

# "A Cup of Cold Water"

Matthew 10:40-42

Baxter Exum (#993)  
Four Lakes Church of Christ  
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## Introduction:

This morning I would like for us to study a short paragraph of only three verses at the end of a chapter where Jesus had just sent the twelve apostles out into the world on their own for the very first time. The chapter is **Matthew 10**, and in our pew Bibles, the passage is found starting on **page 1517**. If we look at the beginning of **Matthew 10**, we find that the apostles were given power over unclean spirits, they were given power to heal the sick, but from that point on, Jesus gets rather graphic with the warnings. Down in **verse 16**, for example, Jesus said, "**Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.**" In **verse 17**, Jesus warns that the apostles would be taken to court—they would also be scourged and beaten. He goes on to warn (in **verse 21**) that the gospel message will bring division into families. Brothers will turn against brothers, parents against their children, and children against their parents. In **verse 22**, Jesus warns that the apostles would be hated by all people. In **verse 23**, He says that they will be constantly on the run. And then (down in **verse 38**), Jesus goes on to give the ultimate warning as He says that, "**...he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**"

So, in many ways, **Matthew 10** is a rather depressing passage. However, right here at the end, Jesus turns it around, and Jesus goes on to say that some people will accept the message, and some will even go so far as to support those who preach it—sometimes at great personal risk, and sometimes with great personal sacrifice. Now obviously, the apostles are long gone; however, it seems that there is still something we can learn from the last three verses of **Matthew 10**. As Christians, all of us have been sent on a mission. Our mission is to pass along the good news of Jesus Christ, regardless of the consequences. And in a society that basically rejects the simplicity of the gospel, I do not know about all of you, but I can use some encouragement! This morning, then, I would like for us to look together at **Matthew 10:40-42**. **»PPT» Matthew 10:40-42**, the last words in a long chapter about the high cost of being a Christian. These are the words of Jesus...

<sup>40</sup> "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. <sup>41</sup> "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. <sup>42</sup> "And whoever in the name of

***a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."***

At the end of a chapter full of warnings, we are certainly relieved to find such an encouraging message! As we ask ourselves why the Holy Spirit saved these particular words for us to read nearly 2,000 years later, we come to our main idea for this morning, and that is...

**I. As those who accept the words of the apostles, WE ARE TO USE OUR RESOURCES TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF CHRIST IN OUR TIME. »PPT»**

Jesus refers to receiving someone who comes to us in the name of Christ. He speaks of receiving someone who comes to us as a prophet, or someone who comes to us as a righteous man. He speaks of receiving someone who comes to us in the name of a disciple. In other words, we are not talking here about helping people in the community. I will admit that when I first looked at this passage and when I first decided to preach on it, I was saying to myself, **"Yeah, we are going to go out in our community, and we are going to give cups of cold water to people. This passage is telling us to go out and serve."** But the more I looked into it, the more I realized—that is not what Jesus is talking about here. In this passage at least, Jesus is not talking about Christians going out into the community and serving people. That is a good thing for us to do, but that is not the main point of this passage. As we look at this passage very carefully, and when we realize it comes at the end of a chapter where Jesus is sending out the twelve apostles, we realize that the blessing is promised to those who support those who are sent. This passage is addressed to those who use their resources to help advance the cause of Christ.

And with this in mind, we find that when we receive and accept someone who working hard to spread the gospel, then we will share in the reward—it is the idea that when we help someone who is speaking on behalf of Jesus Christ, it is the same as supporting and accepting Jesus Christ Himself. Well, we might be tempted to think that this only applies, then, to those who decide to go into preaching full-time. But Jesus seems to cover it all. The progression in **verses 40-42** has been referred to as the **"gospel chain."** God the Father gives the message to Jesus, His only Son. We notice, then, in **verse 40** that Jesus is speaking directly to the apostles, **"He who receives you receives me,"** and so He is talking directly to the apostles there. But then Jesus opens it up to the prophets. A prophet is someone who speaks on God's behalf. It refers to someone in New Testament times who had a hotline to God. God would say, **"Tell them this,"** and the prophet would pass it on, word for word. But then Jesus opens it up even further—in **verse 41** He refers to those who receive a righteous man in the name of a righteous man. And in **verse 42** He opens it up to any disciple. The word **"disciple"** literally refers to someone who is a student, and so all of us here this morning who are Christians are disciples of Jesus Christ. We are students of the Lord. But it is not even limited to the average student, because we notice in **verse 42** that Jesus refers to **"these little ones."** As I see it, then, He is referring even to the most insignificant of the disciples. Even those who are not elders and deacons—He opens it up to absolutely every single

person. And so the idea is that if someone does some good deed to any of us because we are Christians, if someone receives us or supports any of us in our Christian mission, that person will not lose his reward. The smallest support or encouragement offered to any Christian as he carries out his Christian mission will be noticed and rewarded by the Lord.

In fact, the bond between Christ and every Christian is so strong that if someone does it for us they are doing it for the Lord. The same basic principle is taught in **Luke 10:16**. As Jesus sent out the seventy disciples, He said, ***"The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."*** This concept applies to every single Christian who passes along the good news—whether from the pulpit, over the lunch table at school, or in the break room at work. When any of us serve as ambassadors of Christ, the good or the bad that is done to us while serving in that role will be seen and remembered by the Lord.

For a practical example of this principle in action, we only need to look to the life of Rahab the prostitute in **Joshua 2**. We remember that Rahab welcomed the spies, and knowing the danger, she hid them on her roof and sent them out by another way. And we remember what happened. The best summary is found in the Hall of Faith in **Hebrews 11:31**, where the Bible says that, ***"By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."*** The lesson, then, is that we are to support those who are preaching and teaching—even the ***"little ones"***—and we are to receive and welcome them as they do their work. As Paul said in **Romans 10:14-15**, ***"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!'"*** The message is that we all work together—using our time and our resources to support and encourage all of those who preach the gospel.

**II. But as we move on, we need to realize that our support is incredibly important, EVEN IF IT IS SIMPLE AND PRACTICAL. ▶ PPT ▶**

We need to focus in on the example that Jesus gives in **verse 42**, because Jesus refers to those who provide, ***"...even a cup of cold water to drink."*** Providing water to a thirsty person has to be one of the most basic and practical acts of hospitality ever offered. Even when we go to a restaurant these days, one of the first things we are offered when we sit down is a cup of cold water. So we are not even talking here about providing dinner or a meal. We are not talking about providing a year's worth of salary. We are not talking about a massive sacrifice here—simply a cup of cold water. The act of giving water may be simple for the one who offers the water, but for the one who is on the receiving end, that cup of water can save a life. A single cup of water, although very simple, can mean so much to us.

But Jesus is very specific—it is not just a cup of water, it is a cup of COLD water. Other than the obvious, what is the difference between being offered a cup of room temperature water and a cup of cold water? I don't know about you, but to me it seems there is a little more thought involved. It takes a little more effort to get someone a cup of COLD water. In Jesus' time, perhaps you had to actually go to the well instead of just offering some old stagnant water that had been sitting around. A hundred years or so ago here in this country, cold water would require harvesting ice in the winter and storing it through the summer. Some of you know that I grew up in Crystal Lake. Crystal Lake got its name because the water was crystal clear. People would harvest the ice of Crystal Lake, they would pack it in straw, and they would keep it for refrigeration through the summer. These days, to get a cup of cold water, maybe you let the sink run for a little while. Perhaps you could get some water out of the fridge or maybe from a refrigerated water fountain. Here at this church building, several months ago, someone donated a water cooler—and what a difference that makes! I don't know if it affects the taste of the water or not, but cold water just seems better. Cold water just seems nicer.

And so Jesus is talking here about a small effort with some thought behind it. He is talking about an offering, or a sacrifice, or a price that we pay. It may be small, but it is meaningful. We can think of so many examples of great heroes from the Bible who seemed too weak to make a difference, but God used their willingness to serve to accomplish great things. We can think about Moses, a man who stuttered—a man with no real speaking ability. We can think of David as a young man—he had no military training, but he used his shepherd's sling and those five stones. We can think about the young preacher Timothy—we know from the Scriptures that Timothy was young and had trouble with his stomach. We can think about the widow who gave her two small coins. We can think about all of these people who appeared to be weak (from a human point of view), but God used them and God used their resources to advance His cause on this earth.

Certainly we remember the judgment scene where Jesus welcomes some people into heaven, and He says, ***"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 something to 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, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 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'"*** (**Matthew 25:34-40**).

There are so many "little things" we can do, then, to advance the cause of Christ! We can prepare a meal, we can give a drink, we can make a visit, we can say "thank you" to a Bible class teacher—there are so many little things we do for others that we end up actually doing for Christ Himself. This morning, then, we need to brainstorm

a little bit. What can we personally do to advance the cause of Christ? That is a very personal question. It's almost like giving a gift to someone. As parents, when we think about getting something from our children, do we want something that costs a lot of money, or do we want a gift that is meaningful? I think we realize that money is not the only way to give.

In **Mark 14**, a certain woman anointed Christ with perfume, and some of the bystanders had a huge argument concerning the amount of the gift, but Jesus said, **"She has done what she could" (Mark 14:8)**. This morning, we need to ask ourselves whether we are doing what we have the ability to do.

God is looking for people who are willing to do what they are able to do—a kind word, a brief phone call, a dish of food dropped off late at night, a quick click on the send button as we send an encouraging message. It is amazing how something so small can have such a large and positive influence. We think of something as simple as a wooden staff, but that staff was used by God for great things in the hands of Moses. We think of something as insignificant as a little piece of wool, but that little piece of wool was used by God as a miraculous sign in the hands of Gideon. Even life itself started with something as simple as a handful of dirt in the hands of God. In the New Testament, we think about a few fish and five loaves of bread—before they were handed over to Jesus, they could barely feed a little boy, but in the hands of Christ they fed so many more. We think about spit mixed in with dirt, and there's no value there—but in the hands of Christ that little bit of mud brought sight to a blind man. All of this simply illustrates what Jesus is telling us in **Matthew 10**—we are to do whatever we can to advance the cause of Christ, even if what we do is simple and practical.

### **III. But before we close this morning, we also need to notice that A REWARD IS PROMISED. »PPT»**

If we support a fellow Christian in his or her efforts to spread the gospel, the Bible teaches that we will share in their reward! In other words, we are all in this together. You might remember a situation in **1 Samuel 30** where King David was chasing some enemies with 600 of his men. They got to a point, though, where 200 were too exhausted to continue, so the 200 stayed behind and they watched the baggage, allowing the other 400 to go on further and much faster. The 400 got the job done, and when they got back to those who stayed behind, they were trying to vote the 200 off the island (as we might say). In their opinion, the 200 had not done enough to share in what they had captured in the battle. But King David said (in **1 Samuel 30:24**), **"For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike."** King David realized that those who stayed with the baggage had performed a valuable service, and they were to be rewarded for their efforts to advance the cause. Even though they were not out there on the front lines, the success of the others would not have been possible without their sacrifice. Jesus, then, is saying the same thing. If we even give a cup of cold water to someone who is working in the kingdom of heaven, we will share in their reward.

The opposite is also true. We are forbidden from assisting and encouraging those who do not teach the truth. In **2 John 1:8-11**, John has a warning that seems to be based on what Jesus said in **Matthew 10**. John says, **"Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds."** If I assist the false teacher in his mission, or if I give him comfort, if I give him the impression that things are okay between us, then I will also share in his judgment. It certainly goes both ways.

But back in **Matthew 10**, Jesus tells us that if we receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, we will receive a prophet's reward. There is an interesting story back in the Old Testament that illustrates this so well (in **1 Kings 17**). We wonder whether the apostles would have thought about it. But it goes back to the prophet Elijah as he was being chased down by the wicked king Ahab. Elijah had prophesied that there would be no rain for 3-½ years, and during that time of drought of famine, God arranged for Elijah's needs to be met through the work of a poor widow. The account is found in **1 Kings 17:8-16**. The Bible says...

**<sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to [Elijah], saying, <sup>9</sup> "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." <sup>10</sup> So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." <sup>11</sup> As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." <sup>12</sup> But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."**

It was so bad, then, that this woman was collecting sticks for a fire so she could prepare the last meal for herself and her son, and her plan was for them to eat that food and then wait to die. And right in the middle of that, God's prophet comes in and asks for some food. We pick up in **verse 13**...

**<sup>13</sup> Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. <sup>14</sup> "For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.' " <sup>15</sup> So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup> The bowl of flour was not**



***exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.***

I would say that this woman welcomed a prophet in the name of a prophet, and she was blessed for her sacrifice. Her sacrifice involved stepping out in faith to share what she sincerely thought was her very last meal with a man of God, and God blessed her for making that sacrifice. We think we are living in tough economic times. We think, "How can we sacrifice any more?" However, when we ate breakfast this morning, how many of us seriously thought that we were eating our very last meal? How many of us ate breakfast thinking that we would then sit at home waiting to starve to death? God blesses those who support the preaching of the gospel!

Sometimes the reward is a spiritual blessing. When it comes to a cup of cold water, we can think about the woman at the well in **John 4**. Here is a woman who literally gives Jesus something to drink. Was she blessed by that decision? Absolutely! As a result of giving that cup of water, she ends up having a one-on-One discussion with the Son of God. And so we find that there is a reward involved.

- We use our resources to advance the cause of Christ.
- We do whatever we can, even if it is simple and practical.
- And finally, we remember that there is a reward involved.

**Conclusion:**

As we come to the end, and if someone is thinking, "**Yeah, someone really needs to go get me a cup of cold water,**" then we have missed the point of the lesson. However, if we are starting to wonder how we can go about advancing the cause of Christ by using every available resource at our disposal, then we are understanding what Jesus is saying here. I hope that over the coming days and weeks that all of us will be able to support the teaching of the gospel in some new and interesting ways.

It is our tradition to always explain God's plan of salvation at the end of every lesson. The Bible teaches that God sent His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was nailed to the cross, He was buried, and He came back from the dead on Sunday morning. We respond to that sacrifice by turning away from sin and by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have any questions, you can let us know after the service this morning. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [church@fourlakescoc.org](mailto:church@fourlakescoc.org)