



THE GREATEST LESSON IN HOSPITALITY

Pastor Megan Berry

Sunday, February 23, 2025

“The Greatest Lesson in Hospitality” | Luke 22:7-23 | Pastor Megan Berry

It’s hard to believe that we’re almost to the end of our Luke devotional and we’re finishing up our “Good News for All” series today! Because we’re near the end of the gospel of Luke, this also means we’re in a weird liturgical spot of reading about Jesus celebrating the Last Supper with his disciples about 2 weeks before we start back at the beginning of that journey with Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent. That’s okay, we love a bit of liturgical confusion.

While there are a lot of things we could tease out of this scripture passage about passover and communion, I want us to think about hospitality this morning and what we learn about Jesus’ views of hospitality and what our call is from that. Hospitality is seen all throughout Jesus’ ministry, not just in this scripture, so let’s first get started with a working definition of hospitality for today.

Hospitality is the act of showing kindness, generosity, and love to strangers and those in need. When we look at the greek word “philoxenia” which is often translated as “hospitality”, it literally translates as “loving strangers” or “friend to a stranger.” And we see philoxenia used in this context of being hospitable or a friend to strangers not only throughout the Bible but in other Greek texts like the Iliad.

It might be a little aggressive to claim this passage is Jesus’ greatest lesson in hospitality since that was a central part of his ministry. Throughout scripture we get all sorts of examples of Jesus expecting hospitality out of the people he interacted with and calling his disciples to be hospitable to those they interacted with.

Some of my favorite examples of this hospitality are when Jesus sends the disciples out two by two into the towns to do ministry and Jesus tells them not to take anything with them, and to instead rely on the hospitality of the folks in the town (Luke 10). Or the COUNTLESS examples we have of Jesus eating with the poor and tax collectors, even the miracle of feeding the 5 thousand (Luke 5, 7, 9).

And our scripture today again shows this expectation of hospitality and invitation to hospitality. We see the expectation clearly in the ways that Jesus instructs Peter and

John to go and find a place for them to celebrate Passover. At first with no further instructions, Jesus simply told them, go and find a place for the 13 of us, easy right? After a couple of questions, Peter and John know who to look for and what to say and do, but none of us know if Jesus had pre-planned this or was just expecting and planning on this man's kindness and generosity during the Passover festival. Regardless of what that answer is, the point remains, Jesus expects hospitality in his ministry, not because of his status, or because he alone deserves it, but because he believes EVERYONE deserves it and should be extending hospitality.

So as we look at this scripture and think about hospitality, one of my questions is this: How can we be more like the man carrying a jar of water?

You see, it's easy to expect and be hospitable to those in this room or even those whom we don't know but have some sort of connection to us. Whether they look like us, are presbyterian too, or have some other designation that we deem "safe." But that's not what Jesus was expecting or calling us to. Over and over again, we see Jesus eating with and healing those deemed "unsafe" or "unworthy" in society.

Which leads me to our second point about this scripture and Jesus' hospitality that we see played out with the ways he interacts with the disciples around what we now call and remember as The Last Supper.

Just as Jesus expected hospitality from those he encountered in ministry, he also freely gave out hospitality to everyone around him regardless of whether they "deserved" it or not because Jesus believed EVERYONE deserved to be fed, loved, cared for. And we see this explicitly played out in the way he announces that the one who would betray him was sitting among them, being fed by the same bread of life and cup of salvation that everyone had been offered.

Now, one might say "well yes, Jesus said that to remind the disciples that even close friends will betray you." And while that is one interpretation of this passage, I don't think it's an honest interpretation of the passage. Because Jesus doesn't stay stuck on the point of the betrayal, he doesn't elaborate further about testing people or making people prove they're 100% innocent. Instead Jesus offered them ALL the bread and cup, welcomed them ALL to the table, before naming that he knew he would be betrayed and that that person was sitting around this table ALSO invited to the feast.

While it's a bit vexing that Jesus, or the writer of Luke, made this point by ONLY focusing on Judas' betrayal, the fact remains, NONE of the disciples were perfect. They all had faults, they all struggled to believe what Jesus was saying at one point or another, even arguing just after this scripture to the point that Jesus was forced to remind them that

only kings lord over people in the way they're trying to, but the disciples are called to a different type of leadership. We even see Peter deny Jesus in this chapter.

So hopefully, this little passage is a great reminder for all of us, that no matter our faults, no matter whether we believe we are worthy or not, Jesus still says every single time "come to the table, receive the bread of life and cup of salvation, you are enough." He said it to his disciples, even Judas, he said it to tax collectors and the poor, he says it to us. Every single person is invited around the table, and yes that includes the people we don't want to invite ourselves.

That's the good and hard part of this scripture and this calling. The Good News is for EVERYONE or ALL as we've been saying throughout this sermon series. Unfortunately, I don't have easy answers for how to do this, to be the man with the water jug and invite in 13 people we don't know for communion. Or even harder, to love our enemy just like we love our neighbor.

But I do think it's worth trying and aiming for as we're able. And I wonder if it's in our rituals of communion, baptism, praying for each other, that we find this strength and resolve to be hospitable?

Dr. Claudia Highbaugh writes in her commentary on this passage of scripture "Ritual and hospitality go hand in hand with the tasks of discipleship." So, as we think about being hospitable, being the man with the water jug for those around us, how do our rituals of community, rituals of communion, rituals of prayer and rest, help us with these tasks of discipleship?

For me, I think these rituals keep me balanced in being humble and remembering that I am not better than anyone else while also reminding me that I am beloved even with my faults. And those two things combined, while not the easiest, help this ridiculous act of loving our neighbors and enemies and engaging in radical hospitality for ALL.

So, whether we like it or not, feel prepared for it or not, we are left with the same assignment that Jesus gave to Peter and John at the beginning of our scripture passage: go and prepare. Be ready to invite people in, whether with literal food and drink or a little more difficult with an open heart.

So again, how are we acting as the man with the water jug? Waiting to lead Jesus and the disciples into the guest room and be a part of the radical hospitality that Jesus calls us to and offers to us? Amen.