**Rhythms of Grace**

Hospitality for Mission

Hebrews 13:1-6

February 13, 2022

We started the year with a series called the Rhythms of Grace, looking at the rhythms of the Christian life/discipleship, those habits God uses to produce spiritual growth in our lives. We started by looking at our priorities, then we considered God’s word, prayer, community, and last week we looked at Biblical Hospitality. I want to look at biblical hospitality again with a particular focus, the mission of God in my message, Hospitality for Mission, looking at Hebrews 13:1-6 again. My big idea is this, love demands we show hospitality in the hope of pointing others to Jesus. We are going to do this by reviewing what hospitality is, consider why hospitality is an effective means for mission, and then Sky will give us some further thoughts about hospitality and mission and then provide some helpful suggestions for growing in hospitality. So let’s look at the meaning of hospitality and the recipients of hospitality.

**The Meaning of Hospitality**

Hospitality is not entertaining but an expression of love. My definition of hospitality is this, opening up our hearts and our homes in the hope of pointing others to Jesus. It is not just for those to whom it comes naturally, it is a rhythm of grace, a habit of the christian life, of following Jesus. The early church had a reputation for hospitality and it was a requirement for eldership (1 Tim 3:2). Christian love demands we are in the habit of showing hospitality (13:2; Rom 12:10, 13). God calls us to show glad/happy hospitality. Glad because we find joy in being conduits of hospitality rather than cesspools of selfishness. Glad because hospitality is a means of grace, for both those opening up their home and those being welcomed in. It is a means of grace as God overcomes our selfishness and fears and insecurities to become more generous with our time, our talents, and our treasures for the sake sake of the gospel, our spiritual family is encouraged and those who do not know Christ see and hear the gospel. We have reviewed the meaning of hospitality, now let’s review the recipients of hospitality.

**The Recipients of Hospitality**

The passage calls us to show hospitality toward three categories of people, toward our spiritual family, the outsider, and the oppressed. Last week, we looked at showing hospitality toward our spiritual family, in the command to let brotherly love continue (1). Hospitality is an expression of familial love for our spiritual family in the hope that as we share food and conversation, faith is encouraged, love is deepened, community/belonging is strengthened, and we have a greater appreciation of Jesus. Last week I gave us four points of application, the first was inviting someone over to your house. Did you? Why or why not? Today we look at hospitality toward, the stranger or outsider (2). The word stranger describes the outsider, those who are different or unlike us. God calls us to show hospitality toward the outsider, those unlike us in terms of faith, race, culture, or demographics. God calls us to show hospitality toward those who are unlike you with their worldview, what they value, and how they live. They have different ideologies about race, marriage, sexuality, gender, or the value of human life. This command calls us to open up our heart, open up our home, and invite those who are unlike us, the outsider, into our lives in the hope that we can point them to Jesus. The hope of hospitality for mission is that by sharing food and conversation, strangers become friends and friends become family.

*I am convinced the most effective way we can engage the mission of God/share the gospel is hospitality*. Inviting the outsider into our home, making space in our lives for those unlike us, in the hope that over time that relationship leads to trust and safety for gospel conversations. Outside of the gospel, there is no hope for the stranger to experience a joyful eternity. That should concern us about our friends and neighbors. Instead of our homes being fortresses with a wide moat to keep the outsider at bay, the gospel calls us to show them hospitality in the hope that strangers become friends and friends become family.

**God Makes Space for the Outsider (Sky)**

God created us to be welcomed into his family. He has a desire for all those created in his image to be image bearers and clearly reflect his glory. But we’ve gone the other way, denied him, forgotten him, and since the beginning of time he’s creating pathways to get us back. His intention is relationship, his desire is to bring those who are far near. Our God has a hospitable and inviting nature. 4 examples in scripture I want to touch on.

**Eden**: making space for the other. He makes space for those other than himself. He doesn’t just create and give identity, but takes his place and makes it Adams place. Eden. Gen 2:8: “Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.” It was God’s place, and he let Adam in and gave him legitimacy there. In a sense he is welcoming Adam and making a space for someone other than himself.

**Abraham**: The Lord highlights the value of showing hospitality through Abraham in Gen. 18. “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. 2He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he **saw** them, he **ran** from the tent door to meet them and **bowed** himself to the earth 3and said, “O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. 4Let a little **water** be brought, and **wash** your feet, and **rest** yourselves **under** the tree, 5while I bring a **morsel** of **bread**, that you may **refresh** yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.”

**Jesus**: God’s inviting and hospitable nature is also seen in Jesus.

* **Zaccheus** the tax collector one who was an outsider to jewish society. “When Jesus reached the spot, he **looked** up and said to him, come down. I must stay at your house today.”
* **Are your eyes open to those around you? On your periphery.**
* He got to the house and ate and people said **“he has gone to be the guest of sinners.”**
* Then Jesus says, “For the son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Luke 19:10
* **2 more places in Luke 18 Jesus makes room in his life for the outsider**
  + **Beggars**: As Jesus is walking with his entourage **those who led the way** tell the **beggars** to be quiet, Jesus slows down and heals him. (Lk 18:39)
  + **Children**: When disciples rebuked people for bringing little **children** (insignificant ones), Jesus said to them, “let them come, do not hinder them…” (Lk. 18:16)
  + Though he didn’t have a house, he constantly opened space in his life, during the meals he had, and parties he attended, to interact with people. His invitation was – come, be with me, you are welcome here.
  + **Everyone here** has a physical home, so, the question is, how can we open up space in our life for those who are different? How can we let people get a glimpse of God’s love through our hospitality?
* Heaven: The New Jerusalem, people from every tribe, tongue, nation (Rev. 5:9, 7:9).

**Transition**: Since we are his image bearers and we are connected to the ever-flowing spring of hospitality, even though you may not have practiced much of it yet – you can have great hope that God has given you **everything you need** to be hospitable. (1Pet1:3)

You may be thinking – NOT ME – I’m just an introvert – that’s the way God made me. Well, hospitality is easier to some than others but it’s a command to every believer (1 Peter 4:9 “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling”). Here are a few common misconceptions about Hospitality:

**Myths**:

Myth #1: Not my gift so I don’t only people with the “gift” of hospitality are expected to practice it. But it’s a means to express your gifts.

Myth #2: Hospitality is woman’s work.

Myth #3: Only married, well-off people with large homes can practice hospitality.

**Transition**:

These are all myths or lies we can believe about the mission of God through welcoming the stranger. But if we get beyond these there’s still a **cost** that keeps most of us from the mission of God.

**The Cost:**

* Uncomfortable – you’re tired… end of day, week, after work
* Inconvenient – house a mess, kids cranky
* Take time from my tasks – laundry, dishes, projects
* Take time from pleasures – movie, fishing, sewing
* They’ll STEAL my stuff!

THIS IS TRUE – it will cost. But, **WHAT’S A SOUL WORTH?** **WHAT WAS YOUR SOUL WORTH?** God can give you the **desire** and the **energy**.

**I DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOSPITALITY:** receiving love through hospitality changed me. I was the outsider and experienced hospitality. God is on a mission to the outsider.

How to grow in making space for the outsider:

* HOW? Hebrews 13:3…. Remember those in prison AS IF YOU… those who are mistreated AS IF YOU. Love as if you were the one receiving it! Love one another as I have loved you. What is love? – that he laid down his life. (john)
* Kindle the fire of God’s **compassion** for people: Pat Brayton sat in my office and as I quizzed him about how to care for people better he told me this, *“Be kind because everyone you meet is fighting a very difficult battle.”* You may not see it, you probably don’t, but they’re struggling and most people around them don’t know what it is. God led you to them or them to you with a very specific purpose – show his love. Help them to experience the same love, acceptance and care that God has shown you. ***2 Cor. 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.***
* Ask good questions. Asking about their lives and what they think, how they came to those conclusions and why. Have a heart of HUMBLE INQUIRY, in which you draw people out by asking questions to which you don’t already know the answer and building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person. (what’s your story? What are you looking forward to?)
* How do you know what they’re going through? LISTEN! It’s gonna take some time to know how people need to be loved – therefore LISTEN WELL. When people feel love they respond to the gospel – this is something that will help me! This person loving me is someone who cares for me – I should listen to what they have to say.
* **Action points**:
  + put it in your calendar. You may not be too sinful for Jesus to use but you may be too busy. 1 month from now (gives you time to procrastinate)
  + Put extra money aside just for this purpose,
  + extra room in house, live below your means

How you talk to outsiders:

* have conversations not arguments, discussions not debates. You may win a debate but you may lose a friend in the process.
* Jesus was not controlled by fear but by love for them. Henri Nouwen said about having discussions with others, *“Our society seems to be increasingly full of fearful, defensive, aggressive people anxiously clinging to their property and inclined to look at their surrounding world with suspicion. Always expecting an enemy to suddenly appear, intrude and do harm. But still that’s our vocation to convert the enemy into a guest and to create the* ***free and fearless space*** *where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced.”* This is our goal in hospitality.

**Jesus was free and fearless – not afraid of being hurt but opening his heart and presence to the outsider.**

**Transition:**

Whenever you invite people into your heart and life and build a relationship with them then hurts or conflict can arise because we’re sinful people. There’s two ways people typically handle that – those who err toward truth and those who err towards love.

**To those who err towards truth: be ready**

Watch yourself like a hawk. When you get angry – slow down. When you feel tension – ask yourself do I need to fight for this or can God handle this fight without me? Let your conversation be full of grace, seasoned with salt (Col.4:6). NOT FULL OF SALT – makes food bitter.

* “…always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect…” 1 Pet. 3:15
* Be careful not to label, compartmentalize, box then discard them because they are other. the poster child for **an ideological pet peeve** that you have. recognize the difference between accepting people for who they are but not necessarily approving of their worldview or lifestyle. **Those most attracted to Jesus are those that repel many of us**. We can accept people for who they are broken and sinful who are made in the image of god and their only hope for truly flourishing is Jesus. Many will never set foot into a church building or service but you can be the church for them. God calls us to go to them; not for them to come to us..
* You don’t have to say that you disagree with them. Silence on an issue is not wholesale acceptance of every point they made in their monologue. God will reveal to them the Truth in his time when their hearts are ready to receive it. And if not – that’s not your job to convince them. JESUS DOESN’T CORRECT PILATE.

**To those who err towards love:**

You want to keep everyone happy: check your heart to make sure you’re not doing it for esteem, to be liked, family is not suffering, don’t miss opportunities for spiritual conversations because so focused on making them feel welcome. God put you in their life for you to share his truth in love to them.

**Address the posture of your heart:**

*Start praying for a desire to love those who don’t know God or have not felt or understood his love for them.*

There is UNLIMITED POTENTIAL to show hospitality. The gospel comes to each one of us because it is moving toward another person.

* Who is the gospel moving toward in your life? God chooses to work in us to work through us. As Jesus was sent, he sends us into his mission, his cause. Your home can become a portal of belonging.

To increase the joy of your faith & glory of God, let me close with some specific exhortations for strategic hospitality. What step do I need to take to grow in hospitality?

Gradation of Hospitality graph.

1. Give them $5 for a Sandwich
2. Pick up a hitchhiker
3. Have them over for coffee/ice cream
4. Have them over for a meal
5. Host a meeting (10 ppl)
6. Host life group
7. Have a guest for the night
8. Have a guest for several nights
9. Tell others that anyone they have in town is welcome to stay in your sewing room
10. Have a relative or exchange student over for a season
11. Have someone live with you for 3 months

Where are you on this spectrum? What’s your next step?

God makes space for the outsider. Will you?

**Life Group Questions:**

You do not need to ask all questions if time does not permit!

Ice Breakers (no need to ask all . . . 10 minutes))

1. Tell us your name, when you were baptized and how?

Head (10-15 minutes)

1. What biblical example of hospitality most resonated with you? Why?
2. What struck you about Abraham’s hospitality?
3. What struck you about Jesus openness to outsiders?
4. Jesus made space for the wealthy, beggars & children. Who are outsiders in our lives today?
5. Do you remember David’s definition of hospitality? What do you think of it?

Heart (15-20 minutes)

1. Does hospitality come naturally for you or not? Why or why not?
2. What was is the greatest struggle for you to provide hospitality?
3. Are you one who errs towards truth or love? What’s your temptation in this?
4. What is helpful for you in your approach toward the outsider?
5. Everyone we meet is fighting some difficult battle. How does this affect how you treat others?

Hand (10-15 minutes)

1. What is one way you can do to grow in hospitality this week?
2. What steps do you take in mission to the outsider? What steps is God asking you to take now?
3. If there is unlimited potential for God to use you in this area – how can we pray for you to move forward in that?

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