

Kingdom Hospitality

Luke 14:12–24 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: If anyone should understand hospitality, it is those of us in a resort community. The lifeblood of a community like ours is an industry built around hospitality.

Close to 800,000 people vacation on Amelia Island annually, generating over 900 million dollars worth of economic impact. We are absolutely dependent on hospitality for our economy.

However, I want to show you today that *kingdom* hospitality is entirely different from what most people think of when it comes to hospitality.

CONTEXT: Last time we were in Luke, we learned how to be guests at a great banquet. Today, we will learn how to be hosts. We learn kingdom hospitality.

Hospitality and travel in ancient cultures were very different from what they are today.

- **It was dangerous** - people wanted to live behind city gates because there was safety there. To travel was to open yourself up to all sorts of dangers. That's why we have stories like the good Samaritan, about a traveler attacked by bandits.
- **It was rare** - The only people who traveled any distance from home were the ones who absolutely had to. Those who left their own nation were typically merchants and soldiers. Normal people didn't travel the world as they do today. In fact, that didn't change until the early 20th century. For that reason, there was never a real industry built around hospitality. Resorts were very rare, and inns were not commonplace.
- **It was important** - You see, people didn't have access to information readily available, so if they wanted to know what the rest of the world was like, they had to open their homes to travelers. Can you imagine if the grid collapsed and we had no access to information? The only way you could know if travel to Jacksonville had supplies and the bridges were open would be if a traveler passed through and shared the information. So, information was a form of currency.

If you were traveling from city to city, there was a protocol to being invited into a local home.

1. **Presentation** - The traveler would typically sit down at the gate of the city or near a well. We see this sort of thing all through the Bible. We see this in **Genesis 19:1** when two heavenly messengers visited Lot.
2. **Screening** - A potential host would interview the traveler and verify that he was not an enemy and posed no threat to the host family or the community. It was common for the traveler to provide letters of commendation from recognizable figures, which would give them some credibility.
3. **Invitation** - If the traveler was deemed to be safe, he would be invited into the host home. Most homes had an extra room or two for such things. We see this in II

Kings 4:8–11 (ESV) where a couple provided a room where Elisha would stay any time he passed through the region. This became known as a “prophets chamber” and it was common for people to include an extra room in their home.

4. **Provision** - While the traveler was visiting, it was the responsibility of the host home to not only provide but to treat them as one might treat an ambassador. Typically, the best food a family could afford would be provided.
5. **Departure** - It was customary for the traveler to never stay more than two nights. When the two nights were complete, the traveler would lavish praise and appreciation on the host and offer to reciprocate if the tables are turned.

It was a very formal process and it was a very normative part of culture. To this day, if you travel to the Middle East, or if you have friends who are of Middle Eastern descent, you can still find some of these things.

ILLUSTRATION: When I lived in Alabama, I had a friend who was a missionary to refugees in an apartment complex in Nashville. They were all of Middle Eastern descent. He invited me to go door to door with him, sharing the Gospel. Now, when you go door to door with Americans, you could plan to share the gospel with at least a dozen people in a couple of hours. But in that context, you could only share with one or two because they would invite you in and serve you cookies. The visit would take at least 45 minutes, and you would leave with bags of snacks, totally different from what most of us are accustomed to.

Well, that is the sort of cultural context into which Jesus is speaking. So he begins in verse 12 by teaching that....

1. Kingdom Hospitality is Imperative.

TEXT: Luke 14:12–24 (ESV)

¹² “He said also to the man who had invited him, *‘When you give a dinner or a banquet,*

Notice that it is assumed that you will, at times, open your home to host people, especially if you follow Jesus Christ.

Consider the fact that for most of us, our home is our greatest investment. But how often do you leverage your home, your greatest investment, for the sake of the Kingdom? Jesus assumes you will open your home, your apartment, your condo up to outsiders.

Hebrews 13:2 (ESV)

² “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

It was so important in the early church that it was a part of the qualifications of a minister.

1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)

² “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, ***hospitable***, able to teach,”

The word hospitable literally means a lover of strangers. Now, it wasn't that the minister did this so others didn't have to. He did this as an example for the entire church to follow.

Before a widow would be cared for by the church she had to be one who had a reputation of showing hospitality to others. **1 Tim. 5:10.**

So this sort of thing was a given.

You see those who show hospitality held up as wonderful examples: Lydia of Thyatira in **Acts 16**, the good Samaritan in **Luke 10**.

However, the Biblical model of hospitality was much more than entertaining friends or networking. This is how to think of it.

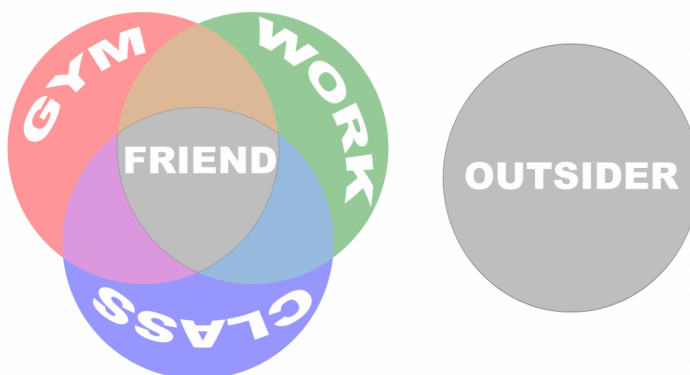


SLIDE 1 - Whether you are Christian or not, most of us make friendship connections, something like this Venn diagram. Where three circles overlap, it is typically where the closest connections are born.

That is typically where we practice hospitality. It is those people who we typically invite into our home. And there is nothing wrong with that...they are the easiest people for you to have conversations with because you already have so much in common.

But Biblical hospitality goes a step further. It says to invite those people in... but also look

for a fourth category, the outsider.



SLIDE 2 - That of the outsider. Biblical hospitality involves intentionally moving a person from being an outsider to a neighbor to a friend.

People who knew God in the OT and the NT were marked by showing

kindness toward outsiders. That is one of the reasons that the treatment of Lot's visitors by the citizens of Sodom was so egregious".

Kingdom hospitality is imperative...

2. Kingdom Hospitality is Incentivized.

¹² "He said also to the man who had invited him, 'When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.' "

Now, Jesus isn't forbidding having friends and family over; he will dine many times with friends in the Gospel. He regularly went to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. So he isn't forbidding that sort of thing, but he is telling us that we must go further than the norm and intentionally connect with outsiders. In fact, he attaches a kingdom incentive to our doing so.

You see when you prepare a meal for a friend, there is always a chance that your friend might return the favor. So in a sense, you are getting two meals for the price of one. Right? So Jesus says, beware of only showing hospitality to those who can show hospitality to you.

Instead, intentionally target those whom you don't know. Jesus says when you do so, you will be repaid and rewarded at the resurrection.

Incidentally, this is the first time that Jesus has mentioned the resurrection in Luke's Gospel. And He does so in relation to hospitality.

Scripture teaches that eternity is not an out-of-body experience. Instead, the very same body you inhabit currently will be raised and glorified. Glorified means it's you but 2.0. There are some celestial upgrades coming. The resurrection is the cornerstone of Christian hope. Not only because we will live again but also because all accounts will be settled.

Mark 10:29–30 (ESV)

²⁹ "Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life'."

Solomon said it this way - Proverbs 11:25 (ESV)

²⁵ "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."

One of the surest ways to ensure that you have the blessing of God on your home is to open it up to outsiders for the glory of God.

Kingdom hospitality is imperative ...it is incentivized...

3. Kingdom Hospitality is Invitational.

¹⁵ “When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, ‘Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!’ ¹⁶ But he said to him, ‘A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. ¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ ¹⁹ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ ²⁰ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ ²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ ²² And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ ²³ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’ ”

Now, keep in mind that Jesus tells that story immediately after the Kingdom of God is mentioned.

Remember that we said earlier that hospitality was essential in that day and time because that is how you would learn about foreign lands you were not able to visit.

Well, Jesus is bringing a message from a foreign land, the Kingdom of God. He compares it to an invitation that went out to the elite of the land, but they rejected it, then it went with urgency and compulsion to the least of these... and they received it with joy.

He is drawing a direct correlation between hospitality and evangelism.

Let me speak to this from two perspectives: personally and corporately.

Hospitality is perhaps the greatest tool in all the world for evangelism.

CONSIDER THIS TRUTH. History can be described as a series of events or the story of great leaders... but it can also be described as a series of meals.

- **The first meal** - was in the Garden of Eden, Eve at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- **The final meal** - is at that marriage supper of the lamb in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- **Two great meals in between** - Passover and the Lord’s Supper.

A very large portion of Jesus's teaching happened over a meal. One of the ordinances that the church practices over and over again is a meal.

So, there is a sense that meals are sacramental, meaning they point to something greater than the meal.

When you invite someone to lunch or coffee and intentionally try to move them from being a stranger to a neighbor, you are doing one of the most powerful things in all the world.

That impact multiplies when you invite them into your home.

ILLUSTRATION: Simon Peter invited Jesus into his home; remember what happened? It became mission-central for Jesus's work in Capernaum. Peter's mother-in-law was healed, and then dozens of others came there to meet Jesus and be healed by him. What might happen if you opened your home up with the purpose of introducing people to Jesus?

Here are some things to consider:

1. **Hospitality requires margin** - space, time, and money.
2. **Hospitality requires risk** - not everyone will respond favorably to an invitation. You have to be ok with that.
3. **Hospitality requires imperfection** - The biggest stumbling block to hospitality is perfectionism. I would bring people over to my home but I have this cat and he sheds. Listen - people die of loneliness, people go to hell without Jesus, no one dies of cat fur.

If you let Martha Stewart tell you when you are ready to open your home, it will likely never happen. You may not have the Southern Living Dream Home. Maybe you have a one-bedroom apartment or a house trailer. Listen - Jesus doesn't hold you responsible for what He hasn't given you.

He says to you what He said to Moses - what's in your hand? Lay that down.

4. **Hospitality requires openness to imperfection** - When you decide to engage with the outsider, you have to remember they, at times, will be very different to what you consider normal. Hospitality will require you to make them feel like they are at home, even when you sometimes wish they would go home.

I also want to speak to what this means to us corporately. You see, when people show hospitality on a personal level, it will not be long until we have more people show up on the corporate level.

When that happens, you look at church differently.

What happens when someone is invited?

- The first thing they do is check the website. Does it have times, locations, and sample services easily available? What about childcare...how does all that work?
- If they decide to give it a chance, studies show they typically decide within 5 minutes whether or not they will ever visit again. What does that mean? It means the pressure isn't on my sermon but on your friendliness. So, the sermon really does begin in the parking lot.
- If they make it through the doors, you have to remember that their anxiety level is high. Some are higher than others. Many have had bad experiences in other churches. They are wondering things like:
 - Are these people expecting guests? What happens when you expect the company to come over? You clean up, make sure there is TP in the restrooms, and you are nicer than you are when it's just family. Right?
 - You make sure there are plenty of seats. What does it say if a guest comes to your small group and can't find a seat? You weren't expecting him.
 - Have you ever been in an unprofessional service? The singers didn't know which song to sing, and the mics didn't work. It makes you nervous, doesn't it? Well, if it makes you nervous, it terrifies a guest.

WHEN YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOSPITALITY, YOU SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY. THINGS THAT DIDN'T BOTHER YOU BEFORE BECOME PARAMOUNT.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: Ultimately, you have to remember that you were the outsider. You were, at one time, far from God. Yet, Christ came for you. He engaged with you. He brought you in and made you family.