



The Adventure of Hospitality

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 13:1-6

On a canoe trip in Maine, we came around a bend and saw a woman standing on the river bank waving for us to come over. She'd run down from her cabin with ice cream bars for us to enjoy. It was a wonderful surprise in the midst of a week away from fresh food and frozen desserts. As we enjoyed the ice cream and chatted with her, she told us she was hoping it would become something of a legend that there was a woman on the river who surprised travelers with an experience of hospitality as they ventured through the backwoods.

Not a bad thing to aspire to. Imagine being known for a legacy of providing hospitality and encouragement in a wild, sometimes treacherous world.

In the parable we are focusing on this month, Matthew 25:31-46, among the things Jesus commends those who are blessed is, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." It is similar to Hebrews 12:2 "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Clearly, when we show hospitality to others we may be encountering the truly high and mighty, regardless of appearances. What an adventure we embark on every time we welcome the stranger and care for those in need.

Imagine how honored are those who provided care for Jesus when he, Mary, and Joseph were refugees fleeing to Egypt. Can you imagine the privilege of serving Jesus and his family in their time of need? This is what Jesus says is what we are doing every time we extend care to the needy and vulnerable in our world. "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

I think of that woman standing on the river bank offering us hospitality. I don't know how wide spread the legend grew, but I do know that those of us on the trip will never forget her. She is honored in our memory and while I'm pretty sure there were no angels in our group, I am completely certain that Jesus noticed her effort. Jesus makes it clear; in caring for us, she cared for him.

None of the people who welcomed and provided care for the king knew it was him they had encountered. We won't always be able to tell, says the author of Hebrews, when we are encountering angels. But knowing that such encounters are possible every time we extend a welcome, compassion, and care, makes offering hospitality an adventure full of potential every time.

Wouldn't this be a great legacy for us to aspire to as individuals and as a church? Like that woman, I'd love for the word to get out that there are people here who provide hospitality and encouragement for those making their way through this often wild, even treacherous world. Both in our personal, daily lives and through our participation in and support of larger organizations like our church, we have an abundance of opportunities to care for Jesus as he comes to us in those our world considers the least and the last. You know you would have, or wish you would have, extended care to Jesus and his family when they were on the run down in Egypt. And though you missed that opportunity by more than a few years, today's opportunities are right before you. "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, even when I don't see you in my neighbor, help me to love my neighbor, knowing that this is your call and that doing so is an essential expression of who I am as a new creation in you. Forgive me for the times and ways in which I avoid noticing or caring about the needs of those around me. Grant me a heart of compassion and the will to do my part to extend care, especially to those most vulnerable and in need. May the love I extend to others make it clear that I am your disciple, trusting and following you, the One who gave his life in love for all, for it is in your name I pray with thanksgiving and praise. Amen.

Something(s) to try:

- Pray each morning this week for God to give you opportunities to be a blessing to someone and then keep your eyes open and take advantage of the opportunities as they come.
- Find out about the ways in which your church is reaching out to welcome the stranger (ministries that welcome young and old; service and missions in the community and world, etc.). Pray for, get involved, and/or provide financial support to encourage those ministries.
- Pray for anyone you've noticed is excluded at school, church, work, wherever, and make an effort to greet and engage with them.
- Consider supporting and/or getting involved with an organization that works with refugees and immigrants (such as Arrive Ministries).

Memory/Meditation Verse:

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:2

Other recommended readings for this week:

Matthew 25:31-46

Hebrews 13:1-3

Isaiah 53:4-12

Psalms 91:9-16

Mark 10:35-45

Hebrews 5:1-10