

October 18, 2020

The Rev. Dr. Morar Murray-Hayes



Reading: Matthew 10.37-42

The Message: Called to be Worthy

[Video](#)

Lately, perhaps because this is for me such a reflective time, I find myself watching the news from a different perspective -- not so much what is *in* the news, as who is lifted up most frequently. Who do we most often see?

It strikes me that right now, when we are so isolated, it's more important than ever to be mindful of the quality of what we welcome into our lives, since each element that comes in from outside has so much more power than in times when our lives are situated more firmly in the outside world.

So let me offer you a story from the news that I believe is a worthy intrusion into your minds and hearts.

Link to the YouTube story here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mq56e7GntUE>



Kenyan runner Abel Mutai was just a few feet from the finish line, but became confused with the signage and stopped, thinking he had completed the race. A Spanish runner, Ivan Fernandez, was right behind him and, realizing what was happening, started shouting at the Kenyan to continue running. Mutai didn't know Spanish and didn't understand. Realizing what was taking place, Fernandez pushed Mutai to victory.

A journalist asked Ivan, "Why did you do that?" Ivan replied, "My dream is that someday we can have a kind of community life where we push and help each other to win."

The journalist insisted "But why did you let the Kenyan win?" Ivan replied, "I didn't let him win, he was going to win. The race was his." The journalist insisted, and again asked, "But you could have won!" Ivan looked at him and replied, "But what would be the merit of my victory? What would be the honor in that medal?

What would my Mother think of that?"

Ivan Fernandez has been called to be worthy. He acted out of what he had received. Not only is Fernandez worthy, I think his mother is very worthy!

This story got me thinking about preparing to be worthy

How does one prepare to be

- Worthy of being elected?
- Worthy Knight of the National Order of the French Legion?

Members of Christ First's Search Committee are looking for a person who will be

- Worthy of being your minister

At the same time, members might be asking themselves,

- Are you worthy of being your future minister's people?

What are the qualities of good ministers? Good congregants?

I'm full of sports illustrations today! Here is a headline that drew me:

The Iroquois Nationals, which represent the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in international field lacrosse, will be among eight men's lacrosse teams competing in the 2022 World Games after they were originally excluded.

Were the rules changed to include the team that represents those who invented the sport? No. The Irish lacrosse team stepped aside to give their space to the First Nations team. It's enough to make me want to watch the Irish team play, for surely, their leaders are people who have responded to the call to be worthy.

I buried a man this week whose actions during the liberation of France in 1944 led to the French government awarding him the rank of "Knight of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour" 74 years later. Murray Young was deemed worthy by the age of 23. He might have rested on his laurels for the rest of his life. But for 76 years, he continued to quietly, persistently act in his private and public life in a manner that anyone would treasure as worthy.

When I watch the world, I wonder, 'How dare we revere those who act out of self interest?'

From RC's to evangelicals, Christians push worthiness to x as a response to (and I quote a Catholic priest here) "whatever trendy goofiness the elite secular culture is peddling this week, and it is always has something to do with sex.

I think the United Church is seeking another way -- a way that is faithful to Christ as we experience him in the scriptures and through the Holy Spirit, through our own personal experience of the love of Christ lived in and through those who have loved us with the mind of Christ as well as the heart of Christ.

We begin with the teaching of Jesus: "You are worthy."

Matthew 6.26

"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

I like the idea of being 'called to holiness:'

- called to mercy,

- called to love,
- called to forgiveness,
- Called to be worthy.

It is a responsibility of our faith to accept the call to mercy, love, forgiveness -- to live a holy life. And it is also a responsibility of our faith to call others to holiness: to call others to mercy, to love, to forgiveness.

The author of the letter to the **Ephesians chapter 4 verse 1**, imprisoned for his faith, is still able to write to his friends urging them to worthiness.

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”

There was a time when in the US, people would notice how much their presidents gave to charity. Journalists reported, comparisons were made. Now it seems, the focus is finding out if they pay any taxes.

There was a time when Bill and Melinda Gates didn't give much to charity. People started to notice and perhaps coincidentally, but perhaps not, the Melinda and Bill Gates foundation was started. Thanks to them, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Herculean efforts of Rotary International, Type 3 was eradicated in 2019 and the end to polio globally is in sight. Because of the work of the Gates' foundation, production, distribution and the administering of vaccines for other diseases worldwide has increased. That gives me hope that once a safe and reliable vaccine for Covid has been tested, as countries like Canada sign up to assist with the cost of distribution to economically struggling nations, that it really is possible to eradicate this disease too.

I have hope because when I was vaccinating children in India as part of the Rotary Polio Plus project, I met the nurses who were now able to give examinations and vaccinations to every child in India. I was volunteering in the poorest parts of the world, yet we were able to reach children living in the desert in cardboard lean tos and makeshift burlap tents. I had the dung clogged boots to prove it.

Jesus calls us to be worthy of him -- to love Christ more than our parents or children, to take up our cross and follow him, and to find our lives by losing them.

Caring human beings called the Gates to be worthy. They inspired Warren Buffet and countless others to be worthy. Canadians called our government to be worthy and they recently committed to help economically deprived countries with the cost of vaccinating against Covid 19.

A Rotarian, a member of my church, called me and my 14 year old daughter to be worthy. It required courage to respond. It really felt like we were losing our lives -- and we did find ourselves in several dangerous situations.

Jesus tells us: “whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

We came back to our regular lives radically altered.

Dana Bryant-Giguere was caught in civil violence while volunteering with Children of Hope - Haiti. I'm sure she would agree that this kind of 'losing one's life:'

- making a decision to take a risk,
- leaving family and safety, is transformational.

Her experience in India has guided so many significant decisions my daughter has made since.

My family, friends, and interests don't simply vanish when I turn my life over to Christ; they return to me newly oriented, re-shaped at the root and pointed faithfully toward Christ.

Now, we are able to love more perfectly through Christ, and see all in the Light of Christ.

I spoke of Murray Young early in my message. He was just one of the many Christ First folk who have been called to be worthy and responded throughout their lives. I read part of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi at his service. It is a fitting end to my message.

Philippians 4.8-10

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.