

## Sermon 28th June.2020

Matt 10 :40-42 “A Cup of Water given in my name”

*I was offended at an article in Saturday's free press written by a Mennonite guy called Carl Degurse. He was asking for governments to lift restrictions and give Churches freedom to gather without public health restrictions! He went on to say “Faith institutions have limped through the last 3 mths”.*

*I wanted to point him to a certain little church I know that has had a full quorum at Zoom board meetings; it has set up 3 very ambitious task forces to*

lookout how it can improve or build on what it has now and will take into the churches future .

This little church has met every Sunday (I know not ideal but consistently,) on Zoom, has called it's members regularly; sent notes to SS kids and sent each SS child a gift package of fun stuff; had zoom youth group and a great youth wind up; meals have been sent to some families with illness; food collected for 2 ,not one , church based ministries, and that is just the congregation, not the paid accountable staff !(But they too have been doing their part)

NONE of this is ideal and yes it sucks, BUT it is reality and nothing, even a pandemic is going to stop

*this little church from “Happening”. I am proud to be part of that same little church. Proud also that we belong to an organization that has set guidelines to keep its members safe.*

*Do we miss being able to gather, you bet we do, but unlike Mr Carl Degurse I trust that this little church is not limping, we are praying, doing, and trusting that a new normal might emerge and we will rise to the occasion of whatever that new normal is!*

*Now I have got that off my chest , perhaps I should stop writing this message and write a wee note to the free press! But as this is the last Sunday we will meet*

*like this for 5 weeks ! So I think I should share what God has laid on my heart.*

*In Matt's gospel. chapter 10 Jesus is instructing his disciples on how they are to carry on his work. He gave them authority to heal to teach keep in mind most of these disciples, soon to be apostles for Christ were un-educated, most of them were ordinary people like you and me, trying to follow their master.*

*Maybe some of them had never prayed out loud (I know some of you don't like to pray out loud but believe me , we are expected to be able to pray for one another and seriously you have all heard me more than once stumble over my words!) I bet the disciples had never*

*heard themselves give a healing command , I wonder if they were terrified?*

*In verse 42 Jesus is really talking about hospitality.*

*Let me tell you a story , I think I told you once before , but it is an incredible story of God's grace and the blessing of a cup of water offered in Christ's name .*

*The story is about a large Toronto church built to seat 1000 people, but they were lucky if it saw 50 on a Sunday and they were down to their last 2,000 bucks in the bank.! A core group of 'faithfuls' and the minister worked tirelessly to fill the pews, because after all isn't that what church is about? Or at least*

*that is what some ministers and congregations think ministry is all about!!*

*The minister of this church had quite a story one that really demonstrates today's text. she had grown up in a dysfunctional household, left home, been on the streets at 15 years old. She of course was a stereotypical street kid, often 'owned by someone else' doing unsavoury things, for money, or booze, or money to feed her drug habit; she was not only a drug user and drug trafficker, she used to smuggle LSD into Canada in hollowed out bibles from California. She said she never read the bible till later on when her life became unmanageable and that was when she found God.*

*That is the Coles note's version of her story, but fast forward to a huge personal tragedy ,after which somehow she found herself in theology school.*

*Her association with the United church had been limited, to just two encounters, during her street days. One, she was given a meal by a church food kitchen and another encounter gave her groceries and both times she received kind non judgemental words which she never forgot.*

*When her big city church was about to close its doors she and her faithful few, decided to blow all 2000 bucks left in the budget and feed the poor with a banquet.*

*Trinity St Paul is still feeding the poor and still a thriving busy church working for Justice.*

*The minister says what she believes they did was to step aside.... move out of the way and let the Holy Spirit take over.... become a 'Missional church' not a church run on someone's ego and need for power!*

*It is so easy isn't it to close our hearts and minds to new ideas or to throw out the line "We tried that" or the other famous line "We have always done it this way!"*

*I believe we are opening our hearts and minds to examine where we have been and where we might go ! Sometimes we might forget the story of our faith, the story that tells us "God has gone before us".... even in*

*this strange place we find ourselves in with Covid 19; a place we have never been before yet the church has had many other , situations in its history worse than the one we find ourselves in !*

*The message of our God tells us not to be afraid, for God is love, and love is stronger than fear, even stronger than death.*

*When we practice the Jesus way of hospitality we may discover like Abraham and Sarah who welcomed three strangers, when in fact they had just welcomed God.*

*Just like offering a cup of cold water to a thirsty child. What was it Jesus says "In as much..... you do it onto me!"*

*In that simple act of caring we are quenching the thirst of Christ who longs to be central in our lives.....*

*And so it will be in the life of that same little church I spoke of at the beginning. Christ is waiting for our actions to honour his simple yet profound message love and service.*

*This is how we will increase our mark in the community , this is how we will be blessed .*

*Amen.*