



Loving People Though Hospitality (Romans 12:9-13)

I. INTRO

- A. There are people in this room who have VERY different reactions and responses to last week's presidential election – not to mention other races and propositions.
- B. I'd like to offer some thoughts on the election for three reasons:
 - 1. It's an elephant in the room. (People need to be able to listen, and talk, reflect on, and pray about what's going on at a local, national, and international level as we gather to worship.)
 - 2. The presidential election – as well as some of the local and statewide propositions provide the Church with some significant opportunities in the coming weeks, months, and years.
 - 3. It's a good segue into our sermon series and the assigned topic for today.
- C. This week a friend reminded me of Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address...
 - 1. It is written on the walls of the Lincoln Memorial. Lincoln said that the Civil War was a judgment from God upon both the North AND the South (blog post).
 - 2. Here is the final sentence: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."
- D. Two reflections on this week's election (a respected author and pastor and the other is a respected sports commentator):
 - 1. Scott Sauls, Author and Pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church, Nashville TN: "I am feeling sobered but also hopeful. Sobered, because we seem more divided than any other time I can remember. Hopeful, because this cultural moment presents the church with a unique opportunity to model justice,

love, and unity across the lines of difference. If the church doesn't take the lead, who will?"

2. Ernie Johnson clip (a sportscaster for Turner Sports and CBS Sports) -- <https://youtu.be/ayU5kw7Kf5U>.

- a. What is most impressive to me about the Ernie Johnson clip is that he is willing to engage this journey of healing by examining himself first.
- b. I especially like his phrase "I want to be a fountain instead of a drain."

E. As I mentioned, the clip provides a nice segue into the next message in our Simplify series: "Loving People Through Hospitality."

1. This is week #9 and we are considering the second stage of our mission statement – Love God, Love People, Make Disciples (Serve)

2. And by way of review, here is our reaffirmed (full) mission statement:

"We exist to bring glory to God by loving God supremely, loving people unconditionally, and making passionate disciples of Jesus in the South Bay and beyond." --King's Harbor Church, South Bay CA

F. Here is the passage for us to look at and consider today: *"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."* --Romans 12:9-13 [We were going to look at Hebrews 13:2 as well but we won't have the time.]

II. BODY

A. I would like to take some time today and focus on the last two words: *"practicing hospitality."* As we consider biblical hospitality today, there are three things I'd like to accomplish:

1. Define biblical hospitality.
2. Determine why biblical hospitality is important.
3. Describe some practical ways we can be hospitable. (With one another as well as the looking for God and/or those who are looking for a community of believers to join.)

B. Let's look at them one at a time:

1. **Define biblical hospitality.**

- a. Some people, perhaps many people, will tend to see hospitality as a spiritual gift that they don't have. Yet Christian hospitality isn't about glamorous table settings or platters of picture-perfect food...
- b. The Greek word is *philoxenos* (fil-ox'-en-os) – brotherly/sisterly love for foreigners or strangers. (I'm not trying to make a political statement here but a biblical one.)
 - 1) *Philo* – One of the four Greek words for love. Brotherly/sisterly love (think of Philadelphia). A friend; someone dearly loved or prized in a personal, (non-erotic yet) intimate way; a trusted *confidant*, held dear in a close bond of personal affection.
 - 2) *Xenos* (zen-ous) – A stranger, foreigner, or guest.
- c. It's been said, "Hospitality follows closely behind its friend humility."
 - 1) C.S. Lewis provides us with an excellent definition of humility, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less."¹
 - 2) Pride and insecurity can be our biggest barriers to biblical hospitality.
 - 3) We can be so full of ourselves and expressing our own opinions that there's no room to welcome someone else with a differing opinion.
 - 4) Have you ever had a (or maybe, several) conversation with someone who always seems to always turn the conversation back to themselves? (Are perhaps YOU are that person?)
 - 5) Humility helps us to assume a posture that communicates, "I don't know you or understand you but I'm willing to empty my heart, just a little, of myself and welcome you in."
- d. That brings to a very good working definition of biblical hospitality: **Making space for someone you don't have to.** (It may be a moment or, in the case of marriage, it may be a lifetime.)
- e. Five thoughts about "hospitable space":

¹ Adapted by Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Life* (Day 19) from *Mere Christianity*, Book 3, Chapter 8, "The Great Sin," Kindle location 1665.

- 1) Hospitable space is physical, emotional, and spiritual space in which God and people welcome another person to “be at home” together. (If you voted for Trump, could you have a conversation with someone who voted for Hilary and not try to “fix” them or assert your reasoning – but even take the time to inquire about their reasons and listen patiently to them?)
- 2) Hospitable space has boundaries at the edges with enough structure and guidance to provide security, stability, and support and enough spaciousness and flexibility to provide freedom for growth and change. (Hospitable space is “free space” with the understanding that we don’t change people. We provide people space and God changes them.)
- 3) Hospitable space does not create expectations that it cannot meet, or make promises it cannot keep. (Churches often overpromise and under-deliver.)
- 4) Hospitable space has a place at the table for everyone who is hungry. It is the place where little becomes more than enough and there’s always something left over.
- 5) Hospitable space is created whenever we participate with God in extending God’s welcome.

2. **Determine why biblical hospitality is important.**

- a. What would you say if I told you that hospitality is at the center of the gospel?
- b. Think about this...
 - 1) Making space for the “other” is how the Bible begins. God literally made space for humankind. (He didn’t have to – God is perfectly happy, joyful, and content within the Trinity.)
 - 2) God literally makes space for life to take shape – and we are ALL the “other.” (Common grace)
 - 3) The apex for this creative endeavor is both male and female and the “space” is the most hospitable place ever created -- the Garden of Eden – it was made for complete human flourishing. The Hebrew word is SHALOM.

- 4) God created space for humanity to flourish or to fail. We failed and God initiated a rescue plan that unfolds in and through the Bible.
 - 5) Like the Garden of Eden, good hospitable spaces have boundaries. Having said that, good hospitable spaces don't require people to change in order to enter.
 - a) Good hospitable spaces make room for God to do the changing.
 - b) "We never know whom we marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change. For marriage means we are not the same person after we have entered it. The primary problem is...learning how to love and care for the stranger to whom you find yourself married" --Tim & Kathy Keller (quoting Stanley Hauerwas)²
 - c) The same is true of church...
3. **Describe some practical ways we can be hospitable.** Here are a few practical tips on making room for others... (first five are general, the final two are for KHC)
- a. Pray specifically for Jesus Christ to help you see others through His eyes.
 - b. When you encounter people during your week, ask them a few questions about themselves. (Be aware of how quickly we tend to turn things back to our own lives, our own agenda. This takes practice and once you become conscious of it, it will seem more natural.)
 - c. Let yourself linger with thoughts of the people you encounter during a typical week. What must his/her life be like? What might his/her struggles be? How could I pray for or practically serve this person in some way? (S/he may be a person of a different ethnicity, a different social standing, educated or uneducated...)
 - d. Practice these same skills with your family. (Being in a park and noticing all the parents who were on their smart phones while their

² Tim & Kathy Keller. *The Meaning of Marriage* (quoting Stanley Hauerwas), Penguin, Reprint ed. 2013:126.

kids were playing. You won't make a ten year old any happier than by being fully present to really listen, ask questions, and be interested in what they're doing.)

- e. Don't try and "fix" people with uninvited Bible verses or pious platitudes. ("Well, the bible says..." Help is not help unless it's perceived as help.
- f. As a church community:
 - 1) Sometimes we sacrifice hospitality and the expense of guarding our relational comfortability.
 - a) Interrelatedness at church (same family, different households) – focusing in on my own family at the expense of welcoming others.
 - b) Here at KHC we are shifting some language in an attempt to reflect more accurately where we are going.
 - Historically, our small groups have emphasized relational intimacy. We now want to balance that with hospitality.
 - Historically, we have identified our small groups as Life Groups (or, Mini-Churches). Someone has said they're Life Groups because some of them have been together for a lifetime.
 - We would like to begin to shift the name to Community Groups to reflect that God has called us to be open to share our lives with others and be willing to make space for the outsider.
 - This means that over time, **I am asking you to be willing sacrifice your (current relational) preferences for kingdom priorities.** God has made room for us and welcomed us into His family – will we be willing to do the same?
 - 2) Let's seek to adopt "Post Worship Hospitality Radar" (PWHR).
 - a) A good PWHR picks up all new or distressed people within a radius of 10 or 15 feet, sometimes even further.

- b) Usually we can't go to all of them, but if we all looked for someone, this place would be electrified with post worship hospitality.
- c) Sometimes we ARE that distressed --or depressed-- someone that needs someone else to notice US...

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Back in 2010 Christian author and pastor Max Lucado wrote this: “Long before the church had pulpits and baptisteries, she had kitchens and dinner tables. Even a casual reading of the New Testament unveils the house as the primary tool of the church...Consider the genius of God's plan. The first generation of Christians was a tinderbox of contrasting cultures and backgrounds...We wonder the same thing today. Can Hispanics live in peace with Anglos? Can Democrats find common ground with Republicans? Can a Christian family carry on a civil friendship with the Muslim couple down the street? Can divergent people get along? The early church did—without the aid of sanctuaries, church buildings, clergy, or seminaries. They did so through the clearest of messages (the Cross) and the simplest of tools (the home)...Hospitality opens the door to uncommon community. It's no accident that hospitality and hospital come from the same Latin word, for they both lead to the same result: healing.”³
- B. We'll close with two verses from John – and a prayer:
 - 1. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another [the other?].”³⁵ By this all [people] will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* -- John 13:34-35
 - 2. *“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”* --John 14:3
- C. Lord, give us Your humility, teach us to give ourselves to others, and forgive our stubborn selfishness.

³ Max Lucado, *Outlive Your Life*, Nelson 2010: 55.

P.A.S.S. Questions For KHC Group Leaders**Sermon Dates:** 11/12-13, 2016**Sermon Title:** Loving People Through Hospitality**Sermon Passage:** Romans 12:9-13

Group Leaders: Don't feel like you need to get through all the questions. Pick one participation question and 2-3 others. Also, feel free to adapt or ask your own questions. The main objective is to underscore the main points of the sermon in an interactive/dialogical way – and certainly leave room for prayer.

P - Participation (get everyone involved in the dialog)

1. Remember a time when you came as a stranger into a church service or an existing group and were fully welcomed. What made you feel welcomed?
2. Remember a time when you came as a stranger into a church service or an existing group and did not feel welcomed. What made you feel unwelcomed?

A - Application (makes it personal)

3. The word translated as “hospitality” in the New Testament, *philoxenia*, literally means “love of stranger.” Its opposite is *xenophobia* which means “fear of the stranger or foreigner.” Can you identify examples of *philoxenia* and *xenophobia* in our world...in today's church?
4. Who are the people in your life (neighborhood, school, workplace, etc.) who are not like you in some way? What are some ways you might extend hospitality to strangers in your daily life?

S - Scripture (thinking biblically is a learned behavior! :-)

5. Read Hebrews 13:2. How might this verse change our perspective as we engage our busy lives?

S – Sharing (aim for a time of honest reflection, authenticity, and transparency in a safe atmosphere modeled by you). [Choose one of the following as a final dialogue question.]

6. Talk about some of the people you consistently interact with on a regular basis. What might specific hospitality look like if you set aside some time to invest in a few of them?