his followers to seek out those who will, welcome, support, uplift and encourage them as they go about the work of the kingdom.

Instead of 'welcome' we could think about the word 'receive'. To be received is about taking the disciple in, heeding the words proclaimed, accepting the teaching, praying for the apostle: *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.*

Here in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is clearly saying that He was sent from God the Father into the world. **Jesus reveals who God is.** If we want to know about God, then we **look to Jesus.**

As Jesus is to God the Father, so is the disciple, the follower, is to Jesus. Those who receive the disciple, welcome them, do that for the Lord.

v41...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.'

Jesus is saying to his followers, that they will be received, welcomed, honoured, and supported in their ministry. Suffering, persecution, and rejection will come but that is not the only response. Yes, they will go to some towns and people will not welcome them, receive them, listen to them. In such situations the disciples are encouraged to shake the dust off their feet and move on.

Jesus is making it clear to his followers then and to us today that some people will offer welcome, receive, listen to them, and accept the Gospel. For them God will give every blessing even the blessing of eternal life. Those who reject the Gospel and the disciples who bring the Gospel will likewise be rejected. These words may seem harsh, but they are meant as encouragement for Christians. They are an encouragement because; God gives us the power to witness to His love, God gives us the support to live out our faith in daily life. God promises us every blessing as we are faithful.

Jesus is telling us not to worry about what others think of us or what they say about us. We should care more about what God thinks of us than what other humans think. We do not like to be criticised and neither do others. We should live out our life being kind, welcoming, and encouraging of others.

Be encouraged today in your faith and your witness. God is with you and Christ is promising you a great reward for your faithfulness. Support others as they live out their faith, their discipleship. Welcome everyone and receive them as from Christ Himself. Pray for people instead of criticising them. Be an encourager and build people up.

v40 'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.'