

Matthew 10: 42
Cups of Cold Water
June 26, 2011

Are you good at imagining?

I'm going to ask you to imagine something now; so get ready to do whatever helps you imagine best. Some people like to close their eyes, you decide what's best for you. Ready?

Imagine that you're in a hot dry place.
It's dusty – the sun is hot and bright
there are no clouds in the sky, no trees to shade you,
the sun is HOT and right overhead.
Your throat is parched.....your mouth is dry
and more than anything you would like a drink of cold water.

Now imagine that you see someone holding a cup of ice cold water out to you....
you reach out, and take it.
You lift it to your lips, and drink.
Feel how it feels as it touches your lips...as it goes down your throat....
feel the coolness, the relief.....
how would it feel to be the one receiving the water?
What would it be like to be the one giving it?

Jesus said: *“Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward”*

We're going to talk about cups of cold water. Given, and received.

As I understand it, one of the key scriptural concepts behind this is the idea that to receive a messenger is to receive the one who sent the message.

In Bible times for example, if someone sent you a message by sending a servant to deliver it, depending on how you felt about the message, you'd treat that servant well, or ...not well. If you didn't like the message, you'd take it out on the messenger. Dangerous work, being a messenger. You know that expression “don't shoot the messenger”? That's real. Does that concept make sense?

So...in the book of John, Jesus often says If you love me you love the One who sent me. And lots of other quotes like that. To receive Jesus is to receive God, who sent him. It's in that way that we can speak of Jesus and God being one.

The same principle applies to those who go out in Jesus' name – disciples. That's us. Jesus says that how people treat his followers is how they are treating him. That's a pretty awesome idea really – we, as Jesus' followers, ARE Christ for people. Sometimes we are the only contact with Christ that people will have. Koda, you've taken a brave and wonderful step today to become a follower of Jesus. As you live your life, at home at school, with friends, with family....you carry with you Jesus and you are his representative – wouldn't that just take your breath away??

And the Bible takes that one step further: not only are Jesus' followers to be received as though they were Christ himself,
but so are the poor, the outcast, those who are thirsty in so many ways. These are the ones we are asked

to receive as though they were Jesus. It's as though they are Jesus' messengers to us – and how we treat them is how we treat him.

How we practice hospitality
how we respond to those who are thirsty
what we do to them
we do to Jesus.

People are so thirsty
all of us.

Many are literally thirsty for water. Clean water. That's a luxury we have and take for granted. But people are also thirsty for love, for meaning, for acceptance, for justice, for God. Thirsty for God.

Today I want you to think about the times that you've been offered a cup of cold water to ease your thirst.

Who offered it?

Did they know how thirsty you were, and what it meant to you?

One example from my own life: at the end of grade 12 three of us went to Europe..it was 1972 and it was the thing to do. Back pack around Europe. I had never been away from my home town for any length of time.... In Vienna we got off the train in the evening the hostel was full and there were no hotels willing to take three scruffy teenagers with back packs. We kept taking turns going into hotels, only to be refused, and asked not to sit in the lobby....it was raining out, I was tired, I was grubby, and very very sad. We spent the night walking around finding hotels and being refused.

About 6 in the morning it was my turn to try. I was refused again, and was walking out when a man, clearly a guest at the hotel, came out of the breakfast room. He came over to me, asked what was wrong, and I told him. He went to the desk, spoke to the clerk, and said “they've made a mistake. They have a room for you after all” He took us for breakfast then, and when he left us, he took my hand and kissed it.

He will never know what he did for me. I had been feeling...worthless, discouraged, dirty and rejected. He will never know how much that meant.

Have you had an experience like that?

Someone who reached out to you when you needed a friend the most?

Or stood by you when others did not?

Or spoke to you of spiritual things when you were thirsty to hear the truth

or even smiled at you, or touched you – just a hand on your shoulder – when you really really needed that?

How many ways have people reached out and in your thirst you received a cup of cold water?

And how many cups of cold water have you offered to others?

You know what? I bet you'll never know. Because often, we just do what are ordinary things – or they seem ordinary to us. A touch, a smile, an invitation to lunch....a word of encouragement. A small gift to the Mission fund. And we never know how much that means to someone else. How thirsty they might have been and who our small word or action was for them, like cold water in a dry desert.

If there are people you can think of right now who have offered that to you – thank them for it. If you possibly can, tell them what they did. Your thanks will be in turn, a cup of cold water for them. Perhaps

the people you're thinking of are dead. Thank them anyway. I'm pretty sure they'll know.

Koda – today we put water on your forehead and you have been named and claimed as God's very own; a follower of Jesus. Now Jesus is asking you to take water to others. And the good news is that you already do that. You're a wonderful girl – your humour, your heart....these are the ways that Jesus works through you to make this world a better place. One of your favourite stories is the story of Adam and Eve. It tells you that you are made in the image of God – God's light shines through and in you. That image of God in you is the ability and the urge to love and be loved; that's what the Corinthians reading is about. Love is what it's all about. There is nothing stronger, nothing that lasts longer, nothing more important than love.

I pray for you that you will always know that love – always feel the water on your forehead. When life is tough for you, when you're sad or scared or wondering who you are....please remember the water.

May you be gracious in your giving

and in receiving

love.

cups of cold water.

Simple acts of kindness that can mean the world to someone

As you do, your reward will be Jesus – the true and living water

there with you wherever you are

no matter what

and that will be enough.

God bless you Koda.

Amen