

## Pentecost 3, 29/6/2104, Holy Trinity

## Matthew 10:40-42

This morning's Gospel reading continues with Jesus' requirements for real discipleship, or as the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it in a book title "The Cost of Discipleship".

To-day's area of discipleship deals with the missionary aspect of discipleship in the ministry of hospitality.

Hospitality can be difficult to define for some people.

I read recently that there are times when hospitality may be defined as: "The ability to make your guests feel at home when you wish they were."

When you offer hospitality under difficult circumstances you would expect some kind of decent reward.

When we look at this morning's Gospel, however, it seems as though it is the person on the receiving end who receives the reward.

For example, "Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward"

This passage comes at the end of Jesus' missionary discourse to the disciples.

Jesus had been talking about what the disciples should do and the difficulties they would face, what others would do to them because of their witness to Christ.

In view of the hardship to be endured I can quite understand the disciple crying out something like "What's in it for me?"

I can also understand it to-day in places of persecution of Christians: places like Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan and some countries in Africa with people saying "I am standing up for my faith in spite of the persecution I suffer and I even try to take a missionary stance so what's in it for me?"

On the other hand, it seems from the reading that if a person is a prophet, there is a prophet's reward, or if the person is righteous (that

maybe a technical term in Matthew for a person in leadership) there is a righteous person's reward.

But you say that you are neither a prophet, nor a leader in the church, but a housewife, an office worker or a single parent and so what about me?

This is where we find that the first verse of this Gospel reading has meaning.

It is a deeply theological statement.

Jesus says, "The person receiving (or welcoming) you receives me and the person receiving me receives the one who sent me."

Prophets, apostles, bishops are not the only "sent" people.

We are a 'sent' people by Jesus who in turn is sent by God.

That is, the person who receives or welcomes you receives Jesus and the one who receives Jesus receives God.

This is reward enough to know the part we have played in making God, Father, Son, (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit known to people.

If we go one step further and take the 'little ones' to mean the members of the community to whom Matthew is writing we can see that caring within the community is also a ministry.

This is not easy: people have their own ideas, own personalities, backgrounds, education and so on.

Yet, we are to minister to such people with hospitality in such a way that they are shown Jesus through us and through Jesus they are shown God and God's great love for all people.

Examine yourself this week as to how this is going with you and what reward you are looking for: is it primarily for a place in eternal life or is it because you are sharing God's love and hospitality with others whoever they may be?

