

Seek to Show Hospitality
Romans 12:9-13

Introduction

- A. In this sermon I want to call your attention to a matter that is vitally important if we are to build and maintain a great church. We aim to be biblically faithful and fruitful.
 - 1. By great church I don't mean better than others (no room for pride). I do mean that we major on the big rocks, the things of first and highest importance.
- B. What are the essential ingredients of great church? Here is my list (and you may differ). You may notice the list isn't program-driven:
 - 1. Faithful biblical preaching (we are blessed by Ben's preaching in Romans)
 - 2. Enthusiastic singing (Eagles or Steelers and Springsteen aren't worthier than Jesus)
 - 3. Spiritual health of the teens (imperfect but growing)
 - 4. Community or fellowship (walk in the light with one another)
 - 5. Outreach (can't hide our light under a basket)
- C. The matter I'll call to your attention gets at fellowship and outreach. If we will be a church that is faithful and fruitful one reason will be that we excel at hospitality.
 - 1. My sermon title is **Seek to Show Hospitality**. I will demonstrate that hospitality is of vital importance to the faithful Christian. Three points and the text:
 - The definition of hospitality
 - The motives for hospitality
 - The application of hospitality

Romans 12:9-13 (ESV) "[9] Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. [10] Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. [11] Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. [12] Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. [13] Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

I. The definition of hospitality

- A. This text begins with two commands that frame our understanding of hospitality. Let love be genuine and love one another with brotherly affection.

1. Where love is cold hospitality will be diminished. People draw back from each other. “Hardly anything is more characteristic of Christian love than hospitality. Hospitality is essential to fanning the flames of love and strengthening the Christian community.... Through the ministry of hospitality, we share the things we value most: family, home, financial resources, food, privacy, and time. In other words, we share our lives.” Alexander Strauch, *Leading with Love*, p. 99

2. We know Jesus calls us to love one another.

John 13:34-35 (ESV) “[34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

3. Love is beautiful. The Apostle Paul weighs in on love this way (and I say, this is the way we treat brothers and sisters in the Lord).

1 Corinthians 13:1-8a “[1] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. [4] Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant [5] or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; [6] it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. [7] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8] Love never ends.”

“Love is the most attractive quality in the world. And it lies at the heart of Christianity.” Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Local Church*, p. 97

“Love and hospitality always go together.” Alexander Strauch, *The Hospitality Commands*

B. Hospitality is rooted and grounded in love. But what is hospitality?

1. The Greek word *philoxenos* comes from *philos* (friend, to be friendly to one, beloved, dear) and *xenos* (stranger, unknown, foreign, or guest).
2. Literally, put together, you get “stranger-loving” or “friendly to strangers.”
3. An English dictionary captures hospitality this way:

“The friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers, the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.” Dictionary.com

C. Hospitality is tangible in that we contribute to the needs of the saints and strangers.

1. What motivates the Christian to seek to show hospitality?

II. The motives for hospitality

A. One motive for hospitality is that we do it to and for Jesus.

1. Jesus so identifies with His people that the way we treat them is the way we treat Him.

Matthew 25:34-40 (ESV) “[34] Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ [37] Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ [40] And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

2. In the reformed world it is fairly common for folks to be scared to death of a social gospel and with good reason. They can be scared to death of good works. We do them to and for Jesus. And, we proclaim Jesus to everyone as we love them.

B. Another motive is God Himself. God is hospitable.

1. In the OT, God clothes Adam and Eve. He later leads His people out of Egypt, and He clothes them and feeds them. God cares for His people.
2. In the NT, Jesus promises that if we seek first His kingdom our daily needs (food and clothing) will be met because our Father cares for us.
3. Jesus also offers us a meal with Him now. Jesus, when in this world physically, was able to give hospitality and receive hospitality. Now with us His offer stands:

Revelation 3:20 (ESV) “[20] Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”

- To be sure this is a spiritual meal but we demonstrate spiritual realities in the way we treat one another.

4. The Christian has new DNA and it is divine. We begin to take on the characteristics and ethics of God, we resemble Him, and we too are hospitable.

C. Yet another motive is the end of the world.

1. There is a feast that we call to mind with every meal and all the more with guests.

Revelation 19:6-9 (ESV) “[6] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. [9] And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

D. Another motive is the gospel and it’s effect on us (perhaps most importantly).

1. We were once selfish, hating one another, but the love of God broke through and now we love others (those in the church and those outside the church).

“A cold, unwelcoming church contradicts the gospel message.” Alexander Strauch, *Leading with Love*, p. 100

2. What to do? How do we practice hospitality? How do we seek to show hospitality?

III. The application of hospitality

A. First, we are compelled by love and as a result we have a conviction.

1. A conviction is what we do, not just what we say we believe. We hear the Word and do the Word (James 1:22) lest we be deceived.
2. The Word says (Romans 12:13) seek to show hospitality. Seek to show (*dioko*) is better translated pursue (it is a forceful term).

“Christian hospitality is not a matter of choice; it is not a matter of money; it is not a matter of age, social standing, sex, or personality. Christian hospitality is a matter of obedience to God.” Helga Henry (wife of Carl F. H. Henry)

B. Second, these convictions mean we minister to one another.

1. Peter puts it this way:

1 Peter 4:9 (ESV) “[9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

2. We practice hospitality on Sunday mornings.
 - Do you know that someone here is the very first point of contact for each person that comes? What does that person receive from us?
3. We practice hospitality when we do foster care or adoptions.
4. We practice hospitality when we have someone over for a meal, and fellowship, and we get to know them, and encourage them in their faith (no fancy meal required).
5. We may even lay down our life for someone.

Ex: Charles Colson was Richard Nixon’s hatchet man. Watergate, went to jail, and friends volunteered to serve his time so he could care for a son (we share our lives).

C. Third, these convictions mean we minister to strangers.

1. The writer of Hebrews says this:

Hebrews 13:1-2 (ESV) “[1] Let brotherly love continue. [2] Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

- This requires a knowledge of the OT but you have Abraham and Sarah, Lot, Gideon, Job, the parents of Samson and who knows who else.
2. We don’t only connect with folks we know in the church but we reach outside. Jesus had some thoughts on this when He said:

Luke 14:12-14 (ESV) “[12] He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. [13] But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, [14] and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Ex: My mom making sandwiches for tramps (though scraping by herself).

3. This is the most natural means of outreach.

“One of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity was by the use of homes.” Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, p. 236

“For the early Christians, the home was the most natural setting for proclaiming Christ to their families, neighbors, and friends. The same is true today.” Alexander Strauch in *The Hospitality Commands*

D. Fourth, these convictions must be held by elders in the church (examples).

1. Paul wrote to his protégée Timothy with these words of qualification (partial list):

1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV) “[2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.”

2. I commend to you your pastors. Ben Kreps, John Steindel, and Kirk Gable. These men (and wives) are hospitable and I respect them for it.

Ex: Beth and I were humbled when we needed a place to live. Kreps offered a place, Wengers offered us a place, as did the Andersons (they all like Beth a lot).

3. For Beth and myself, our practice of hospitality fell off quite a bit due to caring for parents. But we just moved into a house in Middletown and fully expect to host many of you. And, if someone needs a place to stay briefly, we will be available.

- I’m glad some folks can do this spontaneously. Most of us, like me, need a plan.
- How about you? What does your pursuit of hospitality look like? Who have you ministered to recently? Is hospitality a priority (and for many it is)?

Close

A. Because God in Christ blessed us we look to bless others.

1. Hospitality is a ministry open to all. It is a way for us to show the love of God to the saints and to strangers. I exhort you to excel in this ministry.
2. Perhaps you find yourself thinking this. No one has had me over. I’m feeling stuck and I don’t know how to proceed.

B. Well, remind yourself of the grace God has given you in Jesus Christ. Remind yourself of the hospitality of God, the way Jesus Christ has ministered to us.

1. Then think and pray about who you can bless. We only live this way because of everything Jesus has done for us.

1 John 2:4-6 (ESV) “[4] Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, [5] but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: [6] whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

2. Little children, let us love one another. And, let us love strangers. We are living this life for the glory of God and to serve as priests and ministers.

Pray

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