

2023-07-02 ... 10am Morning Worship Sermon ... Mrs Jane Rylands

Romans 6: 12 – end; Matthew 10: 40 – end

(At the start Jane had several folk handing round a choice of sweets for us all!)

I'm sure you've heard the expression 'it's better to give than to receive'. Did you know that it was said by Jesus?

Actually, you won't find it in one of the gospels, it has come to us through St Paul in Acts 20 v 35 : ³⁵ ***I showed you in all things that you should work as I did and help the weak. I taught you to remember the words of Jesus. He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'***"

But a few verses before those we have heard this morning we find Jesus sending out his disciples with these words: ***Heal the sick. Give dead people life again. Heal those who have harmful skin diseases. Force demons to leave people. I give you these powers freely. So help other people freely.*** It does sound like the sort of thing Jesus would have said. Matt 10 v 8

So does that mean that I am one up on you lot because I gave you sweets and you received them? I don't want to make you feel guilty because I hope you've enjoyed them and indeed, the three verses we heard from Matthew I hope will explain why that might be a good thing!

I want to credit the Message bible for helping me come to the understanding that I'm sharing with you this morning and I'd recommend it to you – google will find it for you if you want to look it up. ***(see bottom of page)***

Chapter 10, a big chunk of which we heard last week, is Jesus prepping the disciples before he sends them out on a teaching and healing mission. Today we heard the end of the pep talk and it's all about acceptance being a good thing.

First of all Jesus is telling the disciples that they have value – they are representative of Jesus, just as Jesus is a representative of God. It's a bit like when Anna Turner or Tullis Matson come to church in their official capacity as Lord Lieutenant and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire - they are escorted in quite formally because they are the King's representative.

What we do really matters because if we do it in God's name, someone who accepts it accepts Jesus and accepts God. And if we think about what we heard in Romans, as people who believe that through God's grace it is goodness that rules our lives, we should always be able to confidently take Jesus to others. This brings you a life that is only for God. And this gives you life forever.

What better thing can there be than accepting Jesus? Giving and receiving are two sides of the same coin. What good would it have been if you had all spurned my offer of a sweet?

And more than that, giving and receiving immediately creates a relationship – and if the gift is a good one, it's going to form a favourable bond. Our faith is defined by loving relationships. As God loves us, so we are to love one another.

This idea of going out in Jesus's name is a scary one. Jesus knows it. It's ok to start small he says – giving someone a drink of water is enough to set you on the path.

40-42 "We are intimately linked in this harvest work. Anyone who accepts what you do, accepts me, the One who sent you. Anyone who accepts what I do accepts my Father, who sent me. Accepting a messenger of God is as good as being God's messenger. Accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help. This is a large work I've called you into, but don't be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing."