

December Sermon Series: Recovering the Lost Hospitality Commandments

Sermon Title: "Biblical Hospitality: Seeing the Gospel Spread from Home to Home".

December 9, 2018

Theme verse: Hebrews 13:1–2 Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (ESV)

Introduction: Conclusion at Gospel Community, it takes great effort for non-believers to set foot inside of a church fellowship not knowing what they will encounter. There needs to be intermediate steps that are less threatening.

Context

Exegesis

Main point: There are cultural barriers non-believers must overcome on their way to hearing the gospel and fellowshiping in the gospel. The hospitality of our homes make that process easier.

1. The early church used the hospitality of their homes to evangelize more than any other location.
 - There were no buildings back then to call a "church". They worshipped in the Temple but 90% of the ministry of the church was done in individual homes. Check out:
 - Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. (ESV)
 - Acts 20:20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, (ESV)
 - Luke 5:29 And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. (ESV)
 - Cornelius in Acts 10
 - The fellowship and love experienced in the home is a preview of what heaven is all about and hence the gospel is all about.
 - The NT believers in Ephesus and elsewhere had to welcome Gentiles in to their homes and into their lives. They did this in their homes. *Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (ESV)*
 - The love feast was held in the home of a wealthier believer whose house could handle the numbers. It was to be a humble dinner, not a banquet of rich food. *1 Corinthians 11:20–22 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry,*

another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. (ESV)

- Bob Smith formerly of Bethel College said “90% of evangelism is love”.
2. The practice of engaging in home-centered hospitality and evangelism changed as the church became organized and more professional.
 - Once Bishop Basil of Caesarea organized the first hospital in 370 A.D. (the word itself comes from the Latin word hospes meaning stranger and hence hospital comes from the concept of hospitality) to take care of the needs of strangers and ill and poor, the church members stopped doing this on an individual basis in their homes.
 - This led to more impersonalized care and loss of dignity to the person being ministered to. Today, we have 1) food shelves, 2) Love INC, 3) Habitat for Humanity, 4) United Way, 5) Jingle Bells, 6) Social Services, and with all these organizations the person being helped is seen only once or twice (in the case of social services perhaps more often). Lost is the face-to-face relationship and dignity that one-on-one hospitality in a home can provide.
 - By the time of the 16th Century the concept of hospitality was completely gone and the word had a new definition: it meant inviting friends in for dinner, not strangers.
 - John Calvin is quoted as saying, “This office of humanity has . . .nearly ceased to be properly observed among men; for the ancient hospitality celebrated in histories, is unknown to us, and inns now supply the place of accommodations for strangers.”
 - The churches still took care of widows and orphans but not strangers and aliens.
 - When John Wesley was converted and started the Methodist denomination, he organized his churches into home groups of accountability and one of the assignments these home groups had was to provide hospitality to those in need, but, John Wesley would not call it hospitality.
 3. Today the ministry of hospitality has been taken over by government and other agencies. And as a result the benefits of community life and care have been lost.
 - Handicapped and injured can receive SSI benefits.
 - Children of the elderly can rely at least on Social Security for their needy parents.
 - Orphans are handled by CWS
 - In Alexandria we pay bus tickets to Fargo or Minneapolis for the homeless to seek shelters there.
 - Legal immigrants have Catholic services to provide housing and help get them established in the community.
 - None of the above can provide the love and care that only a community of saints can provide.

4. Our homes have become more privatized and hence more vulnerable limiting our ability to be hospitable.
 - If homes were connected to one another, like an apartment complex or commune, there would be more people to watch over the safety of a homeowner taking in a stranger and vice versa.
 - Often no one is at home with both spouse working and that makes leaving stranger home alone a risky thing.

Application

How can we get back to First Century hospitality?

1. We can start by making entrance points less threatening. The church front door might be too much for non-believers to come through, especially those in need. Game nights, Gospel Communities might be better suited for entrance points.
2. We might want to consider using our 1st and 3rd Sundays as opportunities to have people from the church into our homes and then,
3. Invite non-believing friends to join us in those dinners to make acquaintances become friends
4. And then perhaps do this on consecutive times so that real friendships can develop.
5. And, if there are believers who are without a church home, include them in these Sunday dinners.
6. Finally, this is not a new program. I am not asking for sign-ups. AS one members shared, if the Holy Spirit isn't motivating this to happen, you won't be able to.