Arden Pastoral Charge

July 5, 2020:
A Cup of Cold Water

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Gathering Prayer:

“Come in, come in and sit down, you are a part of the family. We are lost and we are found, and we are a part of the family. There’s rest for the weary, and health for us all; there’s a yoke that is easy, and burden that’s small. So come in and worship and answer the call, for we are a part of the family.”

You may have recognized the words of the hymn we would be singing were we all together. No matter. You are welcome, wherever you are at this moment. You are welcomed to this service, to our online fellowship, and to the local and global community of Christ.

“Hospitable God, we offer thanks and praise for the welcome you extend in friendship and forgiveness. Guide us to welcome others through our relationships, our forgiving and accepting forgiveness. Help us grow in the joy of offering and receiving love. Amen.”

11 Come In, Come In and Sit Down, James K Manley 1984, Voices United 395.
2 Prayers for all Seasons, Year A, 142.
Scripture: Our scripture this morning comes from Jesus as he continues to give instructions to the disciples as he prepares to send them off on their own to teach and preach and heal.

Reading Matthew 10: 40 42 from the New Revised Standard Version

40 “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.
41 Whoever 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;
42 and 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.”

This is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Thoughts Along the Way:

I had a difficult time trying to figure out what this message was going to be. Trying to figure out what the scripture wanted me to say about it. ‘Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, truly I tell you, will be rewarded.’ That was the verse that kept repeating itself to me. I thought it would be easy to work with that. After all, water is the stuff of life – literally and metaphorically.

I thought about 21st century scientific knowledge where we know for a fact for instance, that our bodies are composed of about 60% water;³ and that we can only live a few days without water;⁴ and that a glass of cold water can calm

⁴ https://www.healthline.com/health/food-nutrition/how-long-can-you-live-without-water
someone who is anxious and agitated. I thought about those who lived in the first century as Jesus and the disciples did who did not have our contemporary scientific knowledge and yet did have an innate and lived experience with the value of water, travelling as they did through countryside that was often dry, and whose ancestors stories were of life in the desert. I thought about scripture that tells us that ‘The Spirit of God hovered over the waters,’ (Gen 1: 2) and created all that is. Scripture that tells us that Moses ‘raised his staff and stretched his hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites could pass through to dry ground’ (Ex 14: 16) and freedom; and that, later on their desert travels, Moses struck a rock with his staff as God commanded and water came from it for the people to drink (Ex 17: 6). I thought about scripture that tells about desert watering holes and village wells where people came together. I thought about the biblical history of hospitality – where giving water ‘was not merely a question of good manners, but a moral institution which grew out of the harsh desert and nomadic existence led by the people of Israel. Biblical law specifically sanctified hospitality toward the stranger who was to be made particularly welcome, for their stories reminded them that they too had once been ‘strangers in a strange land’.”

I thought about that story in the Gospel of John where Jesus met a Samaritan woman by the village well, and asked for a drink of water. He told her that he was ‘living water’. He said, ‘Everyone who drinks the water from this well, cool and refreshing as it is, will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. The water I give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ (John 4: 7-12).

And I thought about a piece I read from a book by Ann Weems, titled Cold Water, Hot Coffee.

**Cold Water, Hot Coffee – Ann Weems**

Sometimes that cup of cold water, turns out to be a cup of hot coffee, and what we are asked to do is to pour it... and to listen. Sometimes we

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6 [https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hospitality](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hospitality)
Christians in our enthusiasm think we were asked to save the world, when what we were asked to do is to go into it and tell God’s story to people in need of some good news. Anxious activists forget that just listening is an act of compassion. Driven disciples forget that just listening is an act of faithfulness. Guilty givers forget that just listening is an act of stewardship. Since we church people have a tendency to be driven, and anxious, and guilt-ridden, perhaps we should read the directions again and pour a cup of hot coffee and just listen, in Christ’s name.”

Perhaps we should read the directions again, and pour a cup of hot coffee and just listen. The first directions from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, the first of those we are to listen to – listen for who we are to be, listen for who we are to uphold, listen for what we are to do - come from his Sermon on the Mount.

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ (Matt 5: 3-10).

‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of God in heaven.’ (Matt 5: 44-45).

‘Give to the needy.’ (Matt 6: 3).

‘Pray, forgiving other people when they sin against you, as your heavenly Father forgives you.’ (Matt 6: 5, 14).

'Do not judge, or you too will be judged.’ (Matt 7: 1).

Welcome all who come to you as you would wish them to welcome you. ‘Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous’. (Matt 10: 40-41).

It may be that there will be a time in our lives when we can call ourselves prophets. *Prophetes* (prof-ay-tace) in Greek – God’s messengers, those who speak for God, and foretell by the Words of God through the inspiration of God. And God grant that there will be a time when we recognize the prophets who speak to us, and we welcome them.

It may be that there will be a time when we can call ourselves righteous. *Dikaios* (dik-ah-yos) in Greek – those who are just in the eyes of God, upholding God’s standard of justice for all. And God grant that there will be a time when we recognize and support the righteous ones who uphold God’s justice, and we welcome them.

‘And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.’ (Matt 10: 40). Whether or not we ever see ourselves as prophets or righteous ones, whether or not we ever welcome a prophet or righteous one, we know we are always God’s little ones. *Mikros* (mik-ros) in Greek – followers, least in the kingdom. If all we do is offer a cup of cold water, or ice tea, or hot coffee to another of God’s little ones, then Jesus promised we will realize the reward of our Lord God in heaven.

During this time, as we begin to expand our social circles from the self isolation of COVID-19, surely these are directions even the most directionally challenged among us can follow. Amen.
Let us pray:

Hospitable God:
We yearn desperately too see each other in person, to shake hands, to exchange a hug, to feel welcomed in another’s space and to welcome another into our space. And yet.... We might wonder about what has changed. We might worry about finding our place again with others.

“You, Hospitable God, you graciously welcome and love each of us exactly as we are, and you model how we should be with each other. May you be patient with us and help us as we seek to understand what your true welcome and your hospitality really means for how we should be in our families, in our communities and in our world.”

May you grant us courage and strength to not only welcome each other, but to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, offer a cup of cold water in Christ’s name, and also to speak for what is right, to stand with the vulnerable, and to work for justice.

We pray today for the needs of all during this time – for health, for family, for food and shelter, for financial security, for justice, for equality, for an end to racial strife.

We pray for leaders of nations, and for wisdom. We pray for medical staff, and for front line and essential service workers. We pray for patience as our communities come back to life. We pray for those who are ill, in body and mind and spirit, and for loved ones who still cannot be close enough to care for or comfort them.

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8 Prayers for all Seasons, Year A, 143.
We pray for those who have asked for our prayers...
We pray for those who have no one to pray for them...
We pray for our neighbours, all people of colour, as we stand united against racism, and as we challenge ourselves to speak and act against racism and racial violence.
We pray especially for those who.... (please add your own concerns)...
And we pray for those near and dear to our hearts.....

“Where hope has grown tired and thin, lift our sights,
so that we may see hope beyond hope, life beyond death,
and you, lifted up before us.

We pray all this in the name of Christ who gave himself for our sake,’9
To our Mother of Wisdom and our Father...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Benediction:

“Go from here a welcoming people,
And God will bless you in your welcoming.”10

And now, may the grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,

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10 David Sparks, Prayers to Share, Year A, 130.