



# Sunday Reflection

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 28 June 2020

# Pentecost 4

while all Church worship in the buildings is suspended

On this 4th Sunday after Pentecost, and the third Sunday after Trinity, the theme of our worship is the rewards of selfless giving. Let us in humility and honesty reflect and pray about how this applies to us in our own lives, and how our words and actions affect those around us.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"The reward of the righteous."**

Matthew 10:41

### An Illustration to set the scene



Last year the Canadian writer Nicole Cliffe appealed to her Twitter followers to submit stories about random acts of kindness that they had experienced. It went viral, and it quickly became clear, from the huge range of stories that people sent in, that kindness comes in many forms – from saving someone from suicide, to large deeds of self-giving compassion, or gestures so small and seemingly insignificant that their lasting impact might not even have been apparent to the person making them.

Nicole started with a story of her own, recounting a plane journey when, before they had taken off, her baby was violently sick all over her and the seat, causing the flight to be delayed. People were glaring and tutting, when a kind flight attendant saved the day by lending Nicole a pair of her own leggings. Other stories ranged from strangers coming together to offer support to someone in need, to the simple act of opening a gate. One story involved a stranger sacrificing his own festive family time to enable someone else to enjoy theirs. Another woman recounted how she had fainted on the subway and an elderly Chinese woman, who spoke no English, stayed with her, held her hand and fed her grapes while they waited for the emergency services. When they did arrive, she vanished into the crowd.

### **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

Before Jesus sent his disciples out on their first solo mission, he imparted dire warnings about the rejection and hostility that they would inevitably face. This is the background to today's Gospel reading. Now, just before the disciples depart with nothing but the clothes they're standing up in, come words of reassurance and hope. But these words are not for the disciples themselves. Jesus explains that anyone who welcomes one of his disciples receives Jesus himself and, by extension, his heavenly Father. The reward for such hospitality is not for the disciples, but for those who welcome them.

So where is the reward for the disciples themselves? They have sacrificed their personal comfort, material possessions and security to go on this mission – do they not deserve some form of recompense? This passage makes it clear that any small act of kindness or thoughtfulness brings overwhelming rewards, because doing God's work is a reward in itself. The reward for a faithful disciple is not something that can be measured "in

human terms", as St Paul describes it in his letter to the Romans – our first reading today. Rather, the disciple is rewarded by a deepening relationship with God and an experience of God's love and spiritual gifts.

And this reward, freely given, is more fulfilling than any material incentive. We can see this in Luke's account of the seventy disciples returning from their mission, elated and energised (Luke 10:17-20).

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

One online marketing guru claims that "Successful marketing starts with the WIIFM factor." WIIFM stands for "What's in it for me?" Today's Gospel, as with so much of Jesus' teaching, turns this idea on its head. There is a paradox here. When we put others before ourselves, without any expectation of reward or recompense, we receive the "prophet's reward", as it's sometimes called. Where faith comes into it is in believing that, ultimately, we will be much richer for it.

In his famous prayer, St Ignatius of Loyola prays that he might "give and not... count the cost... toil, and not... seek for rest... labour, and not... ask for reward – except to know that I am doing your will". It's a good starting point for anyone wanting to learn how to live "under grace", as Paul calls it.

If we are welcoming and generous; if we make the smallest of gestures, such as simply offering a cup of cold water to a child; if we humble ourselves, come down to the child's level and listen to what God is telling or showing us, our life will be immensely richer for it. Our lives may not be easy or cushy, but Jesus promises that our self-giving gestures and acts of true altruism will earn us something infinitely more fulfilling, something that goes far beyond human imagination.

# **“The reward of the righteous.”**

Matthew 10:41

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**