

I wonder, what's the best welcome you've ever received? When have you experienced people going out of their way to support you in your service to God. When have you taken the opportunity to support others when they were in real need? - Have a think.

We're continuing this week where we left off last week. The disciples have been watching Jesus showing his miracles, his love, his power and his wisdom, and now in Matthew 10 he's saying to his disciples there are people who need to hear the message and be changed. So that's a job for you.

When we think about the letters L, M. C. we know they stand for Leatherhead Methodist Church, but they also stand, I trust, for love, mission and care; and we know how interlinked those things are.

You **cannot** care without loving, as otherwise it comes across as mere duty.

You **cannot** love without doing mission, as otherwise people might be so taken by the human love that they miss out on the divine source of that love

You **cannot** do mission without caring, as that could show insincerity

All attempts to do one without the other two will present a lopsided view of God

God needs us to love people and he needs us to care for people but what he's talking about is that he needs us to take his message to people, so it's focussing on the mission.

That message of that mission is for us to tell people that they can also take hold of the great salvation that Jesus won for them by dying on the cross and being raised to life.

If you listened to/read our service last week, then you'll have heard Jan talking about the agony and the ecstasy. For Jesus, the agony of the cross for the sake of the ecstasy beyond it, and for us sometimes the agony of giving that which we want to hold onto but cannot keep in order to gain that which we can never lose,

It's such a fascinating chapter, even in the context of a God that deeply loves every single person on this planet,, and asks us to be instruments of blessing to show love and care to people, the passage tells us to be wise about how we deal with people. Jesus even says that if, when we are truly representing Jesus rather than ourselves, and still someone doesn't welcome us, then we should shake the dust off our feet.

The phrase “shaking the dust off your feet” then was a cultural sign to say “I think you are making the wrong choice”. With God’s help, we need to find our own ways of expressing that in our culture where appropriate.

We finished last week with Jesus saying Those who try to gain their own life, will lose it, but those who lose their life for my sake will find it. The passage talks about tensions that may arise with those closest to us due to matters of faith. The current restrictions can also be a cause of tension in homes. If you need to talk and pray that or anything else through with someone, please do get in touch with us through someone you know or through our website. Just go to the homepage and click ‘prayer request.’ We’d love to be able to help.

This is where we come to today’s 3 verses. Jesus closes his sermon by expressing to his followers how much he loves them

He’s saying that even if people turn against you disciples, some will help you and they will be rewarded. Let’s listen to God’s word together

Read Matthew 10 v 40-42.

Although in this particular verse the Holy Spirit isn’t mentioned, the message is about the closeness between Father God and Jesus himself, and those who go in his name.

Jesus says, he or she who receives you (meaning his disciples spreading the message), receives me (Jesus), and he or she who receives me (Jesus) receives the one who sent me (Father God). So the message itself is Jesus, and that Jesus followers are the ones to take that message out to people.

Then there’s another category mentioned here, which is people within his church who receive and bless those who are taking the message, and the other two verses are angled towards that group of people and we’ll come to that group of people in a minute but let’s carry on.

He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward. There’s a couple of good examples of that in the Old Testament. Do have a read of these if you get the chance, they’re in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4

- In the first story, the widow of Zarephath, who expected to die of hunger, honoured Elijah’s request for a morsel of bread after Elijah invoked God’s promise that her food supply would not fail. As a consequence, her “jar of meal shall not empty, neither shall the jar of oil fail”. Later, when her son died, Elijah restored him to life (1 Kings 17:8-24).
- In the second story, a Shunammite couple provided food and a comfortable room for Elisha because he was a holy man of God. As a reward, Elisha promised the

childless couple a child. The child was born and grew up, but then died—and Elisha restored him to life (2 Kings 4:8-37).

But prophets aren't just old people from biblical times as they are depicted in those pictures, they can also be you and me today

Prophecy just means speaking God's word, and even if you don't see yourself now as someone who speaks God's word there's passages in the Bible that encourage you to directly ask God for that ability.

But whether you have done that and have that gift, or whether you are someone who finds a way to bless or provide for someone who does, Jesus is saying from a reward point of view, it's all the same to him. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward.

Verse 41 carries on and talks about righteous people, and I'd say a good definition for those righteous people is this. Righteous people are those who, motivated by their love for Jesus, seek to do what is right, and the result of that is that good comes to them and also to those that they interact with.

And the message of our passage again is that the reward for one of us who receives a righteous person is similar. Anyone who receives a righteous person because they are a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. So if you see people driven by a desire to do what God shows them is right, then, do what you can to help them. There's a tangible sense here that you'll get the same reward.

Then in the last verse it talks about little ones. If anyone gives even a cup of water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you, they will certainly not lose their reward. And I think this is talking about those little ones in the faith, those people who might not be ready to use those prophetic abilities or spread the message of love to those outside the church. That could mean they are little in body, or little in understanding of God's love for them, or both. Either way, those people are significant and hugely valuable in God's opinion and he loves them just as much as the best super spreader of God's good news, or the most faithful servant in the background that enables the church to function.

I don't know about you, but as I read the passage I picked up that there still could be an inference that different people get different rewards,

I wonder, does it mean that a prophet's reward is different to a righteous person reward, or that a "little person" is any less worthy than either of those for a reward? If we're talking about rewards in heaven, I'm not sure about that - the salvation that we all share is a gift rather than something earned. On the flip side of that though, if you are a follower of God, I reckon there are massive rewards to be gained on earth,

including rewards when we interact with God through prayer and study, rewards to be gained in understanding and sharing his message and rewards to be gained in any type of true and sincere involvement in His work. We may be the type of person that feels those rewards keenly, or we may be the type of person that feels those much less, but the rewards are still there.

In the starting sequence of the virtual service, we saw the message “Welcome to LMC”, but actually the message here is the opposite to that, “LMC to welcome”. LMC to welcome all because that is the gospel message, but from this passage also LMC to specifically welcome those that serve God

When it comes to the time of the treasurer paying the bills, we sometimes give the message out. Please give your support to LMC, but the message of this passage is backwards again, LMC to support those that are sharing his love, his care and his mission with others wherever they are.

A cup of cold water is the smallest of gifts—a gift that almost anyone can give. Even if we can't invite anyone into our homes, there are still things that we can do. If you're joining us for our discussion groups after church, feel free to discuss that with each other. If you're not from our church and would like to join one of our groups, again, please do get in touch via the website or via one of your contacts. As I finish, let me give you a few pointers:

- On an emotional level, I know there are some people who continue to take the time to chat with others. Every one of us needs support at some time, so thank you to those that do that faithfully and in humility
- On a financial level, there are organisations that are still seeking to do good, but which need our support. Is there anything that we have spare that we can and should give to help?
- On a spiritual level, I know I've been in real need of help in recent times, and praise God that different people in their own ways have really helped me through that.

What is it going to take for God's church to grow, what is it going to take for his message to be made clear, and what is it going to take for his love to be shown?