



June 28, 2020

Good Morning,

Our worship theme today centers around hospitality. In church circles in normal times, we often speak of hospitality in the way we greet visitors when they come to our worship service. Hospitality is a Christian value that we cherish and seek to honor every Sunday morning. But in these days when we are not together for “in person” worship, how is our practice of Christian hospitality exercised? I do not have an abundance of answers for that one, except to say that still hospitality is something that each of us being part of the faith community is responsible for. We can exercise hospitality to a neighbor via a phone call to see how they are doing. We can exercise hospitality in an email or a text when interacting with anyone via these computerized means of communication. Hospitality is honoring and respecting the humanity of anyone with whom we have the opportunity to come into contact. The way we talk with the customer service person on the phone who we are calling concerning a complaint or issue can be an opportunity to exercise hospitality. The way you respond on “Facebook” to anything that you see there can be an opportunity to exercise hospitality. Remember, hospitality is honoring and respecting the humanity of anyone with whom we have the opportunity to come into contact. On the most basic level, hospitality is treating others as you yourself would like to be treated. Hospitality is a direct outgrowth of Jesus’ command to love your neighbor as yourself.

I challenge you this week, as we all still live under the social constraints of COVID-19, to find ways to exercise your Christian hospitality. You might be surprised of the many ways we can still live into God’s call to welcome all ... both the stranger and kin ... as we seek to be the People of God in these unprecedented times.

Blessings on your time of worship today,

Pastor Rick

## WORSHIP June 28, 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmUbS9Fbk28>

(Click above to watch worship service)

### GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

*You call us, Lord, to be a welcoming people.*

*Teach us that Christian welcome extends beyond those whom we know.*

*You call us, Lord, to be a welcoming people.*

*Teach us that Christian welcome extends to the despised and undesired.*

*You call us, Lord, to be a welcoming people.*

*Teach us to be willing to risk for the sake of welcoming all people.*

*You call us, Lord, to be a welcoming people.*

*Teach us that Christian welcome is your command, that we love our neighbor as ourselves.*

### GREETING

*The Lord be with you*

*May we welcome friend and stranger in the name of Christ.*

*We welcome all who come into our midst!*

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

1<sup>st</sup> reading – Jeremiah 28:5-9

*Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord; and the prophet Jeremiah said, 'Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfil the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.'*

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Psalm 89:1-2, 15-18

*I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;*

*with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.*

*I declare that your steadfast love is established for ever;*

*your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.*

*Happy are the people who know the festal shout,*

*who walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance;*

*they exult in your name all day long,*

*and extol your righteousness.*

*For you are the glory of their strength;*

*by your favor our horn is exalted.*

*For our shield belongs to the Lord,*

*our king to the Holy One of Israel.*

Gospel reading – Matthew 10:40-42

*‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.’*

## SERMON

2<sup>nd</sup> after Pentecost

WELCOME  
Matthew 10:40-42

June 26, 2001

Back in the days before COVID-19

when you walked into a restaurant feeling good about having a meal and eating with friends ... you would go in and usually be greeted by a happy “unmasked” face saying *“Welcome to Red Robin, Applebee’s or whatever.”*

As I recall, the last time I did that

was at Wally’s American Gastropub in the Gainy Ranch Shops ... the restaurant bears the little subtitle of ... *“A Hangout with Comfort”*.



screen 1

Once I entered,  
the hostess welcomed us ... *“Welcome to Wally’s”* she said and promptly showed us to our table.

The waiter said *“Welcome to Wally’s. My name is Andrew and I will be taking care of you today.”*

ALL THAT’S HOSPITALITY ... RIGHT?

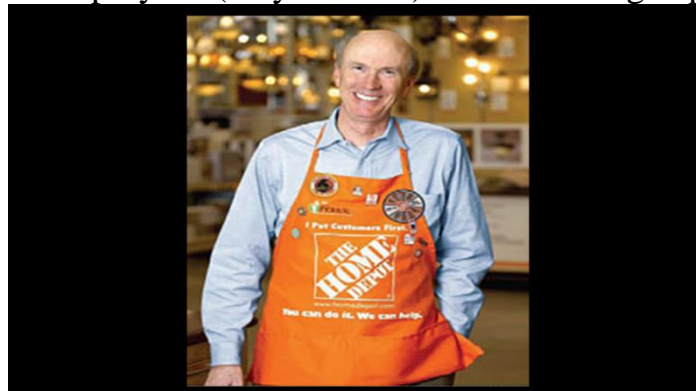
I go into a Walmart ... well, not so much these days, but when I do go, there is always a pleasant looking person dressed in a blue sleeveless vest saying,



screen 2

*“Welcome to Walmart.”*

When I go into a Home Depot, same thing ... I am greeted by at least two store employees (maybe more) in those orange aprons



screen 3

who say “*hello*” and ask me if I am finding everything I need.

HOSPITALITY ... RIGHT?

Well ... yes, all that is hospitality, but behind

the intentional welcome and the friendly “hello” are dollar signs ... the business world has learned that hospitality translates into money and sales.

In some ways, churches, these days have learned this too.



screen 4

Greeting the visitor,  
making conversation with them,  
introducing them to the pastor or to another parishioner,  
inviting them to have coffee after worship ... has become  
standard practice in many churches for increasing the chances that a visitor  
returns.

Nothing wrong with any of that ... motivations aside, hospitality  
promotes civility and recognizes the basic human need for community,  
connection, and a recognition that we all seek on some basic level.

Jesus would never discourage  
such hospitality ... even if the effort carried with it some degree of self-seeking  
motivation for making money or increasing the membership base.

In fact,  
today's reading from Matthew's 10<sup>th</sup> chapter even speaks of rewards for  
those who extend the welcome mat.

Jesus is speaking here to the disciples  
seeking to impress upon them the connection between hospitality and the  
character of God ... God extends the "welcome mat" to all people.

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Let's take a look at the  
kind of hospitality of which Jesus was referring ... we will find it a bit different  
than the hospitality of the Walmart employee.

In Jesus' day, hospitality was arranged into a systematic code of rules & laws among all people no matter religious affiliation or nationality ... there were things one was expected to do, and for good reason.

When you consider the lay of the land in Israel/Palestine,



screen 5

you begin understand the necessity of giving & receiving hospitality when people traveled from village to village ... it was a rough & baron land.

This was also true in the United States



screen 6

in the early part of the 20th century ... before the 1950's hotels and motels were not as abundant as today ... it was difficult for the traveler.

There was a time in this country when a traveling stranger would stop by a home, ask for directions, stay for a meal or perhaps, the night maybe ... hospitality toward the traveler was once as important to us, as it was to our spiritual ancestors of the first century.

**So here were the rules of hospitality in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine ... there were five:**

- (1) Greeting the guest with a kiss (2) Washing the guest's feet (3) Washing or anointing the guest's head (4) Offering a drink of water (5) Offering food to eat.

The kiss was a sign of acceptance and safety.



screen 7

It conveyed that you are accepted & safe here.

The foot washing & anointing of the head offered comfort to the weary traveler.



screen 8

Giving food & water was basic in re-tooling the traveler so their journey could continue.



screen 9

All this was more than a warm fuzzy “hello” ... there were no motivations of money or the hope of gaining a new neighbor ... the motivation was expecting the same treatment if ever you had to travel yourself.

When we read this passage,

the key word is "welcome" ... four times in the first sentence it is used and it is a great word filled with a sense of warmth and hospitality.

But it is also not a powerful ... for nearly 400 years, translation scholars had been using the word "receive" rather than "welcome." *"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me."*

Early translators used "receive" rather than welcome & did so for a reason:

The word "receive" is not a mere "Howdy, come on in" kind of phrase.

It had a very specific meaning.

It was used to describe the formal & respectful acceptance of a king's ambassador.

In other words,

hospitality in ancient Palestine,

to welcome someone in Jesus' time ... meant

to RECEIVE them as someone as important  
as a king's ambassador,

to TREAT them with the utmost of respect,

to ACCEPT them regardless of race,  
nationality, or religion.

This is the kind of hospitality

that Jesus says will be rewarded ... because to welcome in such a way as this, is to

welcome Jesus himself, even God.

### **That's no small deal!!!**

Jesus extends blessing to the heathen,

to the atheist,

to whoever ... whoever extends a welcome and receives the

disciple.

And then, Jesus even broadens it out to a larger span of people than that:

*Whoever welcomes a prophet*

*Whoever welcomes a righteous person*

*Whoever gives a cup of cold water to a little one in the name of a disciple - truly*

*I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.*

The lesson for us is ... **HOSPITALITY IS A BIG DEAL TO GOD!!!**

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Got a letter in the mail some six years ago that I'll never forget ... I'll

never forget because it was a letter that touched me,

humbled me, and

taught me something.



The name on the return address

was a name vaguely familiar to me, but I couldn't place from where or why this name rang a bell.

I opened the letter and read this:

Dear Pastor Lawrence

My name is Dennis (I will omit the last name to protect privacy) ... My name is Dennis and on January 8, 2007 you did a very thoughtful and meaningful service for me and my family. You visited my mother at a nearby convalescence home in West Bend, WI days before her death. At the time I was residing out of state and needed help in arranging for her funeral service. I have become Christian in my faith these past several years and have often thought of your help while others turned a deaf ear to my request. I thank you for your efforts and the funeral service at your church. Please find the enclosed check of \$500.00 to use however you see fit.

Respectfully,  
Dennis

The letter touched me because often times in the ministry ... you're not sure how  
you affect people's lives;

I was humbled because ... in the ministry, you become very aware that your impact upon  
people's lives (should you become aware of it) is not because  
of you, but because of what God does through you; and

I was taught that hospitality  
is something that we Christians extend right down to the last moments of life ... God's  
welcome mat is always out... always extended, to the newborn and to the dying.

Let's look at some of the ways Bethany practices hospitality:

**First** of all,

we are very good at welcoming the visitor ... we want them to know they matter to us,  
they are invited to commune and fellowship with us – that's hospitality

**Second**,

we have numerous groups using our church facilities throughout the week, some pay  
rent others (like the 12 step groups) are charged nothing ... but the point is, we operate  
an "open" campus here allowing our space to be used to serve the community

**Third,**

as we seek to live into our Purpose Statement ... ACCEPTING  
SERVING  
LOVING – WE SHARE GOD’S  
EMBRACE

As we live into that statement, it challenges us  
to understand that our ministry is to be not only for those who like us, but also to  
those different than us ... different socially,  
racially,  
economically, even  
religiously ... we are called to practice a radical  
hospitality because such  
hospitality is the nature of God.

I don’t know how God will  
reward us for that ... but we do it  
not for the reward, but rather because it pleases God.

Why is hospitality so important to God ... it’s important because

recipients of an honest welcome with no strings attached,  
people who are truly received into the midst of a community ... they experience  
something of the grace  
of God.

That you cannot get at

at Wally’s, or  
at a Walmart, or  
a Home Depot – that you can only get from God ... and we as a community of faith,  
living under the name and ministry of Jesus, we are called & charged with the job of  
being the dispensary of such grace. AMEN

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We believe in God, the source of all life, wholeness, and love.

We believe that God is revealed in Jesus Christ.

We believe that in his life, Jesus reveals God in grace, mercy, forgiveness, and justice.

We believe that in his death, Jesus reveals God's determined presence in the world even in the face of hatred, violence, and pain.

We believe that in his resurrection, Jesus reveals God calling us to abundant life both now and forever; to move beyond fear and to trust in God's eternal presence.

We believe that God lives among us, within us, and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God moves us to be together in communities of faith, hope, and love.

We believe these things not out of certainty but out of faith and we trust in the constant presence of God revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Amen

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

*God of mercy, God of grace ... Jesus welcomed the sinner and the outcaste, in that same spirit we pray for your grace and courage to do the same. Jesus welcomes the despised and those considered the "other", in that same spirit we pray for your grace and courage to do the same. Jesus welcomed his own who rejected him, in that same spirit we pray for your grace and courage to do the same. We pray that you fill us always with a spirit of hospitality and welcome. Lord, in your mercy ... hear our prayer.*

*God of mercy, God of grace ... We pray for peace that where there is conflict and division your spirit of harmony and healing prevail. We pray for leaders of nations, cities, and towns to be motivated by what brings welfare to the people they serve. We pray for each of us to do our part in being peacemakers in our own circles of discord and to be providers for those for those in need around us. Lord in your mercy ...hear our prayer.*

*God of mercy, God of grace ... We pray for all those on our Bethany Prayer List. Where there is physical need we pray for comfort and healing. Where there is emotional distress, we pray for peace. Where there is spiritual struggle, we pray for growth and resolve. We ask that you bless today all for whom we pray. Bless them in the way that only you can. Lord, in your mercy ... hear our prayer.*

*God of mercy, God of grace ... We pray for our nation and world. As a pandemic still rages, we pray for frontline healthcare workers. We pray for those ill with the COVID disease. We pray for families who have lost loved ones. In the midst of a racial social upheaval world-wide, we pray for understanding, a willingness to listen, a heart for healing and peace. Lord, in your mercy ... hear our prayer.*

**OFFERING** *(Please mail your weekly offering to the church.  
4300 N 82<sup>nd</sup> St. Scottsdale, AZ 85251)*

## **PRAYER OF BLESSING**

*Let us pray:*

*God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. As you give to us the good things of life, both physical and spiritual, help us in turn to be of a generous spirit using our gifts to serve others and to honor you. AMEN*

## The Lord's Prayer

You may say traditional Lord's Prayer or use the Aramaic translation printed below or you may say both in succession

*O Creator, the one who gave birth to the universe,  
You are the sacred source of our being.*

*Focus Your ways, Your light, within us.  
Make us useful for Your purposes here on earth so that  
Your desire and our lives become one*

*Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.*

*Loosen the cords of mistakes binding us,  
as we release the strands we hold of other's guilt.*

*Do not let surface things delude us, snare us, and lead us away  
from You and Your purpose.*

*But free us from what holds us back, give us power to  
live as you intended and created us to live.*

*From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act,  
the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age. AMEN*

### **BENEDICTION**

*As you leave of this time of worship  
may the Living Lord go with you;  
May God go behind you, to encourage you,  
beside you, to befriend you,  
above you, to watch over you,  
beneath you, to lift you from your sorrows,  
within you, to give you the gifts of faith, hope, and love,  
and always before you, to show you the way.*

### **DISMISSAL**

*Be the welcoming arms and words of Jesus wherever you go and to whomever you  
meet. Go with the welcome of Christ in our hearts.*