

## ***FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST***

***Matthew 10:40-42***

A successful man, known for his generosity, was driving his new car through a poor part of town. A boy tried to flag him down.

The man didn't want to get involved, so he pretended he didn't see the child. As he slowed for a red traffic light, he heard a loud crash. Someone had thrown a brick at his car, denting the trunk.

The man stopped, jumped out of his car and grabbed the boy that threw the brick. "You juvenile delinquent!" he yelled.

"You'll pay for this, or go to jail!" "I'm sorry, mister," the boy cried. "My mom's lying on the floor in our apartment. I think she's dying. Our phone's been cut off and I've been trying for ten minutes to get someone to stop. I didn't know what else to do! Take me to jail, but please, call a doctor for my mom first."

The man was filled with shame. "I'm a doctor," he said and asked, "Where is she?" The boy took him to his mother and the doctor administered CPR and called an ambulance. "Will she live?" the boy sobbed. "Yes, son, she will," the doctor said.

"Then it's worth going to jail. I'm sorry I ruined your car. You can take me in now." "You're not going anywhere," the doctor said. "It was my fault you had to throw a brick to get my attention."

The doctor made sure the boy was taken care of, and as he drove home he resolved not to fix the dent. He would keep it as a reminder that not everyone in need has a brick to throw.

*(Pause)*

Now, let us turn our attention to our gospel reading for today.

What Jesus is telling us to do in this reading from Matthew is similar to the famous Golden Rule, “Do unto others”. A cup of cold water is a gift that everyone can give because it is the smallest of gifts. This gift is precious to the person receiving it, because sometimes it is the gift of life. There is a tradition in some warmer countries that when you enter a home, you are offered a glass of cold water as a sign of welcome or hospitality. Also, water was a sign of life.

We should do this for everyone we meet, because the recipient could be an angel, a prophet, or even Jesus Himself in disguise.

It can mean providing material support such as food, clothing, or shelter. It can also mean accepting the truth of our guest’s message. We must be prepared to pay the costs, be they financial or personal, even if they may put us in a so-called touchy situation.

Our personal space and privacy will most likely be invaded. We could even be caught in the opposition or persecution that the prophet would face. Jesus even said that hatred and persecution would get so bad that anyone who offered his servant one a mere cup of cold water, would receive a divine or heavenly reward. Those who do God’s work can be assured that those who help them will be rewarded. Doing God’s work includes healing, and that includes those who are in the health care profession, such as the staff at our local clinics and at our hospitals. They often leave personal comforts, such as family time, to care for the needs of others. When they care for their patients and Long Term Care residents, they show the love Jesus showed us when he lived among us. When we serve others, we serve Jesus, just

like Jesus and his disciples served others.

By reason of the simple fact that we are Christians, we are to show compassion for others by caring for the sick, visiting shut-ins, encouraging the downhearted, comforting those who mourn, and so on. This is contrary to our “me-first”, selfish culture. It will loosen our hold on our possessions, our lives, and so on, but these small beginnings are the seed of a different kind of happiness, the happiness that only the Christian life provides.

*(Pause)*

Even small gifts can make a big difference. It is a reminder of the old adage that “big things come in small packages”. To offer hospitality, care and compassion, we simply have to bring who we are, what we have, where we are. It requires attention to the person receiving the hospitality. We have to receive the person first, before they can receive the benefit of the gift we offer.

To Jesus, hospitality meant acceptance, even those who, in his society, and in his time, were deemed to be unacceptable. This is why he put his arms around lepers, ate with tax collectors and sinners, forgave adulterers, and broke the Jewish Sabbath laws.

Hospitality was not only important to Jesus, it was at the very heart of being God, and it didn't make any difference to him where such hospitality took place, or to whom, or on what day. When it comes to hospitality, we take turns being the one who offers it, and the one who receives it. Sometimes, when the kindness comes our way, we are the ones who simply need the friendly smile, or the hug, or cup of water. Other times, we are the ones providing the friendly smile, or the hug, or cup of water to someone in need.

The “little ones” Jesus refers to in our gospel reading for today,

are frequently the scapegoats, the marginalized, or the victims in our society. These are the ones who we have pushed to the fringes of society, like the boy in the opening story, and let's be totally honest by saying that many, even Christians, would prefer that they stay there. They are the powerless, the weak, the hurting, the abused, the abandoned, the elderly, or even children, and they are often the easiest targets for our wrath. They need the help and compassion that Jesus offers through us. When we help them, we have the power to bring others unto a relationship with God, the power to show others God's love, by showing them our love, the power to bring them face to face with God, by bringing them face to face with us.

There is a blessing that ends with "may you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet, and may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you".

**AMEN.**