Hospitality

Zanesville, OH | April 14, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Heb. 13:2

**Intro**:

* It is no secret that a disciple of Jesus is called to be servant. The bible teaches that *“If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all”* (Mk. 9:35). Indeed, it’s a passage that demonstrates the need for service and the humility with which one ought to approach his fellow man. What I would like to talk about is something that stems from being a servant and that is **Hospitality**. The word itself does not occur too frequently in the New Testament and it’s not found in the Old Testament at all. Now, that’s not to say that hospitality is less important than anything else we should be practicing or that it’s a theme or topic the bible rarely speaks about. The fact that the word does not occur frequently does not signify that it wasn’t something God’s people and the 1st century disciples were not in the habit of doing. In fact, the practice of hospitality is seen readily on almost every page of the Old Testament and New Testament. The bible does not need to highlight the use of a word to show that the action is taking place. This is yet again another powerful illustration of loving in deed and not just in word (1 Jn. 3:18).

1. **Defining Hospitality**
   1. The word hospitality comes from a word that literally means “love of strangers.” Now, think about that for a second. The primary meaning of the word pertains to showing love and care to strangers. We often use the word hospitality when talking about loving or entertaining friends, family members or our church family.
   2. To use the word in this manner would not be wrong for so Peter admonishes us to do: *“Be hospitable to one another without complaint*” (1 Pet. 4:9). Dictionary.com says Hospitality is *“the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.”*
   3. If we serve our friends, families and brothers and sisters in Christ by loving them, entertaining them and caring for them we do well! However, hospitality is by no means limited to love of friends or those we already love and are in our social circles.
   4. Jesus Himself said it’s easy to love those who love us, for even sinners do the same (Lk. 6:32-33). If we want to be truly hospitable in the true meaning of the word, then our reach and our love must and should extend to strangers (Lev. 19:33-34).
2. **Illustrating Hospitality** 
   1. In Genesis 18, shortly before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham encounters three men while he was sitting at the door of his tent. Abraham’s first order of business was to prepare the choicest of meals for them, to wash their feet, allow them to rest and to speak with them (Gen. 18:1-8).
   2. Abraham had not met these men before nor did he know them as he would have known friends or family members. Yet this did not stop him from showing love and care to these men by giving them the best that he had and treating them as if they were family. Notice that the word hospitality or hospitable never occurs in this story but Abraham’s action truly modeled what it meant to “love strangers.”
   3. The next example is in the next chapter over in Genesis 19:1-3. Lot was a very prominent man in Sodom as indicated by the scripture that says he was sitting in the gate of the city (Gen 19:1). Two men (angels) came into the city and Lot immediately began to treat them with love and care.
   4. It was the intention of these men (angels) to spend the night in the city square but Lot would not allow it because he wanted to be hospitable to them. When they came into his home, he prepared a feast for them and took care of them just like Abraham did with the men in Genesis 18. Here again the word hospitality or hospitable is not used but do we not have to see the word to clearly see that was being done was “loving strangers.”
   5. The well-known story of the Good Samaritan which Jesus told as a response to the question by a lawyer seeking to justify himself is once more a powerful illustration of loving in deed and not just in word (Lk. 10:30-37). The priest and Levite were not willing to be hospitable. They turned a blind eye to someone who clearly needed their compassion, their love and their time.
   6. The one person who no one would expect to stop and care for this man actually did so without hesitation. It took a Samaritan to do what the priest and Levite should have done. The actions of the Samaritan clearly illustrate “love of strangers.” This story and the previous two invite us to reflect on the nature of hospitality even though the word is never used:
      1. **Hospitality is almost always inconvenient**
      2. **Hospitality requires a choice to serve and sacrifice**
      3. **Hospitality reflects a heart of love and compassion (not looking for return)**
3. **Importance of Hospitality**
   1. The NT commands Christians everywhere that they be hospitable (Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; 1 Pet. 4:9; 3 Jn. 1:5-6). Hospitality is an essential characteristic of the disciple of God and through the illustration of such things God is glorified and people can be encouraged, edified and even won to the gospel!
   2. Jesus taught strongly on this subject as a requirement by God. Part of loving one’s neighbor is to show hospitality. The seriousness of this subject is seen in Matthew 10 went Jesus sent out the twelve. In Matthew 10:9-10, notice that Jesus gave instructions for the twelve not to take too many things with them.
   3. Why did Jesus do this? How were they supposed to support and sustain themselves? Well, notice what Jesus tells the disciples they are to do as they embark of this journey of evangelism and encouragement (vv. 11-13).
   4. Jesus was indicating that hospitality would play an important role in this commission. Jesus expected that strangers would open their doors for these men and support them and sustain them for with such an attitude God is well pleased. Why? Because when we show love to our fellow man and in particular to “strangers” we are demonstrating our love and trust for God as well.
   5. However, Jesus went on to say in Matthew 10:14-15: *"Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.”* Now some might say that’s a little harsh. But it’s not! This shows us just how much God values “love of strangers.”
   6. There would be people who would say no to the twelve and by extension they would be saying no to God. Hospitality is one of those things we need to think about and consider very strongly because God feels very strongly about it. It’s a matter of Heaven and Hell (Matt. 25:31-46).
   7. Maybe I am really good about showing love and outreach to those in my inner circle but how is my love and outreach to those who are strangers? Do we make strangers feel like they are a part of our family like Abraham and Lot did? Do we seek to show love and care to others the same we do for those who love us? Do we love our enemies and do good to those who hate us?

**Conclusion:** Why is Hospitality so important? Why is it such a big deal to God? Well, because it primarily manifests our love for God and for our neighbors. Jesus said that all the commandments hang on two principles: *“Love God and Love your neighbor”* (Matt. 22:37-40). He wants us to take the blessings we have and share them with others. He wants us to share the gospel, share our time, share our food, share our fellowship, share our love. God wants us to look out for the interests of others and not just our own interests. He calls us to be about an attitude of giving and not merely receiving (Acts 20:35). And perhaps the biggest reason and the greatest reason God values hospitality so highly is because He knows what it’s like to give. The greatest act in all of human history is a manifestation of hospitality. God gave His Son for us (Eph. 2:12, 19) to bring us close to Him in order that we might have propitiation for our sins and everlasting life! God wants us to model the same attitude. We have received so much from Him and so the least we can do is to be hospitable and practice “love of strangers.”