# Welcome

Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship, June 26, 2011  
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40 “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 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; 42 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.” [[1]](#footnote-1)

The lectionary passages today have a hard passage and an easy passage—Abraham attempted sacrifice of his own son, and Jesus’s on welcoming. Which should we look at? Today, at least, we’ll take the easy road, and look at welcoming in Matthew 10:40-42.

We have actually looked at the general context of this passage a few weeks ago in our series on hard passages, in describing how Jesus came to bring a sword that divides families. And in fact, this passage overall is hard, in the sense that Jesus is warning his disciples of all the hard things that are about to happen to them. First, they were to go out without any visible means of support. Second, he warns them that they will not be welcomed in certain quarters, and (this is hard for me) those villages which didn’t welcome them would be subject to even greater judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah. Third, he says that they were going to be arrested and persecuted and even killed. Fourth, he says that their discipleship will leave their families in tatters.

And, of course, all of these things happened to the early disciples, as far as we know. Here’s what one list says: Andrew: crucified in Greece. Bartholomew: crucified in what is now modern Georgia. James, Son of Alphaeus: stoned to death in Jerusalem. James, Son of Zebedee: assassinated by Herod, killed with a sword. John: banished to Patmos. Peter: crucified upside down in Rome. Philip: crucified in Hierapolis. Thomas: murdered in India. We know, too, all the terrible things that happened to Saint Paul.

What allows people to hear such terrible news, and then live it out? Not all of them did, of course—Judas, for whatever reason (greed is suggested by the New Testament) didn’t do so. But the others, as far as we know, were faithful to the end.

Although Jesus gives it to them straight, he also gives some promises. He promises them that the Holy Spirit will be with them, giving them the right words to say. He promises them that the Father will acknowledge their work, and that the Father values them greatly. In summary, he promises them, for lack of a stronger term, a meaningful life. What they would do would matter in the most profound way.

And here’s where today’s passage comes in: Jesus promises them that anyone who welcomed them would receive a reward—even if they gave them something as small as a drink of cold water on a hot day. Note that we often misquote this passage as meaning something like “even the small things we do can matter.” That may very well be true, but that’s not what Jesus is saying here. He’s saying that even small things done to welcome the apostles will matter. It’s a different thing entirely. And, I think, this would be a word of encouragement to the disciples, knowing that their very presence could serve as a blessing to others.

The question for us is: how do we apply this passage to our lives? Let’s start by being somewhat literal. How can we welcome the apostles?

One way is to honor their memory, and to give thanks to God for their ministry; and let’s be sure to do this during our prayer time.

But another is to think about that phrase, “those who welcome a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward.” The apostles were prophets, who spoke God message; to welcome their message is to welcome them. And, of course, the entire of the New Testament is the outgrowth of the work of the apostles, whether it is in the letters of Paul or in the gospels, written down in the company of the apostles and their “schools,” or the other letters, or even the Revelation, which very well may have been written by John. And of course, when we base on lives on the teachings of the apostles and the teachings of their Lord Jesus, we do in fact receive a prophet’s reward.

But I think we an extend it a bit, too. I would like to suggest the importance of listening for the word of God in the teachings we have on Sundays, and in all the interactions we have through the week. Is there a way we can hear God’s message in the messages we receive? Is there encouragement we can provide—that proverbial cup of cold water—to those with something to say? I know I have been encouraged in the past few weeks by CarolSue, Carolyn and Angela as I’ve talked a bit about the job changes that might be coming for me.

But also, I wonder if God is calling you in some way to provide a message to the fellowship gathered here? Are there ways we can encourage you to step out in faith and bring some word to us?

1. *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Mt 10:40–42). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)