



“The One Who Receives You, Receives Me”
(Matthew 10:40-42)

Introduction: Before Christ sent His apostles out to teach and preach in the cities of the Jews, He told them many things to instruct them and to prepare them for what they were about to face. The first thing He told them was where they were to go and where not -- they were to go to the Jews and not to the Gentiles --, what they were to say -- they were to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand --, what they were to do -- they were to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons --, what they were to take -- just the clothes on their back and nothing more --, where they were to stay -- with those who were worthy to receive them --, and what would happen to those who did not receive them -- it would be more tolerable for those of Sodom and Gomorrah than for them. Secondly, He told them what the people were like He was sending them to -- they were like wolves, while they themselves would be like sheep --, and how these people would treat them -- they would be hated by all on account of Christ’s name. Thirdly, He told them why they would be hated -- if they called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of His household. Fourthly, He told them how they should respond to those who hated them -- they should not fear them, because their wicked deeds would be revealed and judged, because they could really only injure their bodies and not their souls, because God is much more to be feared than man since He can torment the soul after He destroys the body, and because their heavenly Father places more value on them than on many sparrows, none of which fall to the ground apart from His will. Lastly, He told them what this calling and service would cost them in relation to their families and in relation to themselves -- He said, “A man’s enemies will be the members of his own household” (v. 36), and unless they were willing to forsake them in their hearts and love Christ more, and unless they were willing to forsake even their own lives for His sake, they were not worthy of Him; they were not His disciples; He would not own them as His people on the day of His judgment. Except for certain elements here which apply strictly to the apostles, Jesus says that these things apply to us as well, as we have seen.

Now having said all of this, the only thing which Jesus hasn’t addressed yet is what will happen to those who do receive them. It is true that people will hate them and that things will be difficult for them because of this, but it is also true that the Lord has His people He will reach through them. What will those receive who receive them? And what will we receive if we receive those Christ has sent to minister to us today, and minister to their needs? The answer is that we will be rewarded. The Lord shows us clearly in our passage this morning that

When you show kindness to one of Christ’s brethren, because they are His brethren, you will receive a reward which is proportionate to their calling.

I. The first thing He tells us is that if we receive someone who is sent by Christ, we are receiving Christ Himself. He says, “He who receives you receives Me” (v. 40).

A. Christ clearly teaches here the principle of representation.

1. When our Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, did His work on earth end? No.
 - a. Our Lord Jesus is still at work through His Word and by His Spirit.
 - b. “The Acts of the Apostles,” would be better named, “The Continuing Acts of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ continues to do His work through His people. It is His Spirit who moves us and empowers us to do, not our own will, but Christ’s will. We are His hands, His feet, His voice. He accomplishes His will through us. You can see from this why it is so important that we obey Him, for if we don’t, then we thwart His plans.
2. But because the Lord Jesus is present in us to do His will, our Lord tells us, “He who receives you receives Me.” When we receive those He has sent, we are actually receiving Him.
 - a. Now this is true not only at the level of Christ’s apostles, but it is true at all levels. When we receive each other as brethren of Christ, we are receiving Christ Himself. Conversely, if we do not receive Christ’s brethren, we do not receive Him.
 - b. Consider what Jesus tells us in Matthew 25. On the day of judgment, when all shall stand before Christ to receive what they have done in their bodies, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10), “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My

Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it to Me.’ Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ Then they themselves also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (vv. 34-46).

- c. Consider what this says. The way we receive and treat each other, is the way that Christ considers us to receive and treat Him. This should cause us to stop and reflect on how we are doing this. It’s important to Christ if we neglect one another or treat each other harshly or ostracize and reject each other. If we do so, we are actually rejecting Christ. But if we love and care for one another and seek to meet each others needs, we are actually loving and caring for our Lord.
- B. But Jesus goes further. He says that when we receive His brethren we not only receive Him, but also His Father. He continues, “And he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (v. 40).
1. This shows us that when we receive someone who is sent by someone else, we are also receiving that person as well.
 2. Our Lord Jesus was sent into this world clothed with authority by His Father to do all that He needed to do to accomplish our redemption. And on the basis of that authority committed to Him by the Father, He sent His apostles out to preach. Therefore, when the people received His apostles, they were not only receiving Christ, but they were receiving God Himself.
 3. But of course, the opposite was again true. If they did not receive the apostles, they did not receive Christ or His Father.
 - a. Jesus said in John 15:23-24, “He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.”
 - b. And John writes, “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23).
 - c. This is to remind us of two things:
 - (i) First, when we receive those whom the Lord has sent to us, such as the officers of His church, we are receiving not only Christ, but also the One who sent Christ, God, the Father. And conversely, if we reject them, we are not rejecting man, but Christ and His Father. When Samuel grew old, the people no longer wanted a judge and prophet to rule over them, but a king like all the other nations. When Samuel brought their request to the Lord, the Lord replied, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day-- in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods-- so they are doing to you also” (1 Sam. 8:7-8). *That was a very serious indictment.*
 - (ii) But secondly it reminds us that if we do not love and receive each other, we are actually rejecting God Himself. John writes, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. . . . If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that

the one who loves God should love his brother also” (1 John 4:7-8, 20-21).

II. And this brings us to the second point: What if we receive those whom the Lord sends and those who belong to the Lord? If the rejection of them means to reject Christ and His Father, then what will be the result of our receiving them? The answer is that the Lord will reward us proportionately to their calling and the motive for which we help them, again because we are receiving not just them, but Christ and His Father.

A. Jesus says that if we receive a prophet, we will receive a prophet’s reward, if we receive a righteous man, we will receive a righteous man’s reward, and if we receive one of His little ones, then we shall not lose our reward.

1. There appears to be a hierarchy of rewards listed here depending on the place of the one received.
 - a. They are placed in a descending order of importance: first the prophet, then the righteous man, and then the little or humble ones. A prophet is certainly a righteous man, but one who is called by the Lord to speak forth and declare His Word to His people. The righteous man is one who has so matured in his Christian walk so that his life is characterized by righteousness, or right living according to God’s Law. But in his case, he has not been called to be God’s official spokesman. And the little ones here are probably those who are Christ’s, but who have not yet grown to the point of maturity, who are righteous in Christ, but have not yet advanced in spiritual growth.
 - b. Each of these will receive a reward from Christ on the day of His judgment proportionate to the fruit they have produced. Those who have been faithful with more will be rewarded more, and those who have been faithful with less will be rewarded less, but each will be rewarded according to his own abilities. Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower that of the seed which was sown in the good soil, some produced thirty, some sixty and some a hundred-fold (Matt. 13:23). He also tells us in the parable of the talents that one was given five talents, one was given two, and another one, each according to his own abilities. The one who had five talents gained five talents more, and the one who had two gained two more, and the one who had the one, gained nothing. On the day of reckoning, each received a reward according to their fruitfulness or their lack of fruitfulness (Matt. 25:14-30). And Paul tells us in Romans 2:6, Christ “will render to every man according to his deeds.” There will be greater rewards and lesser rewards on the day of judgment.
2. Now He tells us that if we receive such persons, whoever they may be, we will receive the same reward with them.
 - a. This tells us that the more we aid those who are being fruitful for Christ, the more fruit they will be able to bear, and consequently we will share in their reward. If our ministry to them enables them to do their work more effectively, then we will be rewarded accordingly.
 - b. But what is the reward that Christ is talking about? Since there is nothing material in heaven that we can have more or less of, and since the blessing of heaven is the spiritual blessing of love and joy we share in communion with Christ, that reward must be more or less of this blessedness. And if we have ever tasted of this blessedness on earth and know its value, we should certainly want to do all we can down here to store up all we can up there. All of it is certainly given to us by God’s grace, but we need to recognize that there is a distinction in the degree of reward among the saints. Let us strive then to do all we can to have a full reward by helping God’s people. Remember that when we help them, we are actually serving Christ and God.

B. But there is one more thing which must be true about our service, and it is this: When we minister to those who are God’s people, we must do it because they are God’s people.

1. Jesus says we must receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, or a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, or a little one in the name of a disciple.
2. This means that we receive them because of what they are, and not in spite of their connection with Christ. This certainly goes without saying. There is no guarantee of reward for simply helping someone to make yourself look or feel good. You must help them because they are servants of Christ, because they are His people, because you love them, because you love Him,

because you love the One who sent Him.

3. Let us then search our hearts to see if we are receiving, loving and ministering to His people, and doing so because we love Jesus and His Father. If we are, He will reward us according to who and how much we help. But if we are not, then not only can we expect no reward from Christ, but we should also question whether we really love Him at all.
4. But now as we look to the Lord's Table this morning, let us also not forget that there is another way in which we can receive Christ, and it is through the sacrament. Remember that when we receive the bread and wine, we are not only receiving the elements, but also Christ Himself, if we participate in faith. Let us prepare to receive Him then as we come to the Table, and may the Lord be pleased to richly bless us as we do. Amen.