

5th Sunday after Pentecost – June 28, 2026

Matthew 10:40-42

Today marks the anniversary of the first day of the Stonewall Riots – June 28, 1969. These were something that I was never educated about in school. Some of you may remember living through them or hearing about them – the times were pretty tumultuous with anti-war protests and the civil rights movement. And those we did talk about those in history class. Even Woodstock was taught. But the Stonewall Riots were ignored. And they marked a pivotal moment in the lgbtq+ movement.

Fighting back against injustice and inequality, the riots have been commemorated each year after by peaceful demonstrations that have evolved into our pride celebrations. Parts of our history are a bit controversial – Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday marking the day the Union soldiers reached Galveston, Texas to enforce the emancipation proclamation. Pride being celebrated as a month of reclaiming and being able to live out ones God given identity publicly.

In the past month, these two pieces of history have been hot topics. And it comes across as folks not wanting to acknowledge these pieces of history or these people who live their lives carrying these identities. I think it stands to show those who are still, even today, marginalized and oppressed in our country – the same country that will celebrate freedom this Saturday. A country where we pledge liberty and justice for all – yet even today racism, homophobia, and

bigotry remain. While we are not a solely Christian nation – we cannot deny that Christian values were upheld in most of our founding fathers.

And so that means the words of our gospel are supposed to ring true for us. “Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me” says Jesus.

“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” Jesus is sending out his disciples as missionaries.

When we look at our gospel reading, we tend to put ourselves in the shoes of the disciples going out into the world. And we like to focus on others welcoming us and what we have to say. But I think it’s also important to recognize all the characters at play. And recognize that this gospel is also a call for a holy welcome.

Opening ourselves to welcome the stranger. Because that stranger may have some good news for us to hear. When it comes to welcoming the stranger, who would not receive that welcome from us? We have on our sign, “All are welcome.” And we place that there because we truly believe that all of God’s children are welcome to join us. That God’s table is open and welcoming for everyone. And that includes those that other churches dismiss.

We still have denominations discussing whether women can read scripture during a worship service. To say that we are a welcoming church is a bold statement. And that we welcome everyone to come, join, be involved, take on leadership. It’s a holy welcome because it doesn’t have any limits to it. To offer a cold glass of water is just the start. We are called to offer this holy welcome to God’s people. Because in each of them, we find God.

Holding onto this holy welcome perspective can help us remember who God is calling us to love and remember as we are welcoming folks in. That our welcome extends beyond those who are like us. And our welcome extends to the stranger. People we do not know, who are different than us. Folks that even though we can't understand their lived experience, we can still welcome them to God's table – to experience a God who does understand them, knows them, and loves them.

Have we embraced that holy welcome? Are we ready to welcome the folks that society continues to marginalize? It's a holy command. One that Christ exemplified. And reminded us that even the most lowly – God is present within them. There is no “them and us” to God. We are all God's beloved children.

Let us pray:

Loving God, you have shown us in Christ that life is found in loving welcome. Send us now by your Spirit to welcome our neighbors with courage and hope, trusting your grace that makes all things new. Keep us in your promise, and hold us in your steadfast love. Amen.