

CITYWEST CHURCH

VISION SUNDAY 2024 - 11.02.2024 - 10AM

As a church, we have walked through different seasons so far.

Unity

Ancient Path

Equip the saints.

Today is an opportunity for us to step into the next chapter of the journey God has for us as a church.

It's no secret, COVID and our collective reaction to it here in NSW, Australia and to be frank across the world has made us skeptical of one another.

For example, if someone now coughs in public, what is your reaction?

It has pit us all against one another, and that takes us further away than from the way God intended and wants things.

We were not meant to view people as the enemy, but as people made in the image of God.

The world has conditioned us to be wary of one another, not welcoming of each other.

You might think why are you dredging up the COVID stuff again etc. i thought we were past that and we are past the lockdowns but the residue remains.

We have to ask ourselves, how do we evangelize a world that is fearful of each other?

The Bible is the story of how we were all once strangers to God but through Christ, we become his family.

Hospitality is the way, our theme and focus for this year is Hospitality.

Our key verse is :

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. **10** Love each other with genuine affection,^[e] and take delight in honoring each other. **11** Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.^[f] **12** Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. **13** ***When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.***

Romans 12:9-13 (NLT)

The Greek word used for hospitality is Philoxenia, it means love of the stranger.

As Rosaria Butterfield puts it in her challenging book on Hospitality the gospel comes with a house key.

“We would see strangers become friends and friends become the family of God.”

This year we will be going deep on hospitality in the bible and challenging and providing you all to be more hospitable in 2024 not just because but for people to know Jesus.

Our key verse of Romans 12:13 is not a suggestion but a command.

Its not an optional extra to Christianity, its about at the forefront and we will see as we open scripture up this year that hospitality isnt just for those who like dinner parties, but it is for all of us who have put our faith in Jesus.

A command is a strong way of putting it. Paul is encouraging the Romans to make hospitality a defining act of who they are.

I think in post-modern Australia, the act of hospitality will become a defining act.

Hospitality is not about entertaining it's about opening our lives over a meal to discuss the real issues of being human.

Evangelism in post-modern Australia will not happen by shouting God's love from a distance, it will come from sharing meals over tables.

In Luke 14 Jesus heals on the sabbath and teaches on humility and a different way to approach a table for a meal and then he gives an insight into true hospitality.

12 Then he turned to his host. “When you put on a luncheon or a banquet,” he said, “don’t invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. **13** Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. **14** Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you.”

Luke 14:12-14 (NLT)

Jesus communicates anyone can love someone who can love them back. Our mindset can be if I go your house, we need to invite you to our house.

Jesus doesn't say to stop that, he adds another layer for us to consider as the children of God. We need to be people who are intentional about our faith and our relationships with God and others. As you look deeper you will see the power of the table.

Ill speak more about this next week, but the same word is used in Hebrew for table and reconciliation.

Shulchan - a table

Shulchan - reconciliation.

Same word, and in doing so it takes the meaning of table fellowship and hospitality from the edges of the Christian faith right to the middle.

More on that next week.

But to wrap up today,

It's important for us to walk away today knowing that we can only be hospitable if we understand that Jesus is the first one to be hospitable to us.

The invitation of Jesus in Revelation 3:20 says

“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.

Rev 3:20 (NLT)

This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. **22** Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

Col 1:21-22 (NLT)

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS:

- 1. HOW HAS THE HOSPITALITY OF JESUS IMPACTED YOUR LIFE?**
- 2. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN PRACTICE HOSPITALITY THIS YEAR?**