

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

JULY 2, 2023



WELCOME

our radical orthodoxy

by Drew Downs

Of the most ancient of rules our ancestors had, welcoming the stranger may be the most essential.

It was so normative that people always expected to be able to show up and be hosted. Much as in the south, where you have to have some sweet tea ready, just in case.

The principal, while so distant from us now, was also so indelible, that none dare mess

around with it. You didn't choose to not entertain today or ever. Which also made it, perhaps, the most socially-enforced rule of them all.

That we struggle with welcome is no surprise. But it also isn't just about opening doors to strangers. It's about hospitality, rejoicing in the company of others, slowing down to listen to their story, and making this more important than productivity. Which is deeply radical.

ORDINARY TIME

2023

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Apostleship

When Jesus gives his followers *his* power and *his* mission in the world, he sends them out to make a difference. A specific kind of difference. To offer God's dream of beloved community; here as in heaven. That we are their successors, given that same opportunity is something we *kind* of understand.

The last few weeks we've heard this instruction. And we've also heard the warning. That it won't be easy. Some will listen and welcome. Others will not. Some of our families will come with us. Some will not.

And some of us know this way a bit better than others. Because we've always had to make our own way.

This is the part of apostleship that we know intellectually better than we do in our spiritual bones. Unless, of course, we have been persecuted, ostracized, or shunned from church.

This summer, as we explore apostleship's nuances for us now, consider this fascinating idea that Jesus offers us. It feels a bit like a paradox. We must be able to walk our own way. And we always walk with others.

Because we must be able to stand on our own but Jesus sends us out with others, so we're never alone. For we all might say, "my work and our work are the same."

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

July 2, 2023

Collect

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 10:40-42

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 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 the righteous; 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."

PENTECOST

Reflection

Jesus is talking to his disciples here. This reading, at the end of chapter 10 in Matthew is the conclusion of one long sending speech. He's been healing people from all over. And then turns to his closest followers and dubbed them *Apostles*, telling them to go out into the world and proclaim the Good News and heal people like he does.

Of course, Jesus seems to get real with them, too. He says that it's going to be tough out there. Some people will listen. And if they do, hang with them a time. But if they don't, then get out of there.

The language Jesus uses in Matthew is pretty harsh and challenging. Some might say that Jesus is lowering the bar for their expectations. Or that he's being "realistic". But that doesn't seem entirely it.

I think Jesus is reminding them that some people really don't get what Jesus is about. That the offer of peace is something that we all desire. But some of those who desire peace really love war, too. And they want peace to look a lot like having their way.

Jesus ends the speech talking about welcome. That welcome means something more than being nice. It isn't duty or an expectation. It is a gift. To welcome like Christ welcomes. Like God welcomes. Sharing love without payment or responsibility. Genuine love of neighbor or stranger.

Like the gift we receive of being welcomed. Loved. Generously.

After all the bold talk of wolves and danger out there in the world Jesus is sending these apostles, he assures them that welcoming others, the most ancient law of love, is our assurance. Of God's love and welcome. Now and in the time to come.

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