

Second Sunday after Pentecost

FRIENDED

Matthew 10:40-42

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Analysis by Lori A. Cornell

40Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; 42and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

DIAGNOSIS: Unwelcomed

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Inhospitable*

The world can be an inhospitable place to live. So it's no wonder that we have a hard time receiving and welcoming others into our lives when the need arises. Why should we make ourselves vulnerable when that vulnerability may just expose us to hurt? Better to keep the door closed. (That way we may be able to avoid the pesky salespeople, and the door-to-door evangelists.) Why take any chances?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *No Friend of Mine*

What we may not realize when we make such “safe” decisions, is that we may have protected ourselves from something good-namely,

God. And not just any god, but the God who is gracious and merciful. Oh, of course, it's not God Almighty knocking at our door; it's God's representative (the one who is sent by the One who sends people)-one who may not look at all like we expect God to look.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Without a Friend*

Problem is, once we say No to the one who has been sent, we've missed out on a relationship with the One who sent him/her. "Missed out" because our inhospitable response leaves us without the Friend whom we sorely need. A friend without whom there is no true life-only an inhospitable place where death truly is just death. Period.

PROGNOSIS: Welcomed

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Friended*

When it depends on us, that's the way the relationship between us and God goes-badly. But God isn't satisfied to stay passive with us. In fact, God's love for us won't let us go; so God comes in the "first person"-Jesus, his Son. Comes and shows us God's determined and selfless love in the strangest of places-the cross and grave. Jesus enters the most inhospitable of conditions (human suffering and death), to receive and welcome us into God's kingdom. Jesus (be)friends us, and our circumstances, relationships, and whole lives are changed.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Friend Me*

The hospitality of God is welcomed by those who don't want death to have the last word about us. In fact, it not only affects our thoughts about what we want after death, it influences what we want from this life. We don't just want Jesus as a convenient gate opener when we die; we want Jesus by our side through all the inhospitable circumstances of this life. We need his strength, his love, and his mercy to face the world with the same gracious hospitality that he has received us. And having

received what only he has the capacity and reliability to give, we not only welcome him into our midst, but we welcome the One who sent him.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Hospitable*

Now here's the twist: You might think that carrying the news of a hospitable Christ into the world could be a lonely, demoralizing business. After all, the number of people who are likely to reject us and the One who sent us, is high. But while we may not always be welcomed by those who open their doors to us, we have already been received by the One who sent the Christ. Which means we can risk hospitality even in inhospitable circumstances. So we can risk sharing a cup of water with the "little ones" of this world, so that they might know the humble hospitality of Christ. And we can even risk seeing in others' acts of kindness the graciousness of the One who has sent us.