

**SERMON:28/6/2026: SUNDAY BETWEEN 26 JUNE AND 2 JULY (OS13A):  
GEOFF CHADWICK: MTT10:40-42  
“COLD WATER”**

**Matthew 10.40-42**

*<sup>40</sup> ‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> 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; <sup>42</sup> 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.’*

Some years ago, I flew over The Holy Land on the way to a pilgrimage there. (It was a little safer than it is now!). It was daylight and as I looked out of the window during the descent I had a lovely view of the terrain below. The landscape consisted of green hilltops dotted among dry arid desert. Villages were a-top the hills, surrounded by orchards, vineyards and other crops. The arid areas were brown and barren.

This landscape reminded me of Jesus’ saying about cities built on a hill .....

*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.*  
(Mtt 5:14, NRSV)

And today’s reading:

*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. (Matt 10.42, NRSV)*

You see, in the desert, water is everything. Life and water go hand-in-hand.

We modern westerners, can get a cup of cold water any time. It’s just a few paces into the kitchen and the turn of a tap. Not so in Jesus’ day. Getting water involved journeying to a well, drawing out the water and carrying the heavy, precious commodity a fair distance. It’s also worth noting that this was women’s work. Maybe we could say that women are the carriers of life- but that might be stretching the image too far!

So giving a cup of cold water to someone in need, is not as simple or as trivial as we might first think. It is an act of sheer generosity!

Furthermore, I am fascinated that Jesus describes the water as *cold*. It's not *plain* water that is given, but *cold* water. In Matt's Gospel the Greek word is *psychrou* (*psyookhru*) which is a derivation of the literal word for *cold* or *chilly*. In a time before refrigerators, such water would have been stored in porous clay jars where evaporation through the clay would cool the contents. The Romans also kept water moving to keep it cool; and the rich even harvested ice and stored it in insulated underground cisterns. I suspect that the very rich liked to show off by distributing ice-cold drinks at lavish parties! (I digress).

I'm fascinated, because of the emphasis on cold water. It's not just *any old water* but *special water*. Giving a drink is one thing, but giving a *cold* drink is even better!

So who are the *little ones* who receive this drink? There are several possibilities. They could be:

- Children
- The lowly of society
- Or those new to faith.

Let's have a look at these.

### **Children.**

In Jesus' day, although most people loved their families, children had no social standing.

Their opinions were never sought, and at best they were only valued for their potential labour.

Elsewhere the disciples show their displeasure at people bringing children to Jesus. Jesus rebukes them and with these famous words, changes the status of children forever:

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. (Mtt 19.14, NRSV)*

So giving cold water to children (nor just water) is a radical act in the face of a society that placed little value on Children.

### **The Lowly in Society**

This is similar to the situation with children. The lower classes, the outcasts and the diseased were of little standing in the society of Jesus' time. Giving them a cup of cold water is a radical act! It's the way of Jesus, and it's the way of the Christian.

It's difficult to overemphasise how the early church broke down the barriers between class and status. Sometimes we forget that sharing the common cup and the common bread flies in the face of a society, where even at dinner parties the different classes were served different food depending on their status!

### **Those New to Faith.**

Biblical scholars tell us that *little ones* is often code language in Matthew's Gospel for those who are new to the faith. We must remember that Matthew is writing for an audience at around AD 90; and crafts the Gospel to speak directly into that world. By this time there are old, *seasoned* believers mixed up with new converts. It seems there was a bit of comparison going on between the church members. Those with long term faith were claiming a bit of superiority over the *Johnny come latelies*.

I hope this doesn't happen in this church!

Nevertheless, Matthew is reminding them that Jesus was very clear about this sort of thing:

*... whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones [that is one new to the faith] in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.' (Matt 10.42, NRSV)*

Perhaps, member *one-up-ship* occurs in other places as well. The tennis club, the sewing group, Shire Council, Parliament?

I wonder if you've even fallen into this trap yourself. Where you've found yourself saying or thinking"

*They're new here, what would they know?*

That's vastly different from thinking"

*They're new here, how can I help them?*

Or even better:

*They're new here. What can I learn from them?*

So it's cold-water thinking that we need. The ability to offer, not just water, but *cold* water to the little ones in our midst.

Returning to my image of the Holy Land from the air.

Water is life, and Jesus calls us to be oasis people for the parched.

Looking from above I pray that our little patches of green will stand out in what might otherwise be a barren landscape.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**