

Matthew 10:40-42

"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."

Title Slide: 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."

### Call to Worship

God says:

Come, you are welcome here.

Come gather as a family.

Come gather as a community.

Come to me and on my behalf bid welcome to all who arrive with thirst.

Jesus says:

Come to me, you ho are thirsty and tired.

Come rest here and receive water for your souls.

Come and sing.

Come and confess.

Come be reminded that you are precious to God.

Come and hear Good News.

Holy Spirit says:

I am Fire, come and be warmed of spirit.

I am Water, come and be satisfied from your thirst.

I am as a Dove, come be sheltered under my Wing.

Come and take flight with me.

Prayer of Approach

O Triune God, we praise You,  
For You are Goodness, You are Creativeness, You are Righteousness and Eternity.  
We know You, yet, You are so great that were there a way to behold You our sight would be too poor and our minds too small to understand all that You are.  
Knowing our struggles You have come to us in Christ that we may better glimpse Your Love and Humility.  
You are Great O God, and therefore there is still much more to learn of you and from You.

Fill our hearts with inspiration.  
Fill our minds with wisdom.  
Fill our souls with justice.

O Lord of Life, as we come renew us by Your presence and remind us that we are made in Your image, Created for Good purposes and enduring relationship, therefore O God, we sense that we belong to You.

We would welcome You, O God, to our homes, even as You have welcomed us.

Prayer of Confession

Eternal God, in every age and in every place, you have raised up women and men to live in sacrifice for the sake of the gospel and Your Kingdom which is coming.  
You have commanded us to speak, but often we are silent. You have called us to do what is just, but we have been fearful.

Have mercy on us O God, Your servants, who seek to be faithful followers.

We confess that we have not loved you with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. Help us to welcome You into our lives more fully. We confess we need You.

We confess that we have not loved our neighbour as we too would like to be loves. Help us to welcome the stranger, even our enemies, just as we would like to be welcomed. We confess we need one another.

Keep in our watch, O God, great people of the faith; those who do justice, who love mercy and walk humbly with You, our God.

Hear us now as we pray for forgiveness; help us also to forgive others.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself, as the cornerstone.

In Him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a Holy temple of the Lord; I whom you are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Let us rest in the Good News: By grace we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God, Amen.

Hymn: #638 Take Time to Be Holy (4 verses)

1. Take time to be holy; speak oft with thy Lord.  
Abide in him always, and feed on his word.  
Make friends of God's children; help those who are weak,  
forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.

2. Take time to be holy; the world rushes on;  
spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like him thou shalt be;  
thy friends in thy conduct his likeness shall see.

3. Take time to be holy; let him be thy guide,  
and run not before him, whatever betide.  
In joy or in sorrow, still follow thy Lord,  
and, looking to Jesus, still trust in his word.

4. Take time to be holy; be calm in thy soul,  
each thought and each motive beneath his control.  
Thus led by his Spirit to fountains of love,  
thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

Scripture:

Matthew 10:40-42

“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 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. 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.”

Message

A welcome that is both true and complete is a welcome that links and connects many people together. A welcome may be, at first glance, between two individuals, face to face, but the welcome only begins there. Think of all those people behind those two first people who are exchanging the welcome. When you welcome one person, you welcome that person's whole circle.

A true and complete welcome is a chain of welcomes.

You will often see this at weddings where a representative from each one of the families welcomes not only the one marrying into the family, but indeed the whole family. A true and complete welcome of the first person means the welcome of the whole family -for better or for worse.

In the most extreme example welcomes through marriage have welcomed entire nations together. A true and complete welcome, welcomes not just two but everyone who is linked to those first two.

We sort of know this intuitively because the opposite is also true. We would all resonate with the idea that the opposite is also true: that when a loved one is NOT welcomed, it would be hard for all those who stand behind that loved one to sense any kind of welcome either. If someone didn't welcome my parents, my wife or my children it would be hard for me to be welcoming in return.

If someone were NOT welcoming of someone you loved, could you feel any true welcome yourself?

This is why this passage is intimately linked to the previous parts of Matthew 10 that we have explored together over the last two weeks. A welcome or a lack of welcome can be part of that potential confrontation and how we deal with that conflict.

Can we go into potential confrontations with enough peace for two? Can we remember Jesus' words and be not afraid in conflict and unwelcome? These reminders are, I believe, are important dispositions for the disciple.

Part of keeping peace and not being afraid is so that we might be ready for those who will welcome us in Jesus' name and welcome the message of hope we bring. We need to be at peace and non-anxious to carry that message to welcoming ears.

When talking to his disciples, Jesus says that whoever welcome you, welcomes me. I think this tells us two things:

**one:** that Jesus loves us as family and shares a deep bond with us. Where we are welcome, Jesus is welcome. Where he is welcome, we are welcome. As family, for better or worse, we are welcomed together.

**and two:** It speaks to God's abiding presence in hospitality and welcome. God is with us, always, welcoming and being welcomed by those who are seeking.

This is the great reward of mission itself: being reminded that God's mission is all about welcome and that mission and welcome is at the heart of God.

Jesus also promises that welcome produces lesser rewards as well.

This is a bit of a struggle for me and I think we have to be wise here. I think one interpretation could easily lead some down a descent into that most awful form of prosperity gospel that would make many of us nauseous. Too often on TV or radio we might hear the self proclaimed prophets asking for donations and using blessing as bait for the welcomed gift.

"Send me money and you will doubly blessed" say the TV prophets. In other words they are saying you are welcome to make a can offering.

This is why again, we have to look at this passage with the whole of the chapter. Remember when Jesus said: Don't take gold or silver (Matt 10:9) with you. Jesus is saying that if you are to be welcomed, let it be because of me and my message of grace that you carry with you. If you are welcomed let it be about your integrity, your kindness, your willingness to freely share what you have received.

It also reminds us of Jesus' command NOT to be afraid (Matt 10:26). In our human weakness we might be tempted fear that we are more likeable because of our social status or wealth. But in carrying no wealth and promising no wealth, we can be assured that the welcome is sincere and complete.

But there are specific blessings named here: *a prophet's reward* and *a righteous person's reward*.

What are these blessings? In the time of Jesus it was considered an honour to host a religious leader. Some commentaries link it back to the story of a childless woman from Shunem. She hosted the prophet Elisha in her home. As a reward for her hospitality, Elisha bestowed a blessing, giving her a child even against all her hopes, in 2nd Kings, chapter 4. Again it wasn't financial reward nor was Elisha manipulated to offer the blessing. Her welcome was true and complete and the welcome was even attached to Elisha's servant Gehazi.

The prophet's reward is that one may receive a prophet's message. A prophet speaks truth, and timeless truth. I suppose it could be considered a double edged blessing because the truth is we are not always ready to hear truth, yet when we offer welcome a prophet word, we remember that God's presence comes with that welcomed word. We know as Christians that not all words are easy yet when we welcome truth, we truly welcome God.

I believe a righteous person's reward is a lot more straightforward. A righteous person is welcomed by God, in peace, forgiveness and fellowship. When we truly welcome Christ's message we receive the righteousness that accompanies Christ's presence and ministry.

So think of the last time you truly felt welcomed.

Think of the peace it brought you. Think of the excitement it brought you. Think of the sense of belonging that it brought you.

The main underlying theme of these verses is welcome and how connected a welcome is to the whole community. And even though this welcome sits next to the verses that predict our potential rejection by even family members it is reminding us that our connection to God is so very close that where we are welcomed God will feel welcomed.

It is true that sometimes our beliefs will cause tension between people, but this is the same of any deep held beliefs we hold, religious, political or otherwise. The important reminder of this text is to look forward to the welcomes we receive through which we discover and appreciate an even deeper sense of fellowship with God and neighbour.

### Offering

O God, we humbly ask that you would receive these gifts just as you have received us, in unconditional welcome and redeeming acceptance. Help us to use these gifts to welcome others and extend the welcome of grace we have ourselves, received.

### Prayers of the People

God of our Salvation,

We rejoice, for in you there is welcome and unity, you bring together all through the Gospel's welcome of forgiveness. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for we belong to the household of God, through Christ Jesus.

O Lord of all good purposes, grant that your mission to the world through Christ Jesus our Lord may be faithfully accomplished through the church. Inspire your servants to discover new doorways by which different cultures and faiths may exchange welcomes. Help us to share the precious treasure of our faith which sustains us through difficult seasons and gives us consolation in all of life.

We give you thanks for Canada and its provinces and territories and all who, through sacrifices, serve and protect the public.

We give you thanks for this summer season where many can be outside and to enjoy the beauty of your creation. We pray that public places will be open and welcoming for those who are vulnerable to illness.

We give thanks you call us your children and entrusting with the care of all things under heaven.

Even as we give our thanks, we also ask for your help.

Help us feel the many textures of your global tapestry. Unstop our ears that we may hear the calls for help all around us: from the wilderness, from the oceans, from within the cities and in all communities. Help us to open new avenues of care and healing for all.

O God of the heavens and earth are yours and full of your glory, help us to be messengers of peace and justice that we may be joyfully welcomed into many places.

O God our helper, help us to labour well, that we may in partnership with many, be welcomed into new opportunities to overcome conflict and by your grace collectively serve the world for the good of all.

We pray for those who are sick, bring wholeness.

We pray for those who are dying, be present in their consolation.

We pray for those who need financial help, make your church generous.

We pray for those who are lonely, give us warm and passionate spirits.

We pray for those who are suffering, may we, your church, share in this burden.

O Triune God, we add to these prayers the words Jesus taught us to pray together, as we pray:

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,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: #640 Softly and Tenderly (3 verses).

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,  
calling for you and for me:  
patiently Jesus is waiting and watching,  
watching for you and for me.

***Refrain:***

"Come home, (come home,) come home, (come home),  
ye who are weary, come home";  
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,  
calling, O sinner, "Come home!"

2. Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,  
pleading for you and for me?  
Why should we linger and heed not his mercies,  
mercies for you and for me? **(Refrain)**

3. Oh for the wonderful love he has promised,  
promised for you and for me;  
though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,  
pardon for you and for me.

**(Refrain)**

### Commissioning & Benediction

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21 but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

May God alone, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and God will do it. **Amen.**