

## **“Whoever Welcomes & Gives a Cup of Cool Water”**

Pentecost 4, Matthew 10:40-42

June 28, 2020; 9:00 am

Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO

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Matthew 10:40-42 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>40</sup> “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> 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.”

### **GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL**

There ya have it!

How does one love God and neighbor and self, and serve all of the above in faithfulness? By welcoming everyone who welcomes everyone else, in the name of the One who sent Jesus and sends us, and offering a “cup of cool water” in every way possible, to everyone we meet.

Gospel 101.

### **HOLY HOSPITALITY**

Hospitality 101. Holy Hospitality. That is what Jesus wants us to offer, and what life in the Kingdom is all about.

Barbara Brown Taylor reminds us and challenges us (through Jesus’ words in this passage), that we are not "consumers" but "providers of God's love." purpose of seeking and finding a place of safety and reassurance. The Church is not a building; it's also not "a hideout!"

*Not: "the place where those of us who know the secret password can gather to celebrate our good fortune; simply chosen people who have been given more good gifts than we can open at one sitting: healing, forgiveness, restoration, resurrection."*

It’s actually a place, a community—as much as we would not like to admit it!—to be disturbed in our comfortableness.

*"the Holy Spirit comes knocking at the door, disturbing our members-only meeting and reminding us that it is time to share."*

Taylor also suggests a couple ways to “reconsider ourselves” in our Christian walk. We are "agents," not "assistants," of God, traveling light and sharing what we have received.

And, part of our reconsidering is that moving from assistant to agent in an active and intentional way. We're too easily tempted to think (from our comfort zone):

*"Sure, it is the **gospel**, but there is no reason to get all **upset** about it. Being a good Christian is not all that different from being a good **citizen**, after all. You just stay out of **trouble** and be **nice** to your neighbors and say your **prayers** at night. There is absolutely no reason to go make a **spectacle** of yourself..."*  
(Sermon "Family Values,")

Henri J.M. Nouwen, a spiritual sage of our generation, now passed, says this "holy hospitality"

"....means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines."

### **EVEN & JUST**

In that passage that Merilee read from Matthew 10, there's a little word. A little word, only 4 letters long, in a little 3-verse passage, that doesn't stand out much, but packs a mighty punch if we pay attention.

That word, is "Even."

vs. 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."

David Lose encourages us to take a serious look at that little word. It's a lot like "just"—as in "it takes *just* a little"—but intensified. Which is exactly how Jesus uses it here.

### **CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP:**

Why take this word to heart?

Because that little word in that little passage tells us far more than just what it TAKES to be a disciple, but describes what it actually MEANS to be a disciple. The both/ands, as I like to call them: Empowerment, *and* struggle. Welcome *and* rejection. Division, persecution *and* the call to faithfulness. All of these are part and parcel of being a disciple of Jesus, then and now.

"Discipleship, says Lose, "doesn't have to be heroic. *Even* offering a cold cup of water counts. Once you realize this, we can quickly add to the list. Just smiling at the strangers we see instead of ignoring them. Even offering a shoulder to cry on to one who grieves. Just welcoming the new kid in school or at camp. Even writing a letter to a congressperson about an important issue."

"Just showing up for a march to protest the abuse of power. Even thanking a law enforcement officer or someone in the military for their service. Just offering to buy some school supplies for a teacher whose budget has been cut. Even helping out at a food kitchen. Just being there when your kids need you. Even volunteering to help with the Habitat house

build. Just speaking up for someone being discriminated against.”

I would add for us, more items for the list:  
Just supporting one of the many social service agencies like the Mission and the Backpack Program.  
Even taking Mother’s Day flowers or Father’s Day goodies.

Just offering to take someone to a doctor appointment.  
Even calling a handful of people living alone and checking in on them during COVID.  
Just serving on a Team to consider carefully and safely re-opening the church building.  
Even digging a little deeper to support our church’s ongoing ministry and community groups helping those in special need in unique times and “normal times.”  
(Whatever that is!)

There is no small gesture. Even a cool cup of water given—and all that symbolizes.

*“Even our smallest acts of kindness and generosity reverberate with cosmic significance.* Jesus tells us in this passage, that you never know the difference your faithful actions may have. Each and every act of kindness and generosity has an impact well beyond what you’d imagined. And it will not be forgotten by our loving God.” (Lose)

We have the opportunity every day, in every small act wherever we are, to be disciples and change the world. Everyday faith. Everyday disciples.

### **A Modern-Day Disciple**

Here’s a story about a modern-day, every day disciple. He is my grand-nephew, with only 7 years of life experience under him, but there’s incredible wisdom and empathy for the ages and much to be learned from one so young!

One day he asked about what he was seeing on the news. What were those protesters about?

His mom told him a little about how people were being treated badly due to the color of their skin, and now we’re calling out for fair treatment and justice.

After that, they watched the Sesame Street Town Hall on racism and went outside to play. Went about his day and said nothing more about what was spinning around in his head.

Later, he came in, and had written with a sharpie on his hands: Love Matters.

He got it! He’d been thinking all day about everything he’d seen and heard and wanted to do something; take action; stand alongside those being treated unfairly. Proud mama and aunty Becky shared the story, posted a picture and shed a few tears.

I asked Mom if we could share the story in a sermon today and she said they would love that—as they are very proud of this thoughtful, loving son.



From Mom: The catalyst was having seen the news about the protests, so we watched the Sesame Street Town Hall, which was all about how to explain racism and the current atmosphere to kids. We watched the whole thing together then he kind of went about his day, until he came out to the park with this on his hands.

He's very observant and we are one of maybe two white families on our street of 18 homes, so he immediately made the connection between the Sesame Street conversation and our everyday life.

That's one thing I love about our neighborhood—all these lessons that many white families in the US have to just talk about hypothetically are real-life people to our kids (friends, neighbors, teachers).

I thought what was most interesting about the Sesame Street thing is that they approached it through the lens of fairness, which is something kids totally get!

Like most kids, he has noticed physical differences in kids since he was little, so the current climate was a perfect time to talk to him with more historical context. We live in a neighborhood where he's one of only a few white kids in his class and on our street, so it helped make the Sesame Street topic more immediately relevant.

It's less abstract for us than kids in middle-America who have never seen somebody who doesn't look like them! At the same time, he is a highly empathetic kiddo, so it made him upset to think about his friends being treated unfairly. I think that's the true catalyst for his Love Matters message.

May it be so for all of us, of any age. Just a kind word or deed. Even a cool cup of water for hearts thirsty for love and care. Amen.

