

# CITYWEST CHURCH

## 04.03.2024 -10 AM

### FAITH AND HOSPITALITY.

When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13 (NLT)

*The last few weeks I've really tried to lay a theological foundation around hospitality and how central it is to our faith as followers of Jesus.*

*This foundation allows us to live out our key scripture and not just practice hospitality but be eager to practice hospitality. That doesn't just happen, you have to be intentional about it.*

*The timeline of tables and ministers of reconciliation illustrate the picture of shulchan the table and reconciliation.*

*Today we are going to be looking at the first mention of hospitality by Abraham. The power of the first mention is a powerful tool in hermeneutics (interpretation) for us to understand the starting point of humans being hospitable. God is hospitable from the very beginning of scripture. It is always good to start at the start. God is a God of order after all.*

*So Genesis 18 let's read this passage together:*

The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. **2** He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

**3** "My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. **4** Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. **5** And since you've honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey."

"All right," they said. "Do as you have said."

**6** So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Hurry! Get three large measures[a] of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread." **7** Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. **8** When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

**9** "Where is Sarah, your wife?" the visitors asked.

"She's inside the tent," Abraham replied.

**10** Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. **11** Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. **12** So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

**13** Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ **14** Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

**15** Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the LORD said, “No, you did laugh.”

Genesis 18:1-15 (NLT)

*It is important for us to note that we are made aware of this being a divine encounter from the first sentence it is an unfolding understanding for Abraham.*

*He is very quick to offer hospitality to the three men before knowing it's the Lord.*

*This is a powerful story for us to reflect on and learn from because of the practical nature of offering food and not knowing what might happen as we put our faith into action in the service of others.*

*Abraham sees the strangers, immediately runs to greet them, invites them to receive hospitality gives water and washes feet, offers comfort rest, and lodging food and drink, and promises not to hold up their travel.*

*This then opens for them to confirm the promise made to Abraham about his descendants being as numerous as the stars.*

*The faith of Abraham put into action opened the way for the natural offer of food to turn into the supernatural gift of God.*

***Hospitality and faith made way for revelation and reward***

*Gen 19 is a very challenging chapter in the Bible. It serves as a contrast to Gen 18 and provides us with a warning of the slippery slope we can go down if we cast hospitality to the side and put our agenda before God's plan.*

*Let's read it together.*

That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom. Lot was sitting there, and when he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed with his face to the ground. **2** "My lords," he said, "come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again."

"Oh no," they replied. "We'll just spend the night out here in the city square."

**3** But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. **4** But before they retired for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house. **5** They shouted to Lot, "Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!"

**6** So Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him. **7** "Please, my brothers," he begged, "don't do such a wicked thing. **8** Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection."

**9** "Stand back!" they shouted. "This fellow came to town as an outsider, and now he's acting like our judge! We'll treat you far worse than those other men!" And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door.

**10** But the two angels reached out, pulled Lot into the house, and bolted the door. **11** Then they blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of the house, so they gave up trying to get inside.

Genesis 19:1-11 (NLT)

*In this story Lot the nephew of Abraham offers hospitality to the two Lords who turn up in Sodom.*

*Sodom and Gomorrah was a city where self-interest and self-gratification took the highest priority, a place where social justice was absent and the outcry was heard by the Lord and he went to look for himself.*

*The only one to offer hospitality was Lot who was not a native of Sodom, everyone who was had not even one thought of hospitality.*

*This serves in stark contrast to Abraham the father of faith who was quick to offer hospitality. In short, they had fortified walls but didn't use their table at all.*

*Sodom reminds us that God hates sin, we are in the age of grace and Jesus is so kind to us all.*

*So what does this mean for us today? How does this look in our lives?*

## 1. SETTING THE TABLE REQUIRES FAITH.

Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!

Hebrews 13:2 (NLT)

*The writer of Hebrews is referring to Abraham, and the same stands for us today.*

*The supernatural requires the natural. The sacrament of setting the table and having the faith to believe that God will bring about reconciliation around the table that you have set in the natural.*

*You are the host in the natural but God is the host when it comes to the supernatural.*

## 2. HOSPITALITY WITH FAITH DIMINISHES FEAR.

*John Tyson in his book Beautiful Resistance has a chapter on how hospitality must drive out fear.*

*He says setting the table doesn't eliminate differences but it will diminish fear.*

*It takes faith to set the table for those who are different from you.*

## 3. HOSPITALITY IS CLOSE TO THE HEART OF GOD.

*We are part of the body, there are no lone-ranger Christians. We are not meant to eat at our table alone.*

The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. **13** Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles,<sup>[a]</sup> some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NLT)

*We are not self-made we are God made. Whenever we find ourselves doing what is right in our eyes without talking to God we open ourselves to danger.*

*When we see our fellow man as a means to an end we forget that our fellow man is made in the image of God.*

**CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS:**

- 1. HOW CAN WE COMBINE OUR FAITH WITH THE PRACTICE OF HOSPITALITY?**
- 2. DISCUSS HOW WE CAN DEFINE OUR PART AND GODS PART IN HOSPITALITY.**
- 3. BASED ON OUR FOCUS OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS, HOW CAN YOU AND YOUR FAMILY USE YOUR TABLE IN A PRACTICAL WAY?**