

I Peter 4:7-10 "Show Hospitality to One Another"

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Amen. Thank you all. Love the picture of gospel community in that song where we are weak people together, together leaning on our strong Savior, right?
- I've been thinking about that since Derek's sermon last Sunday, how much we all need this. It requires all of us to be a part of this, to be a gospel community, the mutuality of bearing one another's burdens.
- It actually means we have to be willing to bear other people's burdens and we have to be willing to have other people bear our burdens.
- Right? And so that requires all of us being in that together. One anothering like that is a mutual reality. Always involves all of us.
- [1 : 1 0] When we got home from that service last week, we got home to a very warm house with no air conditioning. It wasn't a great day for that, to be honest. And by the time we went home from the ice cream sundae later that night, yes, the ice cream had cooled us off a bit.
- But we had a window AC unit already installed by a fellow small group member in our house. We had another family in the group offering their home for the group to meet in the following evening in lieu of ours.
- We had no fewer than nine offers of homes for our family to sleep in if needed. What a beautiful thing it is to find yourself in an unexpected situation and experience the love of God in relationship.
- Right? We all need that. That often looks like sacrificial hospitality. Like that welcoming an outsider into your home, into your heart.
- It's commanded in several passages, actually, in the New Testament. But this morning we'll read from 1 Peter, our last one another passage.
- [2 : 2 5] We'll take one more look next week at the mission of our gospel community before we leave this series. But this last one another passage has multiple one another's in it.
- 1 Peter chapter 4, beginning at verse 7. This is God's holy word. The end of all things is at hand.
- Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.
- Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift. Use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.
- Let's pray together. Father, we give you thanks for these words because we know them to be words of life. And we need that.
- [3 : 2 9] We want our lives individually and corporately to be shaped the way you want them to. We believe that you are the source of life. Help us to believe it again this morning.

May our hearts and our lives be directed by you and your word and your spirit more than anything else. Work in us even now to that end.

We ask for Jesus' sake. Amen. Hospitality has long been a vital practice of God's people.

From the days of the apostles when you would need a place to stay when traveling and you could find the home of a brother or sister in Christ you'd never met. Stay there. Or the next few centuries when church buildings became sanctuaries.

Places of refuge and respite for many. But before we ask what hospitality means for God's people. Let's remember that we've had a hospitable God well before any of this started with us.

[4 : 40] Hospitality is really at the heart of who God is. And thus at the heart of the Bible's story. God's story that we read there is about relationship, isn't it?

People made to be close to him. To share in his life with him. Find themselves distant from him. And facing death.

So what does God do? God works to restore relationship. To welcome the outsider, the stranger, the enemy home. He moves toward us at great cost to himself.

Initially in a tabernacle. And then in a temple. And then most fully in his son, Jesus. Jesus comes and eats with outsiders and sinners.

And then at the cross. He earns our welcome home, doesn't he? He earns the open door of God's hospitality for us.

[5 : 45] He breaks down the barriers that separate us from God. So we can be welcomed into his home, into his family. I love the picture of God as the father of the prodigal son.

Right? Who runs out off the porch with his arms wide open. And embraces the undeserving failure. And welcomes him home to the best feast that he's ever tasted.

God reaches down, as it were, to tear the curtain of the temple. And usher us enemies into his family. To seat us at his table.

And in fact, the table where we feast with him is the picture God gives us of our ongoing relationship with him. Day in and day out. Through our lives.

Until he comes again to bring us to what? Not harps and clouds. The wedding supper of the lamb. Where we feast with him forever.

[6 : 46] God's gracious hospitality to his people never ends, does it? That's the picture of hospitality that must first define our hospitality for us.

We have experienced hospitality from our God. And we are to show the same to one another as a foretaste of how we will feast with him forever.

One of my favorite non-biblical pictures of hospitality is in Les Mis. But the last minute I decided I'd let the bishop sing it instead of me.

Hey! Come and serve, for you are weary. And the night is cold out here.

Though our lives are very humble. What we have, we have to share. There is wine here to revive you.

[7 : 59] There is bread to make you strong. There's a bed to rest till morning. Rest from pain and rest from long.

What we have, we have to share.

A reality, right, that the ex-convict Valjean won't fully experience until he actually makes off with the silver. And is caught. And then is given the candlesticks on top of that.

Gracious hospitality for sure, right? What we have, we have to share. That's it, isn't it?

So much like God. See, when we talk about our hospitality, it certainly is not less than sharing with others the homes and the resources that God has entrusted to us.

[9 : 10] That we might share them. When Christy and I were newlywed, we headed out to Scotland without really any money and definitely without a clue what we were getting into for my last semester of undergrad.

It was very difficult to find a place to stay from across the ocean. And we got connected with a Scottish pastor and his wife who immediately said they'd meet us at the airport.

And then when we got off the plane, we could stay at their house while we looked for another place to stay. And Kenny and Fiona were so kind to us in that. Stay here as long as you need, Kenny said.

A couple weeks later, the best food we had had was at their table. The only community that we knew in a very lonely place was the sweet fellowship of their 30-member church that we'd gotten to know.

And we couldn't find a flat we could afford at all. So sheepishly, but a bit desperately, I went back to Kenny and said, Hey, so you know, you said as long as you need.

[10 : 24] What if as long as you need was four months? Do you still mean that? Without hesitation, he said, absolutely.

This home is God's home and you're always welcome in it. Four months later, those days in that home tremendously impacted this young couple.

And that congregation's hospitality extended far beyond us, beyond other Christians. I'll share with you about that next week. But today, show hospitality to one another.

See, your home as God's home to be employed for his kingdom, for his family, to welcome his family in.

And if you haven't already learned this about our family, we are weird. Y'all, we just are. We find our identity and our eternal value in the image of God implanted in us.

[11 : 35] And we find our value and our identity and our eternal hope in the life and death and resurrection of the Son of God 2,000 years ago for us.

And that's who we are. Y'all, that sounds weird to many. We can be a strange bunch. Jesus is what unites us in this family.

So our family gospel community includes people of all races and colors, wealthy lawyers and impoverished single mothers, special needs kids, youths struggling to fit in, cool kids, adults in midlife crisis, older people struggling to feel like themselves because their minds and bodies don't work like they're used to.

All kinds of people in between all kinds of people in between all of those. And it's that way because God wouldn't have it any other way, would he? He went out and chose the foolish people, he says.

The weak people. The lowly people. He wanted them to be in his family. He sent his son to go invite the poor, crippled, blind, and lame to his banquet.

[12 : 49] So that's who we are. If you're in that family, welcome. That's who you are. God's family. Gospel community doesn't just minister to the least, the left out, the lonely.

It's made up of the least and the left out and the lonely. Loved by him. We now love and learn from one another.

So when you read, show hospitality to one another, that's who it's talking about. It means having all those people in your home and in your family.

See, the word for hospitality is actually kind of a compound word in Greek. It works like we know the word philosophy. Philo, meaning love of Sophia.

In that case, meaning wisdom, philosophy, love of wisdom. The word for hospitality is similar. Philo, meaning love of xenos, meaning stranger, foreigner, outsider, guest, love of stranger.

[14 : 17] Because of God's hospitality, our family is full of outsiders and strangers. Pastor Ray Cortese came here a few years ago for a conference.

He talked about hospitality. And he said something that only a guest preacher should ever say. So I'm just quoting him. Quote, in your church, there are people you don't know and people you don't want to know.

Yikes. That's why stranger love is required of us. You recall the beginning of this summer we talked about the loneliness epidemic in our culture that we said was alive and well in church communities too.

I shared that over 20 years recently the rate of having people in our homes for a meal dropped in half. Forget the statistic if you don't like those.

Just ask your own heart. Does your home, your food, your money, your time fit in what we have we have to share?

[15 : 27] Or is it possible you're just a bit more protective than that? The upside, by the way, of that downturn in those numbers is that it means that much more these days to be invited into someone's home.

And God answers our loneliness with gospel community that brings us together. Who would feel the welcome of God in a new way if you invited them over for lunch today?

Who do you know who might struggle to feel that the Father is running toward them with open arms and you could help? Who would you think might be hard to open your door to?

Maybe start there. That might be loving the stranger for you. That's God's design for His church, y'all. That's the way He wants us to work. It's not just showing up to say hello once a week to a few people.

It's just not. He designs us to be so much more than that. To be sharing our homes and our lives together. Breaking bread together in each other's homes.

[16 : 40] That's what He sets His church up to be like. That's the community God is calling us and making us to be. One last thing on our homes.

It's important for us to have our horizon of hospitality broadened, if you will. It must go beyond Martha Stewart. Kids, some of you have been wondering how Martha Stewart was going to make it onto the words for this morning.

There you go. It's got to go beyond that. Ask yourself honestly this question. Is my hospitality for myself or for those I'm welcoming in?

Do you know you can make someone feel very unwelcome, even in your home, by making them eat off of China plates worth more than they make in a month? Or that their kids aren't okay to walk in your dining room?

Now listen, I'm not saying you can't vacuum before someone comes over or fix nice meals.

[17 : 53] Please, it's very important you hear me on this because about 40 of you are going to Sandy Newby's house for lunch today. And it is unlikely to be terribly messy when you get there.

And you are very unlikely to want to skip dessert. Okay? That's the best advice I know to give you. Y'all, preparing for guests can be a great way to honor them, can't it?

Please hear me on that. But, but, sometimes that's for ourselves. We have to ask our hearts. Sometimes, warm hospitality looks different.

Some of the warmest hospitality I've received, where I've felt most welcomed and most honored, has been on dirt floors in one-room homes in India. Some of the warmest hospitality our family has received has been from people who had some toys on the floor when we came in.

And dinner was actually running a little bit late and it wasn't going to be all that much. But they cared about us intently. They listened to us sharing.

[18 : 59] And we left feeling we were their family, not their inferiors. Right? The hospitality was about us. Not about them.

That's actually what happens when you open your home, isn't it? It's one of the reasons we're commanded to because it doesn't just invite people into your home. The idea, the heart behind it is it invites people into your life, which can be a bit uncomfortable.

Can we be honest? That's actually the heart of hospitality. Some of you have been at our dinner table and you have learned intimate, embarrassing facts about our family.

Because our girls, they'll share. They'll tell you. They'll tell you the dirt on mom and dad. Kids are really honest sometimes, aren't they?

And if we weren't okay with our lives being exposed like that, we shouldn't have invited you into our home and to our dinner table.

[20 : 13] It's what happens. And this passage actually shows us that hospitality goes beyond how you open your home to how you open your heart. Look at verse 9 again.

Show hospitality to one another. That's a pretty normal command, right? You expect to see something like that. There's lots of commands in 1 Peter. This one all of a sudden has something at the end.

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. Without grumbling. Don't just have people in your home because you're supposed to.

Actually love the stranger from your heart. With no regret of the cost. With no complaining about the sacrifice. The hospitable heart says not, I'm better than you.

But I value you. It's the kind of intentional, sacrificial relationships we've been talking about all summer. Not where you fix the other.

[21 : 20] But as our offertory this morning said, if you're looking for something broken, I am. If you're tired of feeling alone in your brokenness, I'll open my heart and my life so that you'll know you're not the only one who struggles.

You're not the only one who feels weak, who gets tired, and will together look to our strong Savior. Amen? Isn't that what you, don't you need people in your life like that? Don't you have enough who can tell you how to do it?

I mean, advice is nice sometimes. Welcome in. Let's look to Jesus together. Hospitality is a heart issue, isn't it?

Just like we've been asking, is opening my home for me or for those I'm welcoming in? Is my hospitality to show that I'm strong or to join others in weakness and need for Jesus?

See, a gospel community is one where the outsider is welcomed in because that's the way God started the community after all, right? Welcoming us outsiders in so we keep doing that with one another.

[22 : 37] Stranger love to the least of these in the name of Jesus, to those left out and lonely. Because we are aware of our own weaknesses and dependence upon God, we want to introduce fellow sinners to the great physician in whom the broken and hurting find refuge and a home.

We're committed to that. If we're going to show hospitality the way our God has shown hospitality to us, that involves actually leaving our homes, doesn't it?

Not just decorating the house and inviting someone over, but leaving our homes and entering into their lives. Not merely inviting them into ours.

That's what Jesus did, right? He left his home. He made his dwelling among us. He took our sorrows upon himself because he loved and valued us.

You know how much the Bible talks about that being the model for our relationships together in community? It is all over the place. Just as Jesus let go of the comforts of heaven, consider others better than yourselves.

[23 : 57] In other words, treasure them. Even when you think or your instincts tell you they're beneath you. Because they're not. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

It's several times in the New Testament. We didn't even get to preach that one in this series. But why is it there? It seems strange to us, but the heart behind it is honor. Welcome.

Communicate the value of one another. Wash one another's feet, Jesus says. Not only have me over for dinner, but tangibly demonstrate that I'm valuable to you.

Our passage this morning, use your gifts to serve one another. In other words, have a hospitable heart that sees others as greater than yourself and therefore makes them, even in their weakness and brokenness, feel safe and at home with you.

I'm not alone. Even at my low point, because she's down here with me. No better than me. No higher than me. But entering my life to pull me in.

[25 : 08] To welcome me home. That's what God in Christ has done for us, right? He's reached down. He's welcomed us in. He's given us dignity and value.

I got a phone call this week from a man I've never met before. And I wasn't sure why he wanted to talk to me.

But I said, yeah, you know, I'd love to talk to him. Ask when I can call him back. When I got on the phone, he said, my mom has been a member of your church for many years.

She's been homebound, actually, for the last few years, so she can't ever come on Sundays. And I was just calling because I wanted you to hear how thankful I am for how y'all love her.

Her connection to your church is so valuable, he said. He said, she's battling Alzheimer's. She's struggling to remember things.

[26 : 10] But she prays for you, pastor, and for your church all the time. When people visit her, I always hear about it.

Especially if they bring kids or donuts. I hear about that twice. He said, from a son who lives out of town, I thought you should hear how much it means that mom is a part of that community.

She's not able to come to your home for a fancy dinner and tell you how beautifully decorated your home is.

But you can still show her hospitality from the heart. Right? As you move into her life and value her the way that God does.

See, the beauty of gospel community is that even when she doesn't remember it, and she often doesn't, she's as valuable to God as you or I, even when she doesn't know it.

[27 : 18] The beauty of gospel community is that her prayers have helped me more than my visits have helped her. You ought to say amen to that.

That's true. Hospitality. Stranger love is something we all need. And something we are particularly called to show to those who are most outside.

Who would most struggle to come in and feel at home. One another in hospitality and God's family goes beyond how many nights a month you've had your easy friends over to your home.

It moves you out of your comfortable people and places to those most struggling. To feel the welcome of our hospitable God.

Because that's what it's about. We're experiencing that together. We're sharing that with each other. And that's hard because we'd all rather do it in the comfortable ways, wouldn't we? I would. But God says there's something beautiful that's going to happen.

[28 : 22] Even if it's uncomfortable. The hospitable gospel community values and welcomes orphans into their families. Youths who can't seem to fit anywhere else into their friend groups.

Homebound widows into their weekly routines. Challenging kids into their play groups. Lonely couples into their small groups. Recovering addicts into their kitchens.

Y'all this is where life is. I promise that's what it looks like. On the authority of God's word. That's where he says you'll find life. And it's scary to us.

Because it feels uncomfortable. And he says you can trust me on this. This is where life is. And living together like that.

Derek asked you last week if you'd carved out time for it. Have you done that? Is it that important? God says it is.

[29 : 25] If you don't know where to start with following God's command to show hospitality to one another. Start there with those who seem as outsider to you as you were to God.

And move toward just one. There's a lot of community in the world. Lots of places to find it.

Have community they say. It's worth it. It pays off. Invest in those relationships where eventually they'll give back to you.

It'll benefit you later. People say. Y'all gospel community goes so far beyond that.

The world says scratch someone's back who will scratch yours tomorrow. Right? Jesus says when you give a feast invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.

[30 : 25] And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection. Gospel community says Jesus has carried all my burdens.

He's poured himself out for me to overflowing. Jesus has welcomed me in so completely that I am delighted to carry your burdens.

To welcome you in. I'm delighted to do that whether you can pay me back at all. Whether you will ever be able to welcome me into anything or not.

I'm delighted to do that for all of you. Particularly those of you that Jesus has already welcomed into this family to. That's what it means to be a part of this family.

You don't pay me back. That's why it's called a community of grace. I want to be part of a community that loves like that.

[31 : 23] I hope you do too. We're not perfectly that yet. But God is making us into it. He's teaching us how to keep loving one another earnestly.

Next week we'll talk again about how God uses that kind of community. To raid hell.

For many more enemies. And outsiders. And lonely people. Far from his family. That he intends to welcome home. To his table.

I'm looking forward to talking about that too. In the meantime let's love one another earnestly. From the heart. Let's pray. Father we like external checklists more than we like commands about our hearts.

Would your spirit soften our hearts to hear. And to receive. And to believe. That this is what you've designed us for.

[32 : 35] That we'll know life like we've never experienced it before. When we live in this kind of community. Father forgive us for caring more about ourselves.

Than about the stranger. That you've called us to love. Show us. What that stranger love looks like. Open our homes. And open our hearts.

That others might experience. Your welcome. Through us. Help us. Father as we come to you.

We need your help. And ask for it in Jesus name. Amen. Hand of heaven.

Jake. We need your help. Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 52] Peace. Amen. Amen.