Eager to Extend God’s Hospitality

First in the post Easter series in 2017 “Eager to Do What is Good”

# Scripture: Luke 14:1-6; 12-24

# Key Question: How do we put God’s hospitality into practice?

# Intro:

Last week we talked about how Jesus extended hospitality in the feeding of the 5000, in the feeding of the 4000, and often as he presided over meals with his disciples. Most notable among these were the Passover before his crucifixion at which he instituted the sacrament we call Communion. It becomes a continuing reminder of God’s hospitality shown to us in providing not only for our physical needs, but even more for our spiritual sustenance. Finally, we recalled Jesus’ hospitality for his disciples as he gathered them for breakfast by the sea after his resurrection where he fed them fish and bread and broke bread and ate with them one more time.

We concluded that Jesus practiced hospitality not just because he wanted to eat with his disciples, but for a deeper reason, to express in action for us and communicate to us about the hospitality of God. This hospitality of God will ultimately be demonstrated again at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, to which God is sending an open invitation to all who become disciples of Jesus.

Today I would like for us to talk about how we can implement God’s hospitality. Let me put it another way. When we discover a characteristic of God, normally as worshippers of God, that becomes a characteristic that we desire to imitate. So how do we put into practice the hospitality of God?

# We extend God’s hospitality when we are hospitable

## Modeling God’s character in practical ways

The first answer is simple to say but has more implications than we think. To put into practice the hospitality of God, we become people who show hospitality to others! In today’s world there are many venue’s to use for hospitality. Home dining rooms are only one such place. There are outdoor grill parties; picnics at the lake or beach. Here’s some other ideas. Invite another child to vacation with your family. Take someone out to breakfast. Go to a coffee shop or restaurant or dessert shop together.

## Who do we invite?

But what about who to invite? Here’s where details are important.

* First, the easy part: Share food with family and brothers and sisters in Christ.

Dear friend, when you extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers, you make the faith visible. 1 John 3: 5, 6 THE MESSAGE

For many of us, God has given us beautiful homes that we don’t use much for hospitality. We could all improve in this area. Do you find dinners boring? Sponsor a themed event or host a meeting in your home. Maybe you can have prayer as a part of it. Judy sponsors a quilt group and a Bible study. We held some 200th Anniversary Committee meetings at Carol’s house. Dottie hosts Bible study at the Club House at Higley Village.

* Second, show hospitality to those who cannot repay or are unlikely to repay you. This was Jesus’ explicit instruction. Invite some who could not afford to repay you. Invite some whom others hesitate to invite. Invite visitors to church. Invite single people or elderly people who do not have home situations where they could repay you.

Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
Luke 14:12-14 NIV

* Third, use hospitality intentionally to build relationships. Eating together increases friendship. Showing hospitality is important for leaders building relationships with teams. It is important for neighborhoods who want to function better together. It is important for disciples seeking to influence others on behalf of Jesus . No wonder the Bible repeatedly tells us to be hospitable (see 1 Tim. 3:2 also). For example:

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 1 Peter 4:8-9 NIV

* Fourth, at church, be a host or hostess for Jesus. This is God’s house. But who welcomes people and makes people feel at home at church? We do! Smile at people. Greet them warmly. Be friendly. Take the initiative to greet them. The less you know the other person, the more initiative you show to help break the ice. We have a good reputation as a friendly and welcoming church. Let’s keep it.

## Key questions

So first we can ask ourselves, “How does God want me to show hospitality this week?” “Who should I be showing hospitality to this week?” Ask God for opportunities.

# We show God’s hospitality when we extend God's invitation

## The Wedding Supper of the Lamb

There’s another way that we need to be active in showing God’s hospitality. Remember last week that we talked about the wedding supper of the Lamb; that great meal pictured in the book of Revelation.

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:
“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.
Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”
(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)
Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”
Rev 19:6-9 NIV

It is a picture for us of God’s ultimate hospitality to all Christians in heaven.

In Matthew 22, Jesus tells a parable very similar to the one that we read today from Luke 14. However, instead of one servant going out to make the invitation, there are many.

 “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. Matt 22:8-10

## We are the servants who are to give the invitation out

Last week we noted that in interpreting the parable from Luke, it seems best to interpret the servant who goes out to give the invitation as Jesus himself. However, in the Matthew version of the parable, those who go out are the many human messengers that God sends. Jesus has commissioned us to be his witnesses, his messengers, to share God’s invitation with other people. So we are the ones who are asked to go into the highways, the alleys of the cities, out into the country lanes in order to invite people to the great banquet that God is preparing for all who love Jesus.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

So a second key way that we display the hospitality of God, that we implement God’s hospitality, is when we spread the invitation on God’s behalf!

## All Christians are to extend the invitation

Now there’s grave danger in Christian churches that we will leave this task to the professionals.

* People think it is the preacher’s job to spread the invitation. Well it is! But it is not just the preacher’s job! It is every Christian’s job.
* Another danger is that we will back off by saying, “Well, some people have a gift.” That is true, and the church should recognize who they are and not give them so many other jobs that they are too busy to do what they are best that, extending the invitation. I’ve seen this happen over and over again. Just because a person is willing to do a job, they get it, even if some of their best gifts are being neglected. This is especially true with the gift of evangelism because the church often doesn’t have an office that is dedicated to this, which the nominating committee must fill. So they give the evangelist another job. This is a problem for the church leadership.
* But to take it a little further, just because some people have the gift, have the special ability for reaching out to others with the invitation, does not let the rest of us as Christians off the hook. For there are some people who will not be reached with the invitation if you do not reach them. You are the one who has the connections with those people. You are the one they will listen to. God is uniquely positioned you in the web of relationships to help them understand the invitation that God is extending. If you don’t do your job, they may miss the invitation. Every individual Christian has a role to fill in spreading God’s invitation to others.

## Ways we extend the invitation

* Personal faith stories – testimonies. Your life experience will be an inspiration to others. If you share how Jesus has made a difference in some specific circumstance in your life, others will know how Jesus can make a difference in their lives. Some people do this by sharing what a Bible verse meant to them that day.
* Sharing the story of Jesus’ life with others. People today are Biblically ignorant. Many do not know the true reason for Christmas. Many do not know the true reason for Easter. The Ten Commandments are known more as a political issue than a personal instruction of God for the human race. The stories of Jesus’ life and ministry are not known to most people, not to mention the Old Testament stories. So we are God’s messengers to spread the Word of God, the Bible messages in our culture. Hollywood makes a movie with a Christian theme, such as Noah a couple years ago, or The Passion, or The Nativity. How many even among Christians know their Bibles well enough to say whether the movie is sticking to the Bible text? So we have a job to do in helping people know about Jesus.
* We extend the invitation when we invite people to church. Church is God’s house. The Holy Spirit is at work in God’s House. There the Word of God is read and preached. There people will be at prayer. When we invite people to church, we help them move closer to God too.
* We extend the invitation when we encourage people to make a decision to become Christ followers that is to become believers and practicing Christians. Paul said,

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others. 2 Cor 5:11 NRSV

It is important that they take this step. Remember that in the Matt. 22 version of the parable, Jesus told of one who came to the banquet without the wedding garment. What are the wedding garments in Rev. 19? The righteous acts of the saints? What is the first and primary righteous work of God we can do? According to Jesus it is to “believe on the one [God] has sent.”

They asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”
Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”
John 6:28-29

## But they will make excuses

Let me take a moment to say also that is not your fault if they make excuses. Many Christians are hesitant to extend the invitation about Jesus because they are afraid of the way people respond. We must remind ourselves that it is not our fault if people make excuses. Now that does not give us any reason to be tactless, rude, or otherwise boorish in giving our personal testimony or presenting the good news of the gospel. But it does mean that we don’t have to feel personally rejected. Jesus warned us that they would be rejecting him not us.

 “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.” Luke 10:16

## A blessing if we are persecuted for standing up for Jesus

In addition, always remember that Jesus promised a blessing to all who are rejected because they are trying to take a stand for him.

Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.
 “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. Luke 6:22-23

# Conclusion

I conclude with the last part of a story from JoAnne’s book about WandaLou Blaine’s hospitality to her senior teen class and how it affected them.

God With Us pp 150, 151