

Sunday 2nd July 2017: FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Gospel: Matthew 10:40-42

“Christian hospitality.”

In the Name of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

A man suffered a serious heart attack and had open heart bypass surgery. He awoke to find himself in the care of nuns at a Catholic hospital. As he was recovering, a nun came in to ask how he was going to pay for services. He was asked if he had health insurance. “No health insurance,” he replied weakly. The nun asked if he had money in the bank. He replied, “No money in the bank.” The nun then asked, “Do you have a relative who could help you?” He said, “I have only a spinster sister, and she’s a nun. “The nun got a little perturbed and announced loudly. “Nuns are not spinsters! Nuns are married to God,”

“Yes, that’s right!” said the patient, perking up. “Send the bill to my brother-in-law.”

Today in Matthew’s gospel unlike many other passages the focus of the gospel is not about a message to be heard and instead it is all about a person to be received and welcomed. Last week in the 15 or so verses that precede our reading from Matthew’s gospel today, Jesus spends a considerable amount of time warning His disciples about how poorly they will often be treated and received. Our reading last week, Matthew 10: 24-39 is basically Jesus’ warning to His disciples that they will be often be scorned, rejected and greeted with contempt just as He so often was.

And now today in contrast Jesus speaks about the benefits and delights in Christian discipleship and Christian hospitality. Last week in Matthew 10:24-39 Jesus speaks about the rupture discipleship will often place on his followers most valued relationships – including family. And now today in Matthew 10:40-42 Jesus speaks about the delight and the rewards of discipleship.

In Matthew’s gospel today Jesus talks about the new relationship between believers and Jesus and God and how this new relationship affects all others and specifically how this new relationship includes a radically new understanding and practice of Christian hospitality.

If we go a little further on In Matthew’s gospel past our passage for today we find Jesus saying in chapter 25 verse 40 “whatever you did for one of the least of these

brothers and sisters of mine you did for me” and then a few verses later “whatever you did not do for the least of these you did not do for me.”

“whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me” and “whatever you did not do for the least of these you did not do for me.” is basically another way of saying what our passage for today says?

In a nut shell what Jesus is saying is **‘How you treat and receive and welcome others reflects, shows me how you might treat and receive and welcome me.’** Christian hospitality is all about receiving and welcoming and treating others just as we would Christ Himself.

Jesus always welcomed, received and treated people with the utmost of dignity and respect and so ought we to. And we ought to regardless of who we are and regardless of who they are.

Whether we’re respected and elected officials, whether we hold a high or low or no position at all in society, whether the people we meet are high or low or in between, we are to treat people with respect and dignity and we are to receive them and welcome them just as Jesus Himself did.

In the gospel passage, today Jesus talks about receiving prophets -righteous people and what He refers to as little ones.

And we could spend half our time together today trying to figure out what is meant by prophet what is meant by righteous one and what is meant by little one and then we could spend the rest of our time together trying to figure out who their modern-day equivalents might be.

But suffice it so to say prophets in the time of Christ were well known, some were respected and others despised, some were treated like dignitaries or celebrities and others were turned away like thieves. And then there were also righteous people. And righteous people were just like their title sounds that is they were people who tried to do what was right and upstanding, they were basically good solid well respected people who did what was right and honest and true.

And then there are the little people. Little people were the category of people that would include most people. To be little didn’t mean you were any less, to be a little person meant you were basically an everyday person who probably wouldn’t be recognised once you left your own town or city and journeyed to neighbouring communities.

Little people like righteous people were people who outside of or away from their friends and family weren’t usually recognised or very well known.

Little people were everyday people who went about living their lives in ways that don't often get noticed, they lived away from the limelight and attention of others.

Part of what Jesus teaches in Matthew's gospel today is that not everyone is a prophet or a righteous person but everyone is someone important - a little person is still someone important and everyone, prophet, priest, kings and little one's all deserve hospitality.

“He who receives you receives me and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.” Jesus says in verse 40. ***“He who receives you receives me and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.”***

In other words, my friends when we receive people when we welcome them we are in fact welcoming not only them but Christ and God into our homes, hearts or presence.

Amen.