

Eternal Royalties

Matthew 10:40–42 (NASB 1995)

“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”

Introduction

I have been receiving royalties for some of the books I have written.

A royalty is really a reward for the author. You do the work once, and as long as the book continues to sell, the checks keep coming. It is a strange kind of income. You may have written the book years ago, but the reward continues to arrive month after month.

And some royalties can continue even after the author dies.

That is the image I want to borrow this morning.

The Bible promises believers something better than earthly royalties. It speaks of an eternal reward—a reward that does not run out, does not expire, and is not forgotten.

Jesus talks about that reward in today's short passage.

Matthew 10:40–42 contains only three verses, but Jesus gives us a profound truth: **what we do for others in His name is never forgotten by God.**

A cup of cold water may seem like a very small thing. A welcome may seem insignificant. A visit to someone who is lonely may seem ordinary. A kind word may take only a few seconds. But Jesus says that Father in Heaven sees and rewards what we may overlook.

So, let us consider four simple truths from this passage.

1. What We Sow Matters

There is a principle throughout Scripture that we understand easily: **we reap what we sow.** The things we do today can produce consequences tomorrow.

A farmer understands this. When he plants a seed in the spring, he does not expect a harvest that afternoon. He waits. He waters. He cares for the field. Eventually, what was planted begins to appear. The same principle applies spiritually.

Our words matter. Our choices matter. Our generosity matters. Our kindness matters. Our faithfulness matters. Our treatment of other people matters.

Matthew 10:40–42 repeatedly points us toward the future. Jesus says, “**shall** receive,” “**shall** receive,” and “**shall** not lose.”

Jesus is reminding us that what we do in the present does not simply disappear into the past. There is a future connected to our faithfulness.

That does not mean we earn our salvation by doing good things. We need to make that distinction very clear. **Salvation is God's gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We do not earn salvation by accumulating enough good works.**

But the same Bible that teaches salvation by grace also teaches that God sees and rewards faithfulness. We don't serve Christ in order to purchase salvation. We serve Christ because He has already saved us. And Jesus tells us that He does not overlook the things we do in His name.

That is where our passage takes us.

2. God Does Not Forget Faithfulness

Jesus says: “*He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's **reward**; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's **reward***” (v. 41).

The important word here is “**reward.**” The Greek word is *misthos*. It refers to a reward, wages, or recompense.

Jesus is telling us that God recognizes faithfulness and rewards accordingly. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has already spoken about this.

He says that when we give to the needy without seeking applause, our Father sees what is done in secret. When we pray without performing for other people, our Father sees in secret. When we fast without trying to impress others, our Father sees in secret. And the same Father who sees in secret will reward His children.

God sees things that other people never see. There are prayers nobody knows you prayed. There are sacrifices nobody knows you made. There are tears nobody saw. There are

acts of kindness that nobody thanked you for. There are times when you did the right thing even though nobody would have known it.

God sees all of it. And He does not forget. Sometimes we become discouraged because we wonder whether our faithfulness makes any difference. You teach the class. You make the phone call. You visit the sick. You prepare the meal. You encourage someone who is struggling. You give when you could have kept the money. You forgive when you could have held on to the offense. You pray for someone who may never know that you prayed.

And sometimes you wonder, “Does any of this really matter?” Jesus says, **Yes. A resounding ‘YES.’**

God sees. He remembers. And He rewards. That is why Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:58: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”*

Your labor is not in vain. Even when people don't notice it. Even when nobody applauds. Even when nobody says thank you. God sees.

3. How We Receive Others Matters

Now we come to the heart of Jesus' teaching. He says: *“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me”* (v. 40).

Notice the progression. **Receive you → receive Me → receive Him who sent Me.**

Jesus teaches us that the way we receive His people matters because of our relationship to Him.

The Greek language translated in English as “receive” is *dechomai*. It often carries the idea of welcoming or accepting someone or something with open arms.

Jesus' point is simple: **How we receive people who belong to Christ matters to Christ and He will reward us accordingly.**

Think about what happens when someone comes to your home. You open the door. You invite the person inside. You offer a seat. You offer something to drink. You make room. You welcome that person. The act may be very ordinary.

But Jesus says that when we receive His people, something much greater is happening than we may realize. We are receiving Christ. We are receiving God the Father. That changes the way we look at people.

Suppose two visitors walk into church next Sunday. One arrives in a pressed suit and steps out of a beautiful new car. The other arrives on foot. His clothes are old and perhaps not as clean as we would like. Watch your heart in that half-second before you decide how warmly to greet each one. That half-second is where James 2 speaks directly to us.

James warns the church not to show favoritism—to treat the wealthy person with special honor while treating the poor person as though he were less important. Why? Because every person is created in the image of God.

And for Christians, there is another reason. Jesus says, **“He who receives you receives Me.”** That means we need to be careful about how we treat one another.

We encounter believers in all kinds of circumstances. Sunday School children, Youths, Pastors. Teachers. Choir members. Trustees. Youth Group leaders. Longtime members. Shut-in friends. New members. Visitors. Jesus commands us to receive them all in His name.

We might be tempted to measure people by their position, education, income, appearance, influence, or usefulness. But Jesus asks us to see something deeper. **See the person standing in front of you.** That person bears the image of God. And if that person belongs to Christ, remember what Jesus said: *“He who receives you receives Me.”* And he who receives Christ receives God the Father.

4. Even a Cup of Cold-Water Counts

Then Jesus brings the whole teaching down to something wonderfully ordinary.

He says: *“And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward”* (v. 42).

A cup of cold water. Not a large donation. Not a great sermon. Not a famous ministry. Not something that will make the evening news.

Just a cup of cold water. Jesus deliberately chooses something small. Why? Because we tend to think that only big things matter. We think we have to do something extraordinary for God.

But Jesus says that something as ordinary as giving a cup of cold water to someone in His name matters to Him. The size of the gift is not the point. The heart behind the gift is the point.

A cup of water can become an act of worship. A handshake can become an act of love. A phone call can become an act of ministry. A visit can become an act of compassion. A seat offered to someone can become an act of hospitality. A meal prepared for a grieving

family can become an expression of Christ's love. A word of encouragement can change someone's entire day.

We often don't know the impact of our small acts. But God knows.

Jesus says: *"He shall not lose his reward."* There is tremendous comfort in those words. Because sometimes the smallest things are the things we are most likely to forget. We forget the cup of water we gave. We forget the person we encouraged. We forget the visit we made. We forget the small sacrifice. But God does not forget.

Jesus is saying, in effect, **"I saw it."** And because Jesus saw it, it matters.

The Least of These

Jesus gives us another picture of this truth in Matthew 25. When the Son of Man comes in His glory, He speaks to those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned. And they are surprised. They ask, in effect, *"Lord, when did we do these things for You?"*

And Jesus answers: *"To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."*

The point is striking. They didn't realize how significant their acts were. They were simply serving people. They were feeding someone who was hungry. Welcoming someone who was a stranger. Visiting someone who was sick.

But Jesus says, **"You did it to Me."** That is very close to what Jesus is saying in today's text. When we receive His people, we receive Him. When we serve His people, we serve Him. When we show love in His name, He sees it.

Nothing Is Forgotten

That brings us back to the word Jesus uses in verse 42: *"He shall not lose his reward."*

Jesus uses a strong expression here. In Greek, it is the double negation—Not not—"Never ever" would be a better translation. It emphasizes certainty of rewards. In simple terms: **It will NEVER be lost.**

The world may forget. People may forget. We may forget. But God does not forget.

Think about how encouraging that is. Perhaps someone has served faithfully for years and feels that nobody notices anymore. God notices. Perhaps someone has quietly given to others without recognition. God sees. Perhaps you have prayed for someone for

years and wondered whether your prayers matter. God hears. Perhaps you have spent your life serving Christ in ways that seemed very ordinary. God has not misplaced the record.

Your faithfulness will not be forgotten.

Conclusion

So, what should we do with this passage?

This week, look for the ordinary opportunities. When a believer crosses your path, welcome that person. When someone needs encouragement, encourage them. When someone is thirsty, give them a cup of water.

When someone is lonely, make a phone call. When someone is hurting, visit. When someone needs help, help. And when you do these things, don't worry too much about whether anyone notices.

Because someone up there does. God sees.

Remember Jesus' words: "He shall not lose his reward."

One day, we will discover that some of the things we thought were insignificant were not insignificant at all.

So let us live faithfully. Let us welcome generously. Let us serve humbly. Let us love without keeping score.

And let us remember this: **What seems small to us may be precious to God. In Christ, no act of faithful love is ever wasted, and no act of faithful love is ever forgotten.**

Our earthly royalties will one day end. But the reward of faithfulness in Christ belongs to eternity.

Amen.