

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 26th June 2005

Rob Lamerton

Readings:

Genesis 22: 1-14

Psalm 13 page 233

Romans 6: 12-23

Matthew 10: 40-42;

What goes around comes around!

A couple of weeks ago, the Queen's Birthday Honours were announced.

When I see the great long list of those honoured, I think about the many wives and husbands and partners who helped feed and cared for the recipients of the awards —
The friends and family, workmates and colleagues who took messages, answered phones, encouraged, made coffee and advised!

The gospel today tells me that Jesus also believed in the value of any who would reward, encourage and provide for those he sent — in assisting his disciples, Jesus recognizes that they are enabling his mission and his message.

After delivering the challenges of the mission of the twelve, Jesus concludes:

"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 a 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."

When Jesus said this, he was using a way of speaking familiar to the Jews.

The Jews of Jesus' day always believed that to receive a person's representative or messenger was to receive the person!

Just as diplomatic representatives are the agents of governments and national leaders.

To pay respect to an ambassador was to pay respect to the king who sent him/her.

Similarly, to welcome with love the messenger of a friend was the same as welcoming the friend.

To honour a person's representative was to honour the person!

This was especially true for wise men and women and those who brought and taught God's truth. William Barclay tells us that the rabbis said "He who shows hospitality to the wise is as if he brought the first fruits of his produce to God."

"He who greets the learned is as if he greeted God."

To receive a true servant of God is to receive God!

The links can be made out like this:

There is God who begins the whole process

There is Jesus who brought the message to humanity

Then there is the human messenger

the prophet who speaks

the righteous person (godly) who is an example

the disciple who learns and who in turn passes on the good news they have received

Finally there is the believer who welcomes God's messenger and message and so does not lose the reward.

It seems that even those who unwittingly help will gain a reward.

Does it mean that to **actively** reject the messenger or disciple means one can lose the life God gives?

The great beauty of this passage — these words of Jesus — is the stress on simple things! The Lord and the Church will always need its great orators, its examples of saintliness, its teachers etc. But the Lord and the Church will also need those in whose homes there is hospitality, those whose hands create a home, and those in whose hearts there is the caring of Christian love. (Barclay)

When Jesus speaks of "little ones" he is most likely referring to the disciples. (It seems rabbis may have used this title "little ones" when referring to their disciples.)

So for Jesus even those who assist in the most mundane and simple way are assisting the spread of his teaching and participating in his Mission.

On that note, are we aware of being on a mission! Not a mission with meetings and speakers **BUT** having a mission going somewhere — having a purpose for God?

This passage is at the end of Jesus calling the twelve disciples and naming them **APOSTLES**.

Disciple: — learner or apprentice

Apostle: (Greek *apostelo*; Latin *missio*) one who is sent.

So the twelve apostles are on a mission which is the beginning of the mission of the Church.

Our vision/mission "To be a caring Christian Community which embraces and honours difference and offers a place to celebrate and grow spiritually within the Anglican tradition."

Two concrete aspects of mission:

Children's ministry

Evening Worship

We may not recognize it but we each have a part to play in the mission.
Not necessarily knocking on doors but playing our part in the common goals and purposes — we are part of a Church which is apostolic — sent!
We have a purpose for God in this place.

So all of you who hand out books, read, lead worship, make tea, visit hospitals, wash linen, clean churches, etc are part of God's mission as well as those who teach and preach and counsel and guide. Let us be clear that we are all disciples. (learners) but we are part of a people who are apostolic — sent into the world of God's mission.