

Proper 8

(Sunday 26 June to 2 July inclusive)

Principal Service readings

Jeremiah 28.5-9	Jeremiah's dispute with Hananiah
Psalms 89.1-4, 15-18 [or 8-18]	Praise for God's loving-kindness
Romans 6.12-23	Living under grace not law, freed from sin
Matthew 10.40-42	Jesus says those who welcome his disciples will be rewarded

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The reward of discipleship

[Jesus said,] ⁴¹Whoever 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; ⁴²and 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.'

Matthew 10.40-42 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Today's reading is part of the third part of Matthew's mission discourse (10.26-42). It has rough parallels in Mark 9.41 and Luke 10.16, but has been shaped by Matthew. Some commentators have claimed that in this third section Matthew has lost sight of the mission context and has added sayings of Jesus together without much purpose. However, if we assume that these sayings are said in a mission context then we can see that they deal with various encounters on mission, particularly the rewards of missionaries and those who are hospitable towards them.

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

The basic theological principle is stated in 10.40: 'Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me'.

We can note that Matthew uses a number of titles for disciples here: apostle, prophet, righteous one, 'little ones'. Do these titles indicate roles within the Matthean community? The 'little ones' may have been an overall description of the Matthean community or it may have referred to simple but pious people within it (see 18.6, 10, 14).

One of the odd things about this mission discourse in Matthew is that, after this long speech (beginning in 10.26), nothing more is mentioned about the mission itself or its outcome. The narrative section beginning in chapter 11 tells us: 'When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples he moved on from there to teach and proclaim the message in their towns' (11.1). but after that we hear nothing about how it was conducted. The disciples suddenly appear again in Matthew 12.1 in the Galilean grain fields. Again, some commentators think that Matthew has lost sight of his context. Others, however, think that Matthew has deliberately left open the mission of the disciples to Israel, so suggesting that the mission itself continues, and that the instructions given to the twelve apostles have meaning for all those who take up the missionary task.

Quotations

1

At times our media culture and some intellectual circles convey a marked scepticism with regard to the Church's message, along with a certain cynicism. As a consequence, many pastoral workers, although they pray, develop a sort of inferiority complex which leads them to relativize or conceal their Christian identity and convictions. This produces a vicious circle. They end up being unhappy with who they are and what they do; they do not identify with their mission of evangelization and this weakens their commitment. They end up stifling the joy of mission with a kind of obsession about being like everyone else and possessing what everyone else possesses. Their work of evangelization thus becomes forced, and they devote little energy and very limited time to it.

Evangelii Gaudium [Joy of the gospel] / Pope Francis. 24 November 2013. §79

2

I believe that Jesus would have given His life for just one person. Jesus emptied Himself, He humbled Himself and He so yielded Himself to His Father's love that He had no ambition of His own. He was not looking to build an empire, He did not want praise or adulation or to impress people with who or how many followed Him. He stopped over and over again for just one person, for just one life.

Learning to love: passion, compassion and the essence of the gospel / Heidi Baker. 2012

Related topics

For further study:

Paschal mystery; discipleship; evangelisation; kingdom of God; social teaching of the church; mystery of the church

Closing Prayer

You promise your people, O God,
the reward and welcome
of those who speak in your name.
Endow us with the Holy Spirit of truth,
and let our speech and way of life
be consistent with our calling as prophets.
Enable us not only to announce your peace
but constantly to pursue it in all our actions.
We make this prayer through Jesus Christ.

Celebrating the Christian Year, Proper 8, Year A²

CPL • LBC Year A Proper 08.odt • 2020-06-22

² *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*