

Echoes of Scripture

Proper 8a ~ Matthew 10:40-42

Summary of Matthew 10:40-42

Despite the risk, those who welcome Christ's disciples, who stand beside them and support their ministry, even in the smallest of ways, these people can be confident that their fidelity will be rewarded. The welcome and support they give isn't just to the disciples; but to Christ himself... and not only Christ himself, but God as well. By supporting those whom God has sent, they are supporting the mission of God.

Suggested Course of Study

- Read Matthew 18:1-14
- Read Matthew 25:31-46
- Read Matthew 10:5-42

Immediate Context

Matthew 5-7	The Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 9:35-38	Harvest Great, Laborers Few
Matthew 8:1-4	Jesus Cleanses a Leper	Matthew 10:1-4	The Twelve Apostles
Matthew 8:5-13	Heals a Centurion's Servant	<i>Matthew 10:5-15</i>	<i>The Mission of the Twelve</i>
Matthew 8:14-17	Heals Many at Peter's House	<i>Matthew 10:16-23</i>	<i>The Difficulties</i>
Matthew 8:18-22	Would-Be Followers of Jesus	Matthew 10:24-25	Being Maligned Like Christ
Matthew 8:23-27	Jesus Stills the Storm	Matthew 10:26-33	Whom to Fear
Matthew 8:28-9:1	Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs	Matthew 10:34-39	Not Peace, but a Sword
Matthew 9:2-8	Heals a Paralytic	Matthew 10:40-42	Welcome & Rewards
Matthew 9:9-13	The Call of Matthew	Matthew 11:1-6	Messengers from John
Matthew 9:14-17	The Question about Fasting	Matthew 11:7-19	Jesus Praises John the Baptist
Matthew 9:18-26	Girl Alive/Woman Healed	Matthew 11:20-24	Woes to Unrepentant Cities
Matthew 9:27-31	Heals Two Blind Men	Matthew 11:25-30	Jesus Thanks His Father
Matthew 9:32-34	Heals One Who Was Mute		

The Textⁱ

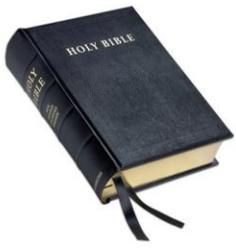
Matthew 10:40-42 (NRSV)

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."

Questions/Issues

Churches as places of radical welcome. Who are the vulnerable strangers around us or among us? How can congregations and its members become better at offering radical hospitality and support? What role can each



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of us play? What role should each of us play? What tiny tasks (as simple as offering a cup of cold water) would go a long way in showing who we are (or who we should be)? What about when there is risk involved?

Who should we offer radical/compassionate welcome to? Are there some we should not welcome? Is there ever a time when the church needs to ask someone not join in the worship or activities of the church?

How does God's radical grace-filled hospitality of us influence our understanding of the hospitality we are to offer? How do we avoid crossing the line of being patronizing/condescending or even paternalistic in our welcome or hospitality? How do we maintain genuine hospitality for all regardless of people's income, education, profession, social status, social skills, situation in life or whether or not they *look* "like us", *think* "like us", *act* "like us", *talk* "like us"?

Do we cross a line when expect to receive something in return? From God? From the person receiving our welcome?

We often talk about having been blessed to be a blessing for others. Being a blessing *for others* on behalf of Christ makes a significant difference. Being *for others* while embodying a spirit of love is different than being *for others* out of obligation or duty; it requires an open heart, a different mindset.

Are there any norms within the congregation that betray or go against our desire to offer gracious welcome and hospitality? How do we shut out others in our congregation or make some to feel less than welcome? What changes might need to be made in order to correct or rethink those actions, motives, intentions or activities?

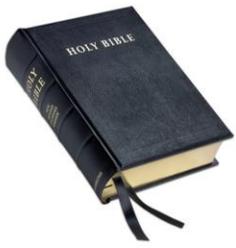
Supporting the Ministry. What can members do to support the work of Christ and the church? How can we support those who come bearing the message of Christ? How can people in the church best support their pastor and others in ministry? Financial or material support of ministry is extremely important, but there are also other ways people can support the work of those called to vocational ministry. What might this look like?

Who our congregation supports its ministry well? What do they do? How do they support it? What is the story behind their actions and support? Perhaps there are several people who do this. Who did they support and how?

Taking Risks/Making Sacrifices for the Gospel of Christ. Supporting the ministry of the apostles was risky business. If the disciples were at risk in carrying out this ministry, those who welcomed them and supported them were at risk as well. What risks are you willing to take for the gospel of Christ? What risks are you willing to take in order to support the ministry of Christ in your community, in your neighborhood, among your neighbors, coworkers, and friends?

Parents often sacrifice a lot for their children (sleep, comfort, finances, etc). They know what it means to give up certain things for the sake of another. What sacrifices are we willing to make in order to support the mission of God?

Seeing Christ in One Another. To welcome/receive someone in Christ's name is to welcome/receive Christ himself. To welcome/receive Christ himself is to welcome/receive God. When we welcome a stranger or even a fellow worker in Christ, do we see Christ in them? Do we see God in them? Do we see Christ in one another?



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Key Words

WELCOMES ME; WELCOMES THE ONE WHO SENT ME – δέχομαι (to receive, to welcome). This word “welcomes” (NRSV, NIV) or “receives” (ESV, NASB, NKJV) appears six times within these three verses.

In Matthew 18:5 Jesus says something similar about welcoming children in his name. He says: ⁵ *Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.* See also Galatians 4:14 for a similar sentiment.

What does it mean to welcome/receive someone in this text, especially in light of what Jesus says earlier in the chapter?

Matthew 10:9-15 ⁹ *Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹ Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹² As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³ If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.*

From this we get the sense that to welcome or receive the disciples is not only to provide for them (food and housing) but also to welcome/accept/receive their teaching; to accept God’s word as well as God’s will as revealed by them. See also Luke 9:48; 10:16; John 5:23; 12:44-49; 13:20; 20:21.

When we welcome one of Christ’s disciples, who are we really welcoming? The notion behind the phrase “whoever welcomes you welcomes me” is what in Hebrew is called *šālīah* and what in Greek is called an apostle. Both words mean “one who is sent, an envoy”; one who acts as an authorized agent or representative. The notion is that the authorized representative carries the full authority of the person they represent *as if that person (themselves) was present.*

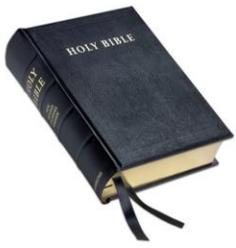
This is partially how we understand the mission and ministry of Jesus (the One who was sent by God); which is made clear in the gospel of John:

John 4:34 ³⁴ *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.*

John 5:23 ²³ *so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

John 12:44-49 ⁴⁴ *Then Jesus cried aloud: “Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. ⁴⁷ I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, ⁴⁹ for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak.*

The disciples are sent to carry out the ministry of Jesus which is the ministry of God; to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, etc (see Matthew 10:7-8). This ministry will be challenging and difficult. There is great risk involved. Jesus has told the disciples to travel light and to depend upon the generosity and hospitality of “those who are worthy” (see Matthew 10:9-11). Here Jesus discusses the fact that those who assist his disciples by providing welcome, hospitality, and sustenance are credited as having helped Christ himself; even more, they have aligned themselves with God and are actually supporting the work of God. They are partnering with God, with Christ, and the disciples. They are sharing the risk and promoting the cause by receiving the disciples into their homes and providing for them.



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Conversely, to reject the disciples is to reject God. For this notion in the scriptures, we remember the story of Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:7 ⁷ *and the Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.*

What does it mean to welcome/receive a prophet of God? See the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-10:

⁸ *One day Elisha was passing through Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to have a meal. So whenever he passed that way, he would stop there for a meal.* ⁹ *She said to her husband, "Look, I am sure that this man who regularly passes our way is a holy man of God.* ¹⁰ *Let us make a small roof chamber with walls, and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that he can stay there whenever he comes to us."*

See the story of Cornelius and Peter in Acts 10:1-8.

¹ *In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called.* ² *He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God.* ³ *One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius."* ⁴ *He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.* ⁵ *Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; ⁶ he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside."* ⁷ *When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, ⁸ and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa.*

See the story of Lydia in Acts 16:14-15

¹⁴ *A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul.* ¹⁵ *When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.*

See also where Paul commends Phoebe to be welcomed appropriately in Romans 16:1-2.

¹ *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, ² so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.*

See also where Paul talks about being hosted by Gaius in Romans 16:23.

²³ *Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*

See also where Paul talks about Onesiphorus who welcomed him in 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

¹⁶ *May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; ¹⁷ when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me ¹⁸ —may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! And you know very well how much service he rendered in Ephesus.*

See Philippians 4:15-19 where Paul talks about the support of the church in Philippi.

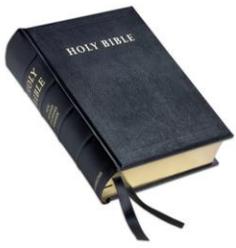
¹⁵ *You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone.* ¹⁶ *For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once.* ¹⁷ *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account.* ¹⁸ *I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.* ¹⁹ *And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

Finally, consider what it says about being kind to the poor in Proverbs.

Proverbs 14:31 ³¹ *Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.*

Proverbs 19:17 ¹⁷ *Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full.*

IN THE NAME OF A PROPHET; IN THE NAME OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON – To do something “in the name of” someone is to do it under their authority; representing them. Jesus is talking about receiving “prophets” and



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“righteous ones” in His name. See Matthew 13:17 ¹⁷ *Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.*

Jesus, while visiting his hometown of Nazareth, referred to himself as a prophet saying “Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house” (Matthew 13:57).

Jesus is frequently referred to as a prophet in the rest of Matthew’s gospel:

Matthew 14:5 *Though Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet.*

Matthew 16:14 *And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*

Matthew 21:11 *The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”*

Matthew 21:46 *They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.*

Righteous. Being righteous and the notion of righteousness are prevalent throughout Matthew’s gospel. See the following verses:

Matthew 1:19 *Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.*

Matthew 3:15 *But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.*

Matthew 5:6 *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

Matthew 5:10 *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:20 *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:45 *so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.*

Matthew 6:33 *But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

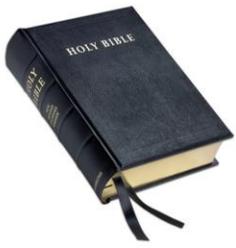
Matthew 9:13 *Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”*

Matthew 13:40-43 *Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!*

Matthew 13:49-50 *So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Matthew 21:32 *For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.*

Matthew 23:25–35 ²⁵ *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean. ²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. ²⁸ So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous, ³⁰ and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹ Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors. ³³ You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell? ³⁴ Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, ³⁵ so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.*



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Matthew 25:37-46 ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?' ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?' ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;' ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

A PROPHETS REWARD; THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS – What is the reward of a prophet or the reward of the righteous? We find this affirmation in Hebrews 6:10 ¹⁰ For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.

We also have this promise in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 9:6–15 ⁶ The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. ⁹ As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

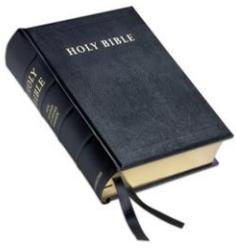
For the notion of acts of piety being rewarded, see Matthew 6

Matthew 6:1-18 ¹ "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no **reward** from your Father in heaven. ² "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their **reward**. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will **reward** you. ⁵ "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their **reward**. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will **reward** you. ⁷ "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ "Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. ¹⁶ "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their **reward**. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will **reward** you.

For the notion of taking up the cross, self-denial and rewards, see Matthew 16

Matthew 16:24-28 ²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? ²⁷ "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then **he will repay everyone** for what has been done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

See also Matthew 25:34–40.



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³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;** ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

It's also hard not to think of God's words to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 when it comes to rewarding those who welcome and those who reject God's people.

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

A CUP OF COLD WATER – Perhaps small echoes of the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (see 1 Kings 17:9-15, 20-24).

⁹ "Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." ¹⁰ So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." ¹¹ As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹² But she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." ¹³ Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." ¹⁵ She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days...

...²⁰ He cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" ²¹ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." ²² The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." ²⁴ So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

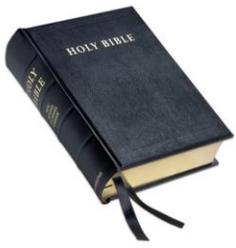
See also the description of Obadiah who sheltered 100 prophets on God's behalf in 1 Kings 18:3-4).

³ Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Now Obadiah revered the Lord greatly; ⁴ when Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)

THESE LITTLE ONES – Who are these little ones? Is Jesus referring to his disciples, to the least in the kingdom, or is Jesus talking about little children? This isn't the only place where Jesus talks about **these little ones**.

Matthew 18:1-14 ¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² He called a child, whom he put among them, ³ and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. ⁶ "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of **these little ones** who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes! ⁸ "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire. ¹⁰ "Take care that you do not despise one of **these little ones**; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. ¹² What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of **these little ones** should be lost.

See parallel passages in Mark 9:42 and Luke 17:2



Echoes of Scripture

Proper 8a ~ Matthew 10:40-42

See also Matthew 19:13–15 ¹³ Then **little children** were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; ¹⁴ but Jesus said, “Let the **little children** come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as **these** that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” ¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

In the parable in Matthew 25, Jesus talks about the least of these.

Matthew 25:40-45 ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of **the least of these who are members of my family**, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of **the least of these**, you did not do it to me.’

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