

Lectio Divina **Matthew 10: 37-42**

Lectio

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 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; and whoever gives even a cup of water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you none of these will lose their reward. [NRSV]

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Meditatio

As I read and ponder this gospel, there are two themes that resonate: the radical cost of discipleship - to "prefer nothing to Christ", and love of my neighbour for Christ's sake.

These words in the last line of the first paragraph, stay with me: "*those who lose their life for my sake will find it*". And in my mind's eye, a large image of the cross sits right behind these words. I hear the Spirit of the living, risen Christ calling me to nothing less than a wholehearted discipleship in which my life is IN Christ.

The second theme is the calling to love my neighbour, welcoming them as Christ himself. For the giving of "even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones" is not simply an act of hospitality, but a giving of oneself generously by reaching out, most particularly to the more vulnerable.

Oratio/Contemplatio

This response is in the context of my current challenging post operation recovery, following major surgery on my left foot. With this foot, still mostly elevated and sometimes severely painful, the call to surrender to and trust in God's presence in my vulnerability is ever before me. I offer my prayer:

Lord, I trust in your boundless love.

How blessed to know your love never lets me go!

I give thanks for your healing presence - healing I can see and feel just as surely as I know you are holding me and strengthening me each day and each night.

I ask for the grace to abide with you, to turn to you rather than be bound up with myself.

And I ask for the grace to look beyond my own needs and to be mindful of the needs of others, especially those caring for me and praying for me, and those fellow travellers who are housebound, perhaps alone and even more vulnerable...

My prayer response to God soon became wordless prayer, followed by resting in His presence.

Ruminatio

These words from a prayer of St Teresa of Avila (see full prayer below), give me inspiration on my journey:

*Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.*

Evangelization

I have learnt through my own experience and that of others, that our calling as Christians to radical, costly discipleship is only possible by holding steadfastly to the love of God in Christ and relying solely on God's grace.

I take heart trusting "Christ makes up for our lack" as Brother Roger of Taizé asserts in his beautiful book, *God is Love Alone*. And I know that our God of Compassion and Mercy is always moving towards us (whether we know it or not) and calling us home to abide with him. When we fall short, which we inevitably do, we are always forgiven and drawn into the life of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, who gifts us with all we need to continue our journey.

Closing Prayer

Let nothing disturb you,
let nothing frighten you,
all things are passing away:
God never changes – God alone abides.
Patience obtains all things;
whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices. St Teresa of Avila.

Some contextual information about the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew is writing to a community of Jewish converts to Christianity, and therefore no longer in communion with the Pharisee-led Judaism that came to the fore after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Cumulative scholarly evidence for Matthew's gospel suggests that an unknown Greek-speaking Jewish Christian, probably a scribe based in Antioch, composed this gospel between 80 and 90 CE. (If so, this gospel was likely attributed to the disciple Matthew primarily to lend it authority.)

While Matthew's gospel is clearly opposed to the hostile Pharisaic leadership of the time, it is not, as has often been claimed, antisemitic, fuelling the persecution of Jews, the pogroms, and even the Nazi Holocaust. Rather, Matthew proclaims Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures we call the Old Testament.

(See *Lifting the Burden: Reading Matthew's Gospel* by Brendan Byrne SJ, St Paul's 2004.)