“Platinum”

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Matthew 10:40-42

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***40“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41Whoever 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, 42and 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.”***

In his book “The Art of People,” author David Kerpen tells the following story: "Personally I am very fond of strawberries and cream, but I have found that for some strange reason, fish prefer worms. So when I went fishing, I didn't think about what I wanted. I thought about what they wanted. I didn't bait the hook with strawberries and cream. Rather, I dangled a worm or grasshopper in front of the fish and said: 'Wouldn't you like to have that?'"1

With the dreaded subtitle, “11 Simple People Skills That Will Get You Everything You Want!” this story illustrates what has come to be called The Platinum Rule.2

Originally coined in 1979, popularized by modern leadership literature,3 The Platinum Rule came about as a leadership strategy aimed at going deeper to discover more about “your people.” Instead of the Golden Rule which says we should treat others as we would like to be treated, the Platinum Rule says we should treat others as *they* would like to be treated. Oh, the irony of that concept in a book about getting everything you want!

The Platinum Rule implies some groundwork. One can’t work the platinum rule unless we remember that we are all different, that the world is not all about me, that I need to consider others – and, that fish would prefer worms to strawberries and cream.

In short, the seeking to follow the Platinum Rule builds empathy.

Just imagine the situations where this would be helpful! It’s not just the empathy itself that would be helpful. Also helpful is the path itself that leads us to knowing someone well enough to apply the platinum rule. Knowing how someone else wants to be treated means connection and it means relationship. Connection and relationships take some risk. But even a small gesture is a start.

A gesture like, say, offering a simple cup of cold water.

Debi Thomas, a commentator I like to read, who never ceases to throw a wrench in whatever I was thinking, writes, “The danger in approaching this week’s Gospel passage is that we’ll dismiss it as straightforward.”4

The wrench of course being that I was assuming that it *was* straightforward. Jesus is teaching us to be welcoming. Jesus is teaching us to welcome the stranger – whether the stranger is Christ himself, or a prophet or even a “little one” – the little one being either a child, or one new to their life of faith, or one living on the margins. Anyone, is who we should welcome.

But Debi Thomas suggests that because Jesus is speaking to the disciples in this longer portion of Matthew, Jesus is actually telling his disciples “…what it looks like and feels like for followers of Jesus to accept welcome in Jesus’s name.”4

In this long section of the gospel of Matthew Jesus has been instructing his disciples about what to do and what to expect as they go out and spread Jesus’ message. These instructions aren’t only about *being* welcoming, they’re about *experiencing* welcome.

I want to suggest that the difference between being welcoming and experiencing welcoming is much like the difference between the Golden Rule and the Platinum Rule.

Being welcoming is like the Golden Rule because everything starts with me. When we ask ourselves here at Bethany if we are being welcoming, we look around at *ourselves* and decide. Experiencing welcome is like the Platinum Rule because when we ask ourselves here at Bethany if we are being welcoming, we need to consider *those outside of us* and decide.

If Bethany is anything, it is a welcoming community! How do we know that? Do we know that because we know how we would like to be welcoming and we do those things? We inside the building asking us, inside the building, what would work. Sure! That would be the Golden Rule! That’s perfectly acceptable.

But how might we apply the Platinum Rule? Instead of knowing what we would want and doing those things, what do we know about the other – the stranger, the newcomer, the outsider – and how they would like to be welcomed? We inside the building asking *them*, *outside* the building, what would work for them. Do *others* say that we’re welcoming?

Church is one community. We have families, clubs, circles, work places, classrooms, and other groups. And of course, the most obvious community we are a part of on this Independence Day weekend, is that of a country. The Presbyterian Calendar calls this Immigration Sunday, which fits well into the scripture about being welcoming.

Immigration as a concept, the reality of life for many throughout history, and as an ideal are different than Immigration as a policy. In the same way, Independence Day is a day to celebrate the patriotic ideals of our country, separate from the political systems and policy of our country.

Being patriotic and engaging in acts of patriotism are different than being a patriot. Loving our nation is different than the concept of Nationalism. Nationalism loves ones own nation to the detriment of another, while Patriotism loves the ideals and values of one’s own country without lessening another country.

The overlap between worship and our civic life occurs when we let our faith guide our life. As Christian individuals we come to worship to learn more about our faith and celebrate a lifetime of being formed by the work of God in our lives. How then does that worship guide us in our lives outside of church? In our volunteer activities? In our civic responsibilities? In our vocations? How we vote? How we see others?

Churches cannot ignore the water in which they swim. With a foundation of welcome, a foundation of working for connection not brokenness, a foundation of the love of peace of Christ, who gives not as the world gives, but as Christ gives, a better world is possible.

Let us pray.

1<https://www.careercontessa.com/advice/the-platinum-rule-at-work/>

2<https://www.livingasaleader.com/Resources/Leadership-Blog/The-Platinum-Rule-A-new-leadership-mindset-for-improved-work-and-personal-relationships.htm#:~:text=The%20Platinum%20Rule%20was%20popularized,important%20shift%20from%20false%20consensus>.

3<https://www.livingasaleader.com/Resources/Leadership-Blog/The-Platinum-Rule-A-new-leadership-mindset-for-improved-work-and-personal-relationships.htm#:~:text=The%20Platinum%20Rule%20was%20popularized,important%20shift%20from%20false%20consensus>.  Milton J. Bennett, [Overcoming the Golden Rule: Sympathy and Empathy](https://web.archive.org/web/20060902025103/http:/www.library.wisc.edu/EDVRC/docs/public/pdfs/LIReadings/OvercomingGoldenRule.pdf), 1979

4<https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2672-welcome-the-prophet>

5<https://www.dictionary.com/e/patriotism-vs-nationalism/>