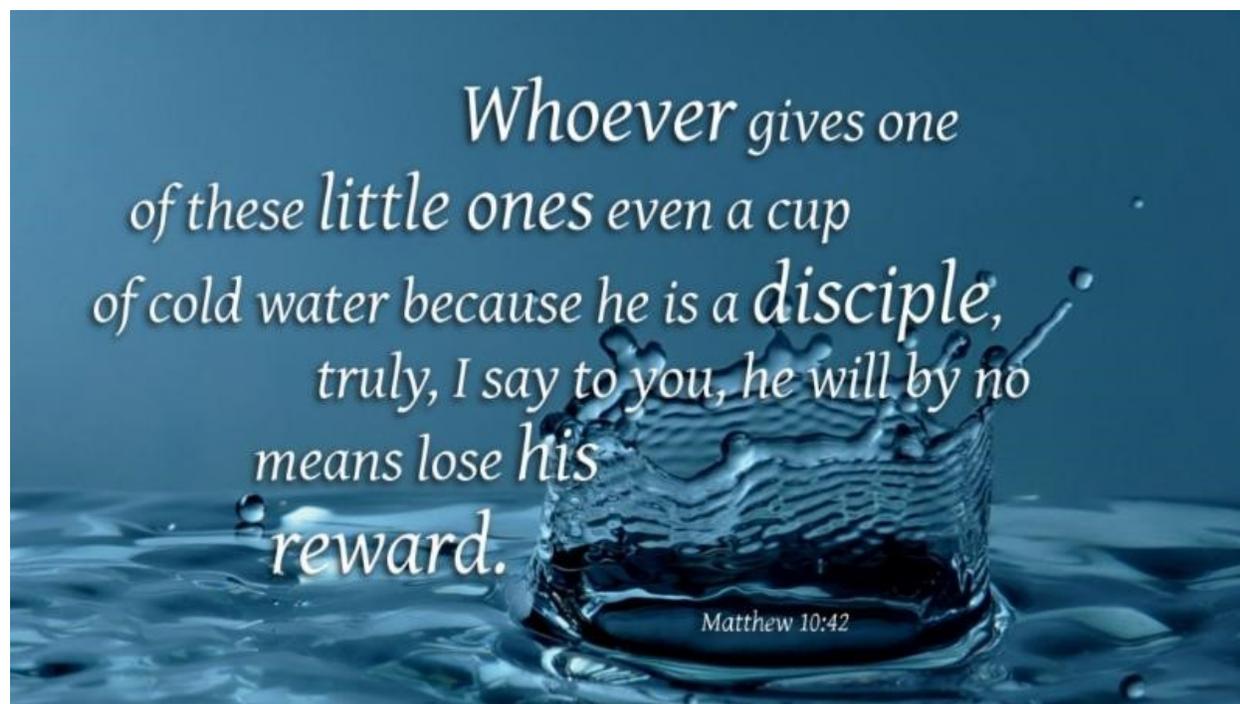


Worship at Home Guide



October 25, 2020

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gathering Question/Gathering Music

Opening Sentences Psalm 78:1

God says:

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you created the heavens and the earth, and humankind in your image. Teach us to discern your hand in all your works and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee"¹

O master, let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free;
tell me thy secret; help me hear the strain of toil, the fret of care.
Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear winning word of love;
teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.
Teach me thy patience, still with thee in closer, dearer company.
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong.
In hope that sends a shining ray far down the future's broadening way;

in peace that only thou canst give, with thee, O Master, let me live.

¹*Public Domain. In honestly admitting the limits of human ability, this prayerful hymn does not seek a sense of God's presence for self-comfort, but for strength and companionship in pursuing the tasks that God sets before us. The writer, Washington Gladden, specifically chose this tune by Henry Percy Smith, to accompany his words. Our music director specifically chose this hymn to ask for strength and companionship in pursuing the tasks that God sets before Chapel Lane to be a Matthew 25 congregation.*

Prayer of Confession

God of Grace, help us to admit our sin, so that as you come to us in mercy, we will grow more and more in your likeness and image in Jesus' name. Have mercy on us as we lift our individual prayers to you... Amen.

Hymn "Open the Eyes of My Heart"²

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you; I want to see you. (Repeat)
To see you high and lifted up, shining in the light of your glory.
Pour out your power and love as we sing, "Holy, holy, holy." Holy, holy, holy. Holy, holy, holy,
Holy, holy, holy, I want to see you.

²Text/Music Paul Baloche ©1997 Integrity's Hosanna! Music reprinted with permission CCLI #120092. All rights reserved.

Scripture/Meditation

[Matthew 10:24-42](#)

Anthem

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

O Lord, strengthen our faith. Nourish it with passion and love towards you....
Nourish it with passion and love for our neighbors as we offer prayers for them...
Nourish it with passion and love for our enemies as we offer prayers for them...
Nourish it with passion and love for the world...hear now our prayers for the world...
Nourish it with passion and love for ourselves...hear now our prayers for ourselves...

Almighty God, whose Word we trust, whose Spirit equips us to pray, we continue to pray saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Hymn "God, Be The Love To Search and Keep Me"³

God, be the love to search and keep me; God be the prayer to move my voice; God, be the strength to now uphold me: O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.

³Text/Music ©2004 *This Here Music*. Reprinted with permission ONE LICENSE #A-716826. All rights reserved.

Sharing of the Peace: Sharing Jesus' invitation to his disciples:

Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you!

* Resources from the *Book of Common Worship and Glory to God Hymnal*, PCUSA

Scripture Lesson Matthew 10:24-42

“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs on your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.”

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worth of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

Questions for Reflection and Discernment

1. What questions do you have for Matthew as the storyteller?
2. For Jesus as one who is the teacher?
3. What word or phrase catches your eye/ear in this text?

4. There is a lot to find offense with here, what do you find offensive?
5. This is part of the teaching section having to do with instructions to the disciples. Which of these instructions do you find most hopeful/helpful as a disciple of Jesus?
6. Luke also has much of this teaching, which suggests he and Matthew had a common source. Check out Luke 14:26 for an even stronger version of “Whoever loves father/mother...” What would you like to ask Matthew/Luke about including this teaching of Jesus?

Interpretation of Matthew 10:24-42

Those who proclaim the gospel are reminded that they are called to share Jesus’ experience of hostility and rejection. The reference to Beelzebul ties this text to Matthew 9:34 and its statement of the negative response to Jesus’ mighty works, and it looks forward to 12:22-32, where the theme is more fully explored. It has often been remarked that persecution is good for the church. As we prepare ourselves for such an eventuality we must remind ourselves that it is our risen Lord who sends us into the encounter with hostility.

To these warnings about coming persecution are appended sayings that encourage fearless confession, highlighted by the “So have no fear...” that continues the teaching. Jesus expects the disciples to rise above their natural fear while being faithful as evangelists.

The saying concerning confessing and denying Jesus combines the positive and negative sanctions. There is good reason to believe that this is an authentic saying of Jesus. Anyone who declared to a would-be disciple, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead” (8.22) must have required unwavering loyalty from his followers. This is the word of one who was utterly convinced that God had called him to a central role in the world final drama (see 12.28).

The next paragraph introduces a still more traumatic result of preaching the gospel. Flogging, verbal abuse, and shunning are far easier to bear than alienation from one’s nearest kin. The community here in question is the family. This point is reinforced by two sayings, Matthew correctly interprets the hyperbole “hate” found in the Lukan parallel of the first saying (Luke 14:26): “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worth of me.” This saying, which seems to be in such tension with the Fifth Commandment, “Honor your father and mother,” must be understood in relation to Matthew 8:22, which claims that following Jesus takes priority even over the filial responsibility of burying one’s father.

The cross saying puzzles many commentators, who find it difficult to believe that Jesus anticipated Roman crucifixion for his followers in Palestine and who conclude therefore that this must be a post-resurrection saying. Is it to be understood figuratively rather than literally? If so, perhaps it means that disciples of Jesus must be willing to be “crucified” by their families.

The final saying of the group is in some respects the most puzzling, since it is not clear what is meant by the opening phrase, “The one having found their life.” According to Jesus, those who give highest priority to the task of protecting themselves will find that there is nothing left to protect.

The concluding paragraph of this discourse returns to the missionary theme with which the chapter began. A messenger of anyone was considered to be the person who authored the

message themselves. Jesus speaks of “The little ones”, a phrase according to Matthew 18:6 references humble Christians who are not church leaders and who may also be poor. Such persons must not be neglected or treated with disdain, for they too represent Christ.

— from *Matthew, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Douglas R.A. Hare

Meditation on Matthew 10:24-42

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Blessings in God’s name on this 21st Sunday after Pentecost, or the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time. We are coming to the end of the most extended time in the church year, the time referred to as Ordinary Time, so named not because it is a time of low expectations but because it is a time that does not have a holiday, like Christmas or Easter, or the context of a specifically devoted season, such as Advent or Lent. It is a season of growth and the liturgical color is green.

In the Sundays of Ordinary Time that remain ahead of the new church year beginning with the First Sunday of Advent on November 29th, we will be reading and reflecting on texts from the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew serves as the primary Gospel for Year A. Matthew has arranged Jesus’ teachings into five sections. The second teaching section is found in chapter 10. The chapter, and thus the teaching section, could be entitled “Commissioning and Instruction of the Twelve.” The Twelve in Matthew, as well as the other Gospels, look back to the twelve tribes of Israel and represent the constitution of the new Israel found in the church that has been founded in Jesus’ name. The early verses share details how they are to represent themselves as they evangelize, these latter verses remind them of whom they represent, that Jesus is with them.

If you have not already, or have not in a while, I would encourage you to read the first 23 verses of this chapter as well. When we hear the word ‘disciple’ in Matthew’s Gospel, as well as in any of the other Gospels, we are to understand that the words are addressed to us, not solely the original listeners. Jesus sends the disciples, us, out into the world, as Matthew understood it, to the ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel’. Unlike other witnesses, Matthew says that Jesus does not send the disciples to Gentiles or to the Samaritans, whereas other witnesses do include them.

The disciples are to proclaim the good news: “The kingdom of heaven has come near,” and they carry the authority to “cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” They are to travel simply and sparsely: according to Matthew they are not to take extra clothes, they are not even to have sandals for their feet or a walking stick for their travels. They are to receive hospitality as it is given, and if it is not given, they are to move on to a place where they will be welcomed. They are to accept what is given, how and where it is given, in Jesus’ name.

The disciples carry with them not only Jesus’ name, but his authority. They are to re-present Jesus in every form and fashion. And, they are to be prepared to receive rejection, whether by individuals or councils. Even within their families of origin they may incur dissension and division.

This warning about persecution is the focus of the second half of the chapter. Jesus is quoted as saying, “A disciple is not above the teacher, not a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciples to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.” One of the intentional changes in the New Revised Version of the Revised Standard Version was to replace the word “servant”

with “slave”. Even after reading and reflecting on this change now for over 30 years, I find the change challenging.

What is the purpose of such challenges? Why use the word ‘slave’ instead of ‘servant’? Why not simply leave out the term all together, leaving it with “a disciple is...”? All good questions. I wish I could invite Matthew to join us in person to help us understand his choice of words, his understanding of what Jesus’ said. What Matthew does share about Jesus is the frank statement that for those who re-present Jesus as Jesus’ disciples, modeling the one who re-presents God, there are challenges as well as comforts.

Does it make a difference if we understand ourselves as ‘disciples’ of Jesus or if we understand ourselves as ‘slaves’ of Jesus? This is not simply a hypothetical question. If we accept Jesus’ wisdom that a disciple is not above the teacher, can we hear that as the equivalent of “a slave is not above the master...it is enough for the slave to be like the master?” While most of us generally do not self-identify as slaves, are we willing to self-identify as disciples of Jesus? If so, how do we hear what he says as an invitation to deepen our relationship with God through him equipped by the Holy Spirit?

There is too much in this text to ponder in an abbreviated fashion. I encourage you to read the words slowly and deliberately, listening for the Spirit’s direction to you and for you. As you do so, I encourage you to hear these affirmations:

“So have no fear of them (those who oppose you);”

“What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops;”

“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before the others, I will also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven;”

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me;” and

“Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of those will lose their reward.”

Very affirming words.

Jesus also teaches:

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword;”

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;”

“Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Very challenging words. In Jesus’ day to be cut off from one’s family would result in a person being very vulnerable. Why is this teaching of Jesus remembered? Because by the time Matthew writes there are followers of Jesus in the community who have experienced division within their families—of origin or faith—and these are words of comfort to them.

Further, there is yet another even more challenging for me: “Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” Amid teachings of comforts and challenges, exists this most personal discipleship challenge, “What are you going to do about your life, Timm High?” “Am I going to seek to “find” it in ways that celebrate me, or am I going to lose it for Jesus’ sake to find another dimension of life?” What is my purpose in life as a disciple of Jesus? What is your purpose as a disciple of Jesus? Can we take heart in Jesus’ invitation to lose to find? Or as John’s Gospel shares Jesus saying, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains but a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Jesus, in calling us as disciples to witness to how ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near’, is inviting us to die to live more fully. Amen.