

Advent Series: Hospitality Incarnated: What Christ's birth reveals about how we treat others.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 7:14 (various OT passages) **Key Words:** Hospitality, Generous Treatment

Churches around the world are celebrating [Advent](#) season, which is a word meaning, “*To appear or come into a place.*” Together, we’re remembering Jesus’ first advent while anticipating His final advent. We’re calling this series: “*Hospitality Incarnated: What Christ’s birth reveals about how we treat others.*” Our liturgy (the readings, prayers, songs, and sermons) has been crafted to remind us of God’s goodness towards us, so we can be formed by His grace rather than a culture of individualism, consumerism, and self-reliance. Today, using the biblical storyline, we’ll see how hospitality is vital to gospel formation and arrive at this...

BIG IDEA: Jesus came to redeem how we treat one another.

The word “*hospitality*” simply means “*The generous treatment of guests.*” It can make us think of institutions (e.g., hospitals, the hospitality industry/hotels, Disney). However, this series will explore how God designed hospitality to be relational. A quick survey of Scripture proves: 1) ***It began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3)***: God hosted Adam and Eve in a perfect paradise, but pride led them and their descendants to become inhospitable towards God and one another (cf. Romans 1:16-5:21). 2) ***God made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah to restore what was lost (Genesis 12)***: God asked a Chaldean family to be a nation (Israel) that would model His ways to a broken world. He promised them land and endless heirs but also much difficulty. Genesis 15:13-14 states, “*Your offspring will be sojourners (foreigners, aliens, outsiders) in a land that is not theirs and be servants there (Egypt) and be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.*” 3) ***God established laws to help His people relate better (Exodus 20)***: At Mt Sinai, Moses was given laws to help people realize how to love God and neighbor better. Take, for instance, Exodus 22:21-27: “*Do not wrong or oppress sojourners, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do, and they cry out to me, I will hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor’s cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he*

sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate” (cf. Leviticus 19:32-35). God’s law condemned a lack of hospitality (cf. Numbers 20:14-21; Deuteronomy 23:3-4) and instructed God’s people to receive the poor into their homes (cf. Leviticus 23:35), to celebrate festivals with foreigners who live among them (cf. Deuteronomy 16:11, 14), and to establish cities of refuge to protect anyone who accidentally took a life (cf. Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-10).

Old Testament stories contain many positive and negative examples of hospitality (cf. Genesis 14:18–24; 18; 19; 23:1-20; 24:10-49; 43:32; Joshua 2:1-21; 6:22-25; Judges 4:19; 1 Samuel 25:2-38; Nehemiah 5:14-17). Generous hosts were expected to Bow and greet guests with a kiss (cf. Genesis 18:2; 19:1); Welcome guests into their homes (cf. Genesis 24:31); Invite guests to rest and wash (cf. Genesis 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; Judges 4:19); and Provide needs like food, drink, and security (cf. Genesis 19:8; Judges 4:19; 19:5). Most importantly, and we’ll circle back to this in our series, hosts were to offer something we lose when hospitality becomes institutionalized: Conversation--listening and being known (cf. Genesis 24:33). Modern culture would greatly benefit from studying the first half of the Bible, especially [Genesis-Deuteronomy](#). Sadly, by ignoring God’s design and the history of His people, we mistreat one another and cut off relationships that are essential to us and the spread of the gospel. Consider Moses’ final words from Deuteronomy 4:5-8: *“Look, I’ve taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God has commanded me, so you may follow them in the land you are entering to possess. Carefully follow them, for this will show your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the peoples. When they hear about all these statutes, they will say, ‘This great nation is indeed a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call on him? And what great nation has righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today?”*

Hundreds of laws and numerous examples were unable to change how God’s image bearers treat one another, which brings us to a peculiar proclamation God made through the prophet Isaiah (7:14): *“The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (which means ‘God with us’).”* God promised a miracle, the likes of which the world had never seen, to course-correct creation. A perfect image bearer would be sent to redeem a wayward world and model a better way to live. Throughout our series, we’ll see how Jesus did this, but today we’ll land on one obvious takeaway: ***There’s something wrong with the way we treat one another, and Jesus came to fix that!*** We often think sin only hurts us, but essentially it fractures our

friendships and distances everyone from life-sustaining community. So, we can't rightly say stuff like "I'm better off on my own", or "People are a hinderance to my happiness", nor suggest that "People experiencing poverty just need to work harder like I do." Such short-sighted ideas deny sin's impact on people and systems, while betraying God's design--life is sustained and enriched by relationships that depend on God and others! For this reason, God sent His Son--to model the beauty and benefit of trusting His ways, to exterminate the sin that ruins us, and to take up residence within us. In history's ultimate act of humility and hospitality, Jesus came to our turf, sat at our table, shared our life, and sacrificed Himself to restore healthy, life-sustaining relations with God and others (cf. Philippians 2:5-8). Our series will challenge us to confess that hospitality in Scripture is a means of grace through which God develops relationship with us, through which we emulate God, and through which others are brought into salvation and the church. We'll learn more about how Jesus (God with us) embodies everything God was saying and showing us in the Old Testament, but for now, let's close with a few questions raised by these truths: 1) Does my life reflect commitment to God's ways and my need of His provision and protection? 2) How has the Advent of God's Son transformed the way I view and treat myself, God, and others? 3) In the coming year, how might God want me to repair life-sustaining relationships that I've taken for granted?

Let's pray: Father, thank you for sending your Son, not only to die for us but to live for us. His birth and His life help us find our way back to you. They remind us of your character and your ways, while also inspiring and empowering us to become the people you designed us to be. Clearly, you are a God of generous provision, who has provided for us so that we can provide for others. Give us fresh vision for that during this year's Advent journey. Amen.

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Advent:** Word with Latin roots, meaning 'coming.' Christians of earlier generations spoke of 'the advent of our Lord' and of 'His second advent.' The first phrase refers to God's becoming incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. The latter phrase speaks of Jesus' second coming. In a second sense 'advent' designates a period before Christmas when Christians prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth. This practice may have begun in some churches as early as the late fourth century. Advent began as a time of fasting. Sermons focused on the wonder of the Incarnation. By the Middle Ages four Sundays had become the standard length of the Advent season. Since then, Advent has been considered to be the beginning of the church year." Fred

A. Grissom and Steve Bond, “Advent,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 31.

- **Sojourners:** “Or aliens (Hebrew: gerim) were often landless in an agrarian society where land was usually distributed by inheritance and where access to land was essential to life. Without special attention, resident aliens would be marginal to most Israelite institutions—to extended families, as well as to legal, economic, political, and religious institutions. Their status was precarious, and their well-being depended on the willingness of the community to welcome them into its life. Often powerless and vulnerable to injustice and exploitation, sojourners were frequently grouped with the poor, the widow, and the fatherless in the biblical text. As God’s love for aliens provided them with food and clothing, so Israel was to express its love in practical, active ways. Specific laws required that Israel avoid mistreating and oppressing sojourners but instead actively seek their well-being. The protected sojourner owed the God of Israel certain acknowledgment, and with increased loyalty to the God of Israel, the sojourner was increasingly included in the religious life of the society.” Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 28-29.
- **Bibliography:** Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016). Several historical points were gleaned from *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016) and from Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

Quotes related to the larger context:

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us about many other resources.

Direction for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the discussion around 30mins. Go for a single, not a home run.
3. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Let’s prepare for our sermon from Isaiah 7:14.

- What do you suppose prompted God to announce this incredible promise through the prophet Isaiah? Think through the storyline that began in Genesis 1-3, continued in Genesis 12, and then culminated at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 20.

Let’s apply our sermon from Isaiah 7:14.

- How does my life reflect a commitment to God’s ways and my need of His provision and protection? Please share some specific examples to help us all process this question.
- How has the Advent of God’s Son transformed the way I view and treat myself, God, and others? In the coming year, how might God want me to repair life-sustaining relationships that I’ve taken for granted?

Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>