

Sanctuary First

A PLACE TO BE

The Ultimate Invitation - Easter April 2018

The resurrection - the breathtaking moment of heaven touching earth - is a profound act of hospitality, of inclusion, and welcome. It's the ultimate invitation. The drama of resurrection, of sacrifice and new life, sparked the global movement of Christianity, an invitation to all - no matter where you are from or who you are.

He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 Luke 24: 46-47

And Jesus came and said to them "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and breaking them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28: 18-20

Starting with Easter Sunday, we want to take this month to challenge ourselves to respond to the hospitality of Jesus, and the hospitality demonstrated throughout the Bible, by becoming more hospitable to one another. How can we invite others along with us, not as a box ticking exercise - but in the way Jesus did, by breaking barriers and bread in radical acts of hospitality? As well as considering hospitality in the abstract, we want to think of real practical steps we can take. What can we do to become more hospitable - as individuals, as communities and as a society?

We will explore:

- the importance of sharing food, music and festivities with one another
- what a politics of hospitality might look like
- the demands and risks of hospitality
- different forms of hospitality, from rural to *Her Majesty's*, from corporate to lives lived together in intentional communities...

We want to know, can we afford to be hospitable... and can we afford not to be?

Each week of the theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
1 April *Easter Sunday	Food, friendship, and festivity!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Luke 24:13-35 2. Acts 10: 34-43 3. Mark 16: 1-8 4. Isaiah 25: 6-9 5. Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 6. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 7. 1 Corinthians 5: 6-8 	<p>Social interaction with one another, with food and music, is not incidental but an essential part of the plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The centrality of sharing food together. Here the food acts as a trigger of revelation. 2. Compelling detail in verse 41 about eating and drinking with the resurrected Jesus. Sharing together is vital. 3. "...and they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." Marks ends on this brilliant cliffhanger. It's a tantalising twist because obviously they must have told someone, as we are hearing about it now. Mark puts us in the position of those who have found out... who are we going to tell, who do we invite into the narrative? 4. Food is an essential component of this vision of renewal, it's not that we won't need to eat any more - but rather that we'll eat better than ever. 5. The songs sung in tents in verse 15... sounds like a festival... 6. God's grace invites a persecutor to become an advocate. Including radically different people brings transformation. 7. Are we celebrating the festival? Or settling for second best, going through the motions? We need to challenge complacency and 'making do'.
8 April	A 'Politics of Hospitality'?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 4: 32-35 2. Psalm 133 3. 1 John 1:5 - 2:2 4. John 20: 19-31 5. Leviticus 19: 9-10 6. Romans 13: 1-10 7. Leviticus 25: 1-24 	<p>Challenging our society to be more hospitable. Can there be such a thing as a Politics of Hospitality?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Here we see an example of a radically alternative economy, based on need, generosity and reciprocity. Could this be the basis of a politics of hospitality? 2. Living together in unity. A community based on abundance rather than scarcity. How does that square with our capitalist economy that derives value from the scarcity of resources? 3. The importance of humility in a politics of hospitality. Many political movements have started with high ideals and then crash into ruin and disrepute without integrity and humility. A politics of hospitality should be offered humbly. 4. They were gathered together as a group when Jesus appeared to them and they were together again when Jesus came the second time - Jesus did not come to Thomas on his own. Was the gathering together important? Hospitality enables us to work collaboratively rather than being isolated on our own. Do our politics give us enough space to gather together and learn from one another? 5. Making space in our public life for people on the margins. Finding ways of including people in the fringes. 6. An often controversial passage. How do we read it in the context of brutal and oppressive regimes? Is there something here in giving the benefit of the doubt to our leaders - to trusting even when we have been let down, to being better than them in order that they might become the leaders they are meant to be? See also Hebrews 13: 17. 7. Being hospitable to the very land we live on - not forcing it to yield ever more. Forgiving debts as an act of hospitality?

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
15 April	The demands of hospitality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 3:12-19 2. Psalm 4 3. 1 John 3: 1-7 4. Luke 24: 36b-48 5. Leviticus 19: 33-34 6. Genesis 18: 1-15 7. Hebrews 13: 1-2 	<p>Hospitality can be transformative personally, socially, and culturally but it is not without cost. Hospitality can be demanding, putting enormous strain on us.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The painful rejection of the Messiah. 2. The anguish of a sleepless night. The psalmist is stressed, overdrawn, spent. 3. Reassurance in our inheritance as children of God. 4. When unexpected guest turn up - they bring their needs - like Jesus asking for broiled fish. Hospitality is cemented by this exchange but the gift comes at a cost to the giver. 5. Being a host requires making a lot of changes and adjustments. This can be particularly rewarding but also challenging when we have little in common with our guests. As positive as this process can be there is bound to be stress for both parties, especially over a long period of time. 6. Abraham and Sarah are enthusiastic hosts, their offerings escalating. A little water to rinse the strangers feet and a wee sit down becomes bread, and then cakes, and then a calf, and then some kind of dairy based concoction (shall we say Biblical ice cream?). It is a wonderful thing to be blessed by this escalatory hospitality which starts with a simple easy-to-accept offer and becomes profoundly generous. Abraham and Sarah do all this at great cost to themselves. They end up being blessed with a pregnancy, an idea Sarah can't help but find funny. (This blessing will bring in itself a challenge to a new kind of demanding hospitality - parenthood!) 7. Those wonderful words in verse 2 are so resonant. In the King James Translation they are: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Despite the demands of hospitality, when we open our homes and hearts - we open the door to the mysterious, the miraculous and the wonderful.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
22 April	Many hospitalities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 4: 1-12 2. Psalm 23 3. 1 John 3: 16-24 4. John 10: 11-18 5. Acts 2: 42-47 6. Exodus 34: 22 7. Exodus 23: 1-9 	<p>There are many different types of hospitality. Each day in this final week we are going to think about a different form of hospitality we see in contemporary culture and see how we can learn from it/or challenge it. Every day let's also think of something practical we can take action and do, to respond to the hospitality of Jesus.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>At Her Majesty's Pleasure - hospitality and the state.</i> In this passage a group of prisoners are given a voice, a platform to express themselves. How can we be more hospitable to those experiencing the hospitality of the state, in detention centres and correctional facilities, giving them a voice? (See also Hebrews 13: 3) 2. <i>Rural hospitality.</i> Many remote communities maintain practices of hospitality, such as isolated island villages that need to band together in times of crisis. This is often driven by necessity but leads to real bonds of trust. This passage shows us the ultimate model of a rural host, caring for the flock. Whether or not we live in rural communities, what can we learn from rural hospitality? 3. <i>Aristocratic hospitality.</i> The wealthy have traditionally relied on a formal etiquette of hospitality to maintain social aspirations, broker deals (and marriages) and keep a close watch on one another. These ostentatious banquets and balls (or global summits at elite hotels...) are often lavish and generous but tend not to be based on the needs of others, but on the needs of the wealthy themselves. How can we learn from rich traditions of courtesy and gift giving, but use verse 17 as a challenge to the insularity and exclusivity that often goes with it? 4. <i>Corporate Hospitality.</i> The reading contrasts the 'hired hand' who cuts and runs at the first sign of trouble and the 'good shepherd' who is there through thick and thin. Corporate hospitality outsources welcome and care to a specialist 'hired hand'. The relationship becomes one of money rather than friendship. In many instances corporate hospitality will take care of you (and your credit card) but is nowhere to be seen when the wolf is at the door... The defining model of hospitality in contemporary society is one of luxury, anonymity and cost to the guest - rather than humility, relationship and cost to the host. 5. <i>Intentional communities</i> are groups of people who deliberately decide to live together, sharing some form of common life. There are many different forms, but commonly Christian communities feature sharing and pooling resources, meeting regularly to pray and eat together, and being welcoming to strangers and visitors. 6. <i>Street parties.</i> From coronations, to Olympic opening ceremonies, to large summer music festivals - big public acts of celebration are popular. In this reading we see festivals tied into the common life of society at seasonal times. Do we place enough importance on shared opportunities to celebrate together? 7. <i>In our home, in our work, in our communities</i> - let's think of a range of practical things we can do, right now - today - to be more hospitable. What would be a non-agricultural rendering of verses 4-5?