



*Both Host and Guest*  
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost A 6/28/20  
The Rev. Nick Morris-Kliment  
Christ Church, Needham, MA

***Oh Lord, take our minds and think through them, take our mouths and speak through them, take our hearts and set them on fire. Amen.***

Today, we finish up the so-called Missionary Discourse in the Gospel of Matthew—three weeks of Jesus preparing his disciples to take the message of the Kingdom of Heaven out into their neighborhoods and beyond.

If you recall, it has been pretty tough stuff. The last two weeks we heard about persecution and hardship, family breakups, swords, and the like. Actually, there are parts that we didn't read this year, because the lectionary marks some parts as optional; like the parts where Jesus warns his disciples that they might be flogged or dragged before the authorities. Like the hair-raising parts about what will happen to communities that choose not to listen. And parts listing all the things that his disciples should not take with them on their journey.

Today we finish up this section and it's a bit lighter. It's about welcome, about hospitality, and a cool cup of water, especially delicious and life-giving in the desert.

When I think about the times I've been sent out consciously as a missionary and lay them beside the texts we've had from Matthew this month, a lot of it makes me feel like maybe I've missed something. For example, while Jesus says to his disciples, "Don't bring any money, or a suitcase, or extra clothes, or a staff, or even shoes," I've had long lists of things to make sure that I bring, like sunscreen, anti-malaria drugs, sturdy shoes, a hat, definitely money and money belt, and lots of t-shirts. And a passport.

When Jesus sends his disciples out, he sends them into places where they are not in control; where they are dependent upon the people to whom they are sent to meet basic needs.

That tends not to be the case in the kind of service work that we modern Christians in the affluent West are involved in. We are the ones with the resources that are being brought to bear in communities that need them. And it's hard for us not to be completely and totally in charge.

And so in a sense, we really have to work to see ourselves in this narrative, to imagine the ways in which we are dependent on another to catch glimpses of the Kingdom of God, in which our own power and resources do not hold the keys to the kingdom.

The rewards come to the ones who recognize their dependence.

When I think of those places where I have responded to the invitation to serve with those who, according to the world's standards have nothing, inevitably I am the one that has been blessed.



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I think of the times serving with the crew here at Christ Church at Monday MANNA lunch at our Cathedral where I have been encouraged by something one of the guests has said; or seen peacemaking happen; or beheld healing word offered—I have seen a brief vision of the Kingdom of Heaven—housed and unhoused, rich and poor, male and female, gay and straight, black and white, unbelievers and believers, all breaking bread together, meeting one another’s hungers and thirsts. Though I have been part of our team that brings food to the Cathedral, the guests bring themselves and their complex and beautiful and heartbreaking and inspiring and vulnerable selves. We are all both guest and host. I think taking part in the revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven is in good part the reward that Jesus speaks about today.

And I think of the trips that I have made to Haiti with Christ Church. Although we were bringing important resources to the community, it was also receiving the generous hospitality of the people of Lazile, it was the mutual dependence and hospitality that revealed the Kingdom of Heaven in our midst.

And when I think of the times that I have served with Christ Church’s Summer B-Safe Crew at the Epiphany School, again, we have brought important resources, but we were also guests of a community who welcomed us into the Gospel work of helping children and teens to thrive. Together, in mutual hospitality, we reveal the Kingdom of Heaven in our midst.

In the end, the missionary journey that Jesus prepares us for is not just in places that are special where we bring important resources but also places where we are guests who have blessings and gifts to receive as well. Together, in those places where we are both host and guest, in charge and dependent, giving and receiving, strong and vulnerable, the reward we receive is the presence of the Living and Risen Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Amen.