



**PRESTON  
MEADOW**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

## Sunday Morning Grow Groups

October 10, 2021

- Happy Fall, y'all! Welcome!
  - We had such a blast last weekend for the Mortgage Burning Party! Thanks for joining us!
  - Reformation, the celebration of Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses, actually falls on Sunday, October 31. We're planning some fun things for our kidsConnect crew that day. Costumes in worship are optional for Halloween :)
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### Getting to Know You

(spend about 5-7 minutes here)

*Building personal connections is a key component of Grow Groups, and these questions will help foster deeper connections. Don't forget to introduce yourself if there are new faces in your group today.*

- *What company, retail store, or restaurant has the BEST customer service in your view? What separates them from the rest?*
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### Background -- Steadfast Welcome

This month we'll focus on the theme of "Steadfast Stewardship." In last week's sermon, Pastor Paul said, *"Steadfast stewardship is a response of ours when we fully realize all God has done for us and for our world. We see how God gave everything for us to be in relationship together, and that radical love of God moves us so that our response is to let God be Lord of everything in our not lives, and not just a portion. We see how trustworthy God is in life, and we turn over all to God. We are put here as stewards, managers, and trustees of what belongs to God and called to work with God to make this earth more of what God wants it to be."*

We'll apply this theme to some of our church values this month. Today, we look at our "Steadfast Welcome" and what it means to be a community of **compassionate acceptance**. We define compassionate acceptance as *welcoming others as Christ has welcomed us*.

## DIVING INTO THE TEXT

(Reading today is from the New Revised Standard Version translation)

### Hebrews 13:1-8

**Background:** The authorship of the Letter of Hebrews is unclear. It was thought to be from the Apostle Paul, but more recent scholarship separates this from his other letters because of its style and theology. It is written broadly to “Hebrews” and makes the case for Jesus to be the Messiah by mentioning many Jewish symbols and stories. In this part of the letter, the author lists off a number of things that new believers should pay attention to and practice. Belief in Jesus leads to a certain practice of ethics in your life. A spirit of openness, compassion, and respect for relationships is tantamount.

+++ (Choose a person to read the following passage) +++

**13:1** Let mutual love continue. **2** Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. **3** Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. **4** Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. **5** Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” **6** So we can say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper;  
I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?”

**7** Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. **8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. +++

- Our focus today is on the first pair and last pair of verses as we think about our steadfast welcome.
  - What do you think is meant in verse 2 of welcoming strangers?
  - Have you ever had someone go above and beyond in welcoming you? What impact did that make? Why was it special? What did they do that made it so remarkable?
  - The hospitality industry in our country is big business. People can earn degrees in hospitality. What, do you think, should be the church’s approach to hospitality for those who are new to our community?
  - How were you welcomed when you first started checking out PMLC? What worked (or didn’t work!) for you?
  - Whose job is it to welcome guests when they come to our church? The pastors? The welcome team? The staff? The ushers? All of us??
- The last two verses encourage us to imitate leaders and remember the consistency and dependability of Christ’s character. Good leadership will always work to emulate Jesus in their lives.
  - What are the key characteristics of Jesus’ personality that make him worthy to imitate?
  - What leaders in your life come to mind as people who know how to welcome others well?

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## Luke 15:1-7 (New Revised Standard Version translation)

**Background:** The 15th chapter of Luke contains three parables, or stories, with the lost/found theme. There's a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son who is brought back into relationship with his patient father. When each is found, there is great rejoicing.

+++ Choose someone to read the following passage. +++

**15:1** Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. **2** And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

**3** So he told them this parable: **4** "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?"

**5** When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. **6** And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' **7** Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." +++

- Notice how this chapter starts out. The Pharisees are upset that Jesus is welcoming and eating with sinners. Many think that Jesus might have belonged to a group of Pharisees and his work was to help them reform their approach to faith. Their heart might have been in the right place of devotion to God, but their practice of it was way off target because they didn't leave much room for grace.
  - Why do you think Jesus' practice of welcoming and eating with sinners would cause other people to get upset?
  - Where do you see this happening in our culture today?
- The stories Jesus offers are told in response to this complaint. What is the real message of them for you?
- Throughout our lives, I suspect, we all have an experience of being in the group of the "99" or being the "lost sheep." If you care to do so, share an experience of being found, or finding a lost one, and what that was like. What worked? What didn't work?
- To reinforce our point of steadfast welcome and compassionate acceptance, Jesus makes the searching of the "1" personal. The group is left behind in order to find the individual. That means the shepherd notices when one isn't there. In welcoming others, we go to great lengths to get to know them.
  - At the end of the day, what does our value of "Compassionate Acceptance" mean to you?

**Special Request:** *Who would like to facilitate this group next week?*

## **Closing Prayer**

*James tells us that the prayer of the faithful is powerful and to ask for help if we're sick or suffering.*

*Spend a few moments asking for any prayer requests, and pray over them if you have time. You may also opt to close with this prayer together.*

**Grant, O Lord,  
that what has been said with our lips  
we may believe in our hearts,  
and that what we believe in our hearts  
we may practice in our lives,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*Connect to Christ!*