

Scripture: Matthew 10:40-42.

Text: Matthew 10:40 --"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me."

Theme (Topic): Who Receives Christ?

Proposition: When you receive Christ, you first achieve a receptive and understanding attitude toward all others who also are trying to know him, and toward persons who are in need of help.

Date written: February 9, 1968.

Dates and places used:

Feb. 11, 1968 - Alton, Colo.

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Introduction:

1. Carlisle Marney, a well-known Southern Baptist minister, writer, teacher and lecturer, at a series of lectures at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, recently quoted someone as to the different approaches of clergymen of the various major faiths in our United States. The Jewish rabbi, he said, will speak whatever he says as a proclamation: "thus saith the Lord." The Roman Catholic priest uses the term, "The Church says." However, the Protestant minister says, "It seems to me." At first glance, this makes the Protestant seem awfully weak, without much authority, and not very dependable. As you think about it, though, the most sure authority in a person's life is not what he has been told, but what he himself has experienced or thought. So the "it seems to me" terminology of the Protestant is from the best authority, from the heart, from one's own personal experience of faith and truth, and very genuine--not second-hand. At least, that is the way it is if the words "it seems to me" are genuine.

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2. In the words of the Scripture passage that we read today Jesus was telling his disciples somewhat the same thing: that the people to whom they would go and tell about him would have to make the message their own if they were to become real Christians, if they were really to know God. Since they people to whom these first disciples would minister would not know Jesus first-hand, just as you and I do not ^{know} and have not known him in the form he was over 1900 years ago here on earth. Therefore, the earliest Christians after the disciples, and people like us ever since, must know him as he is revealed by other people. Even the ^{testament} New ~~1/~~, our chief source book about Jesus, is a record of Jesus and of the Christian church which was compiled for us by other people. Since about 33 A.D., then, Christians have accepted their faith on the testimony of others, rather than on the physical presence of Jesus himself.

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all time since are told that they must receive other people as the route by which they receive Christ. Here today we want to examine and interpret these words closely, for they are important evidence about two things which are appropo to a Race Relations sermon: how we know Christ through our reception of other people.

I. When we hear and believe the Christian story presented by someone else, we accept both Christ and the one eternal God.

1. This is what Jesus meant when he told the disciples, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me." (v.40).

2. What is the best way for a person to put across to his fellowman the Christian message? The American poet Edgar A. Guest, famous for his folksy, easy-to-understand, plain poems, has said it well in his poem, "Sermons We See":

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"I'd rather see a sermon than hear
one any day;

I'd rather one should walk with me
than merely tell the way.

The eye's a better pupil and more
willing than the ear,

Fine counsel is confusing, but ex-
ample's always clear;

And the best of all thre preachers
are the men who live their
creeds,

For to see good put in action is
what everybody needs.

"I soon can learn to do it if you'll
let me see it done;

I can watch your hands in action,
but your tongue too fast may run

And the lecture you deliver may
be very wise and true,

But I'd rather get my lessons by
observing what you do;

For I might misunderstand you and
the high advice you give,

But there's no misunderstanding
how you act and how you live.

"When I see a deed of kindness,
I am eager to be kind.

When a weaker brother stumbles
and a strong man stays behind

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"I'd rather see a sermon than hear

Just to see if he can help him,
then the wish grows strong in
me

To become as big and thoughtful as
I know that friend to be.

And all travelers can witness
that the best of guides to-day
Is not the one who tells them, but
the one who shows the way.

"One good man teaches many, men
believe what they behold;
One deed of kindness noticed is
worth forty that are told.
Who stands with men of honor learns
to hold his honor dear,
For right living speaks a language
which to every one is clear.
Though an able speaker charms me
with his eloquence, I say,
I'd rather see a sermon than to
hear one, any day."

3. Isn't this emphasis on
doing and being, rather than say-
ing, what Jesus meant when he said
to the disciples, and for all
Christians since: "And whoever
gives to one of these little ones
even a cup of cold water because
he is a disciple, truly, I say to
you, he shall not lose his reward."

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4. This means that if you would know God, accept at face value the goodness and kindness and friendliness you see someone exhibit. If you would show the spirit of Christ, practice forgiveness and love and goodness toward others. If you are judgmental, unforgiving, selfish, and withdrawn, the chances are that you suspect even the best acts of other people as having ulterior motives. But if you are the opposite of all that, than you probably accept as genuine, as in the Spirit of Christ, the good that you see others do.

5. The lawyer for the defendant on trial for murder noted a friend in the jury panel and managed to get a few hurried words to him. "Listen, Pat, you'll be on the jury in my case, and the District Attorney is out for a first degree verdict. I want you to promise you'll hold out for manslaughter." "I will that," responded Pat. The jury retired after the judge's charge, and were out for eleven hours. Finally they returned with a verdict of manslaughter. They lawyer

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congratulated Pat, and asked for details. "Begorra, I had the divil's own time," said Pat. "Eleven of them were for acquittal, but I held out for manslaughter." ("Masterbook of Humorous Illustrations," L. B. Williams, Abingdon-Cokesbury, Nashville, 1938).

How a person who professes faith in Christ holds out in his every day living does more to win people to or turn them from a similar faith than all the words he can say about his beliefs.

II. When you accept and adapt as your own the belief and way of life of another, you become as that person in what you get out of life, and in what you give to it.

2 1. Christ referred to the result of accepting belief presented you by another in the words of our Scripture: "He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward,." Prophets of the Bible were known men for their forthright saying of what they believed directly to whomsoever their message might concern. Their

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2.1. Christ referred to the result of accepting belief presented you by another in the words of our Scripture: "He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." They believed directly to whomsoever their message might concern. Their

words often did two things: (1) gather followers who believed as they did and felt strongly about the matter, and (2) antagonized the person or persons in the power structure to whom they addressed much of what they had to say. This second factor sometimes resulted in them having to run to hide somewhere, or in persecution when they were caught. Such punishment as they might have meted out to them was usually visited on their known followers too. With this outlook, with this history and fact from their own culture, Jesus disciples who first heard his words would have been very familiar. If they were willing to be his followers, they must be willing to accept the dangers, as well as the rewards. That they were so willing is evidenced by the fact that we have good historical reason to think that all of his 11 disciples (all except Judas) died martyrs' deaths. However, the persecution they might face was not their chief reward. Instead, the sense of being used by God, of being in the right, of standing for something eternal and good, of being worthwhile, was

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worth far more than anything else. Because of this, they could take whatever came. "He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" makes sense.

2. So do the words, "and he who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

The reason is the same as he who receives a prophet: when you accept as right the way someone is acting, you are apt to try to act like he is acting. Your actions, then, are likely to get the same reaction from other people, and from God.

3. It is hard to know, much less to do, what is right, so often. Frederick William Faber (1814-1863) said it well in his poem "Right Must Win":

"O it is hard to work for God,
To rise and take His part
Upon this battle-field of earth,
And not sometimes lose ~~ha~~rt!

"He hides Himself so wondrously,
As though there were no God;

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He is least seen when all the power
Of ill are most abroad.

Or He deserts us at the hour
The fight is all but lost;
And seems to leave us to ourselves
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Ill masters good, good seems to
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To ill with greatest ease;
And, worst of all, the good with
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Is at cross purposes.

It is not so, but so it looks,
And we lose courage then;
And doubts will come if God hath
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His promises to men.

Workman of God! oh, lose not
heart,
But learn what God is like,
And in the darkest battle-field,
Thou shalt know where to strike.

Thrice blest is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field when He
Is most invisible.

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Blest too is he who can divine
Where real right doth lie,
And dares to take the side that
seems
Wrong to man's blindfold eye.

Muse on His justice, downcast soul,
Muse, and take better heart;
Back with thine angel to the field,
And bravely do thy part.

For right is right, since God is
God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

Conclusion:

1. "It seems to me", as the Protestant preacher usually says, that when you hear and believe the Christian story presented by someone else, you accept both Christ and the eternal God he represented.

2. It seems to me that when you accept and adapt as your own the belief and way of life of another, you become like that person in what you find in life, and in what you give to others through your life.

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3. It seems to me that whoever shares the Christian viewpoint that is your ^{held} own, is your brother, sister, and worthy of your friendship and fellowship, without limitations based on race, nation, or anything else.

4. It seems to me that if the Christian gospel is really important to you, you'll want to demonstrate it in kindly words and actions to people who do not yet accept it, to people who are most in need of it, to people with whom you might normally feel most strained! And when you do this, it seems to me that the best race relations in the world are bound to begin to come about.

5. This seems to me to add up to the statement that when you receive Christ, you first achieve a receptive and understanding attitude toward toward all others who are trying to know him, and toward still other persons who are in need of your help.

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