

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

In Matthew, the author strives to reach largely a Jewish group to convince them that Jesus was the hoped-for Messiah. Jesus is someone who relives the experience of Israel as what is prophesied in the Old Testament. In Chapter 10, Jesus is sending out the apostles to heal and preach throughout the region and gives them careful instruction, to reach the lost sheep of Israel. He is empowering them to heal, have power, and proclaim, and to do so cautiously and shrewdly. There is a lot of prophesy and wisdom by Jesus before we come to these verses. We then approach these last three verses of the chapter, the ending note. As we drill down, we see these three verses are powerful. Jesus is setting a precedence and stating what will be done according to the person. Each person has their way of connecting with people, from the prophetic to the righteous to the little children.

When I first read these verses, I think of radical hospitality, even if that is not what the verses were meant to say. In radical hospitality, you invite the stranger, the other, the unknown into your midst. And in kind, Jesus says no one will lose their reward, but [implied] receives the blessing from God. We in turn bless others. At this time, I request that we bless those in our midst, the people of the Navajoland, with the following collect. May it speak to their heart and all that read it, say it, and even shout it!

God, life-giver and protector,
From where our help will come.
Who neither sleeps nor slumbers, but keeps us from all harm.
May the Lord watch over us.
May we lift our eyes up to the mountains,
For the Lord will keep us from all harm.
He will watch over our life.
The Lord will keep our going out and our coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

For we know You, Lord, have measured the waters in the hollow of Your hand
And the breadth of Your hand marked off the heavens.
You held the dust of the earth in a basket
And weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance.

Lord God,
Enfold the people of the Navajoland in Your strong arms of love.
Hold them in the loving hollow of Your hands and protect them.
Bless and protect the clergy, those who are on the front lines, and the people of the Navajoland.
Stir Your Spirit within the people and upon the land
So that the people will be moved to value the preciousness of life.

May all take the necessary precautions to keep everyone safe so that life and health will be preserved.

We ask this through the loving heart of our Shepherd,
who watches over us and protects us in all times throughout eternity.
Amen.

*Inspired by Psalm 121 and Isaiah 40:12
Laura Orcutt and Melody Oliphant
Education for Ministry (EFM) Group from St. Mary's, Provo, UT*