June 28, 2026 – Westwood United Methodist Church

“When They Meet You” Rev. HeeYoung (Lucas) Lim

Matthew 10:40-42

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.”

“ When They Meet You”

A few days ago, I read a question from a Korean family preparing to move to the United States. They asked, "Our children don't speak much English yet. We have about three weeks before we leave. What should we do to help them?"
Many people gave good advice like these:

- "Memorize everyday English."
- "Learn school vocabulary."
- "Practice speaking common expressions."

Ten years ago, I probably would have given the same answer, but today, I would answer differently. I would say, find a good person like a teacher, a classmate, a neighbor or someone at church.

Because, according to my learning experiences, I learned much more from people than from words in books or in the academy.

According to my understanding, my language skills came through relationships. Cultures and life skills are also affected by relationships with people. Of course I studied through the reading of books. However, the experience through relationships were stronger.

And through those relationships, I frequently changed my mind. And I realized that when we meet people, we can change our minds.

That is also how God chose to reach us.
In today's Gospel, Jesus says,

> "Whoever welcomes you welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me."

These verses are surprising.
Jesus did not say, **Whoever listens to you listens to Me.**

He did not even say, **Whoever believes your message believes in Me.**

Instead, Jesus said, **Whoever welcomes you welcomes Me.**

Through these verses, Jesus identified Himself with His disciples.
He tied His life to the disciples. Imagine, what if Jesus tied His life with us?

When people met the disciples, they were meeting Jesus because Jesus considered their lives were His life. That is exactly how Jesus lived.

Jesus did not stay where it was safe. Jesus did not remain with the people in powerful positions . Jesus could have had an appropriate relationship with the political leaders.

However, Jesus walked with ordinary people or minority people at that time. He ate with sinners. He touched and healed the sick.

Jesus welcomed those who were rejected by the authorities.

Jesus did not simply help people. Jesus shared His life with them.
And Jesus sent His disciples to do the same as Jesus did.

I experienced something similar just a few days ago. During a meeting with our District of UM pastors, we talked about the issue of. Years ago, many people did not understand what immigrants experienced, except Korean pastors. It was hard to explain this to them, or it was simply outside their world.

But over the past few years, it has changed. Many pastors know about immigration status issues or they are ready to hear about those them. They have learned. They have cared. Not only because they read a book or the NYTimes, but because they met people, the people who are experiencing it in their ministries.

Wow. I was so surprised. And that gives me hope.
People change when they truly meet one another. When people open and tie their lives to others, I think we realize how God loves us.

The Gospel spreads the same way. Jesus did not send a book of words. Jesus sent people. Jesus did not send ideas. Jesus sent disciples.
And Jesus trusted that His disciples would share God's love or God's good news through their lives. Imagine what Jesus would tell us? Do you think Jesus would send us or would Jesus deliver a book?

This week our nation celebrates Independence Day. This year also marks 250 years of American history. Like every nation, I agree that America is not a perfect nation. There are still divisions, there is still fear. And there is still pain.

But I still have hope.
Because, even today, I still see people carrying the heart of Christ. When people meet them, they meet Jesus. People who welcome strangers. People who stand with immigrants. People who care for those who suffer. And People who feed and care for them, they have the Spirit of God.

A decade ago, even American pastors did not pay attention to immigration status because that was not a major issue. However, when the immigrants are suffering, they become their neighbors. During and after the pandemic, because of economic challenges, people contributed food donations to feed their neighbors with the heart of Jesus.

When I see those acts of love, I see Jesus still walking among us.
My prayer is simple.

When people meet us, may they discover kindness.
May they discover hope.
May they discover Christ.
Because Jesus still comes through His people like us.

Remember, when they meet you, they meet Jesus.
Amen.

Let us pray.
We feel deep empathy for people who are struggling with their issues. However, we know you are always with them with your caring. And your empathy overflows to us, not to let them stay alone but to invite us to feel their heart. Lord, let them not stay lonely. Let them see you through us. When they meet us, let them see that You are connected to us so they feel that they are receiving your love and peace. Amen.