

Growing in Hospitality

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 July 2024

Preacher: Andrew Bartlett

[0 : 00] Our reading is from Luke, chapter 14, starting at verse 1. One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

There, in front of him, was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts of the law, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?

But they remained silent. So, taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way. Then he asked them, If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?

And they had nothing to say. When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable.

When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor. For a person more distinguished than you may have been invited.

[1 : 22] If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, Give this person your seat. Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, Friend, move up to a better place.

Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

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.

[2 : 38] Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Very good to be with you again. When someone says they're going to talk about hospitality, I wonder what mental picture you get.

I looked at some photos on Google Images, and there was an image from the Times newspaper of well-dressed people around a table, and the caption said, Dinner parties from hell.

You'll be glad to know I'm not going to be talking about dinner parties that make you think of hell. Instead, we'll be thinking about hospitality that has the aroma of heaven.

And I hope you'll catch the aroma, because it's beautiful. It's special. It's beautiful, it's special, and it's life-giving, because it can bless you and bless others, especially others who are hurting or needy.

[4 : 03] The title I was given was Growing in Hospitality. We'll cover it by considering three questions. Why? To whom? And how? Why grow in hospitality?

Hospitality to whom? And how to do it? So we'll start with four reasons why it's good to grow in hospitality. Number one, because God is generous, and hospitality is generous.

God loves to give. He's generous. And hospitality is a way of being generous. God cares about those in need, as in our reading in Luke 14, verse 4, taking hold of the man, what did Jesus do?

Healed him, because he cared for him. And in verse 13, Jesus says, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.

There are people who are needy, and Jesus wants them to be helped. Reason number two, because hospitality is commanded in God's word.

[5 : 23] The apostles took their cue from the values that Jesus expressed. Paul, in Romans chapter 12, verse 13, wrote, practice hospitality.

Peter, in 1 Peter 4, verse 9, offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Hebrews, chapter 13, we don't know for sure who wrote Hebrews, probably Barnabas, but anyway, verse 2, do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing, some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

Great encourager. Hospitality is commanded and encouraged three times, because it's part of the normal Christian life.

reason number three, because it blesses others. That ought to be a statement of the obvious, although it isn't necessarily so, because there are such things as dinner parties from hell.

But, but hospitality ought to be a blessing to others. and I guess we probably all had some experiences of that blessing.

[6 : 47] I think particularly of when I was a student at university, living away from home for the first time, short of money, living alone in digs, sometimes hungry.

it was just so wonderful to go to church and every week receive an invitation to Sunday lunch in someone's home. The warmth of love made a deep, deep impression on me.

I still remember the names of the wonderful people who took me in. Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, it was all surnames in those days, Mr. and Mrs. Gill, Mrs. Gill's amazing lamb curry with apricots.

I mean, it was just Mrs. Reynolds coleslaw recipe. Elizabeth still uses it. So, I think it's a warm thing and a wonderful thing to receive.

But reason number four, because it's good for you too to be giving hospitality. We've noted it's a blessing to receive hospitality.

[7 : 58] Jesus teaches it's even more blessed to give it. Do you believe him? He says it's even more blessed to give. Acts 20, verse 35, the Lord Jesus himself said, it's more blessed to give than to receive.

And Luke 14, 14, from our passage, Jesus said, you will be blessed and you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Jesus. So, there's four reasons to give hospitality.

Our next question, hospitality to whom? We read in Luke 14, verses 12 and 13, 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'll be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.

Well, what does Jesus mean? is he saying it's wrong to invite friends and family and neighbors? No, as he so often does, he's teaching by making a contrast.

[9 : 35] And he's stating his point in an extreme way for maximum emphasis. His first followers understood what he meant.

They didn't take him literally. They didn't take this as a restriction on hospitality. We've already seen what Peter wrote, offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

That doesn't exclude our friends, our brothers and sisters. In Acts chapter two, we read about the early church breaking bread in their homes and eating together with glad and sincere hearts.

In Romans chapter 16, Paul mentions Gaius. whose hospitality Paul and the whole church enjoy. In Corinth, he must have had a big house.

So what Jesus says here isn't to be taken literally. He means it as a challenge to his host's priorities. And so it's a challenge to our priorities also.

[10 : 43] He means hospitality to anyone is good and it's even better to give to the needy rather than those who can repay you. So how might that apply today?

I mean, who are the needy in and around Hearn Hill today? There may be some who are poor or crippled or lame or blind.

But maybe two particular kinds of needs stand out. First of all, loneliness. Metro reported on the 1st of April this year, in a large study of 10,000 people in Britain, 29% said they feel lonely, some of the time or often.

among Londoners, 35% reported regularly feeling lonely. So all around us there are people who are poor.

Poor not in money, but in friendly relationships. And second, there's a blindness, isn't there, that's spiritual rather than physical.

[12 : 05] There's only a minority who've come to see the truth that's in Jesus. The majority around us are in great need of him. Some of those needy people who are lonely or who are spiritually needy may be our friends.

They may be our family members. They may be our rich neighbors. They may be some of the neediest. So we've asked why and to whom.

Let's consider how. One, with God's compassion, the love of Jesus, 1 Peter 4, 8 to 9, and two, with humility.

When we give hospitality, it's as ambassadors of Jesus. So we need to show his love. Peter makes the connection directly in his letter. Love leads on to hospitality.

hospitality. Verse 8, 1 Peter 4, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins.

[13 : 12] Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. So there's that connection between love and hospitality. You may wonder why I've put humility as the second point.

That story that we had read to us. Jesus is teaching the guests about being humble, isn't he? And he says, for all those who exalt themselves will be humble, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

But what if you're the host? How does it apply then? I'd suggest it's equally important if you're the host to be humble.

That's because hospitality with the aroma of heaven is not a show. It's not look at me, look at what I'm doing, look at my house, look at the food I've prepared.

True hospitality is not a show, but a generous sharing. No showing off, no posturing, no fishing for compliments.

[14 : 28] It's about serving, serving other people, taking the lower position, treating them as more important. Now let's get even more practical.

Third point on how. Collectively helping one another. The New Testament has a lot to say about spiritual gifts.

and we've read 1 Peter 4 verse 9, offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. In our English Bibles, there's a full stop at the end of verse 9, but in Peter's Greek original, the sentence runs on into what we call verse 10.

I put up there a word-for-word translation. Hospitable to one another, he writes, without complaint, each one according as they received a gift, serving it to each other as good stewards of God's varied grace.

We don't all have the same gifts, the same circumstances, the same opportunities. The command to be hospitable is to all believers, but some have particular gifts of hospitality.

[15 : 47] hospitality. Those who've been here a long time, I'm sure, will remember Brenda Moore, Auntie Bren, I see some heads nodding, a single lady who had a wonderful ministry of hospitality to young people.

One or two such people in a church make a massive difference to the health of the whole body, to the outgoingness of the whole body.

So the purpose of this teaching is not to make individuals feel guilty or inadequate, but to inspire us.

If you're not personally in a position to offer hospitality yourself, perhaps you can help someone else in the fellowship do it. It might be by introducing people to those who can offer hospitality.

hospitality. It might be by helping others give hospitality in their homes. The reason Elizabeth and I don't live here anymore is that God showed us we were to go to live in Canterbury and give hospitality there.

[17 : 00] There's photos in our kitchen. We have an open house on Thursday evenings for international students and other internationals. we have a meal and we divide into groups and look at the Bible to learn about Jesus.

Some of our guests are secular, some of them are Muslim, some of them are Hindu, some are Buddhist. We love doing it, but there's no way we could do it on our own.

Other people make the contacts in the universities or on the streets. Others help with the cooking. Others help lead the discussion groups. Others help clear up.

It's a collective effort by people from five different churches. So every believer's contribution adds together to make the church of God hospitable and to demonstrate God's generosity.

With God even the tiny things count, even the littlest things, and are appreciated. In Matthew 10, 42, Jesus said, if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.

[18 : 24] So be encouraged about what you could do, however small as God may lead you, and with the help of others. As followers of Jesus, we're called to bless others by showing them God's generosity.

And we're called to do that with compassion and with humility, and we're called to do it collectively, helping others in accordance with our gifts and circumstances.

Who knows how God may bless and use the hospitality given? If God is in it, people will catch the aroma of heaven.

At our open house, we've had students who've received hospitality and come to faith in Christ. I'm thinking of a man from Angola, a woman from Japan, a man from Malaysia.

If someone hadn't invited them along, they might never have discovered the life that's in Jesus. So let's grow in hospitality and in generous love.

[19 : 35] Let's be open to what God may do. Amen.