

Wooahoo, it is again time for another installment of ponderings with Pastor Jeff (PPJ). Once again, the text this week has much to think about, especially as it is the end of the 10th chapter of Matthew and takes all of that chapter into account. I will leave the reading of Matthew's chapter 10 to you all out there and hope that you do so in order to provide some context as you hear the end verses 40-42 of chapter 10 read this Sunday. It is only 3 verses long and has a ton of things to think about. I will pick up on what I have been living with so far this week.

As I was filling in my empty Greek sheet that I had printed out and doing my best at translating with my Greek tools, I noticed two things. The word for receive – “Dexomai” – is used in one form or another six times in the verses 40-41. That is a sign to me to pay attention to this “receiving” thing going on in the text. The second thing I noticed is the word used for little ones is “Micron” not the general words for child that are used “Paidion or Teknon.” So, we are dealing with a metaphorical small one most likely in the text of which children can certainly be a part. There is also one more thing that I notice, and that is that we often hear this text as a legal text, “If we just do this we will live.” In other words, give water to the little ones and you will be saved and receive your reward. Not that this is a bad way to hear this text since if we actually did this often then the world would be a much better place. For example, how would some of our own nation's policies concerning children or those who are marginalized be different if we read this text in a way that meant we are to treat children and the marginalized in this way in order to receive the promise of God. This way of reading the text should give us much pause.

However, I am reading this text right now as addressed to the disciples/apostles as the ones who are receiving and not the ones who are doing the giving. The Greek pushes me to see the disciples/apostles as the little ones who have been sent out! Reading the text this way gives us a different twist and with all that has gone on previously in chapter 10 it makes more sense read in this way. Rolf Jacobsen says in his observations of this text, “Jesus' words in 10:40-42 are to be heard as words of promise, under the broader commandment to follow Jesus out into the world in mission. Jesus tells his disciples as it were, “I am sending you into a dangerous world as part of my mission to love, save, bless, and be reconciled to that very world. It is dangerous out there. But you will find welcome. Those who welcome and receive you, also welcome and receive me—and they will be rewarded.”

As always, I do not know where I might end up in my sermon this Sunday yet. But, this receiving the promise as we participate in the mission of God in Jesus name to love, reconcile, bless, and to offer water to those on the outside of the gate, and then, also, those that God has sent to us as the prophets and the righteous, and then us, as the ones being sent out in mission experiencing reception or not, has me thinking and pondering. We know that prophets who tell the truth - we have trouble receiving - and those who are overly righteous (Pharisees) - Jesus was always challenging. So, there seems to be a juxtaposition of receiving/giving reward and receiving/giving challenge from God. Good luck living with this in the next few days as I try to craft a gospel word for you this Sunday.

Blessings on your ponderings, Pastor Jeff