

September 23rd, 2018

1 - VIDEO: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

2 – TITLE SLIDE

WELCOME

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

INTRODUCTION TO SERIES

Today we are starting our new sermon series called, “Love Your Neighbor.” We will spend 3 weeks here talking about practical ways that we can love our neighbors.

Just a reminder that the final week in this series will be Oct 7. That will be an early service at 7:45am, then we get to go downtown and worship with our neighbors at 9:30am in a community worship service.

FOOD

As we begin this series though, I need to ask you a really important question ...

How many of you enjoy food?

I am pretty sure that every one of you should have raised your hands. I have been in the Church since I was 5 years old. One thing that I learned rather quickly is that Christians love food.

It seems that every event that I went to growing up involved food. And really, most of our events involve food in one-way shape or form.

There is something about joining together for a meal though, isn't there?

Think about when you get together with your family. What do you do? You eat.

We gather for Thanksgiving, Christmas, 4th of July, Birthdays, Graduations ... and we cook or cater in food.

Food also played a significant role in Jesus' ministry.

- The Last Supper and the feeding of the 5,000 are in all 4 gospels
- Jesus ate with Matthew and his shady friends in all of the gospels except for John
- We see in Matthew and Mark the feeding of the 4,000
- In Luke we see two meals at Pharisees' houses, a meal with Zacchaeus, and the meal that Jesus shared with two of His followers on the road to Emmaus.

Some say that Jesus, "ate His way through the Gospels."

But really, what we are seeing in Christ, is a way to reach our neighbors. To interact with and get to know the people around us better. This hospitality and this food lead to deeper and richer conversations. They lead to Kingdom impact.

STRATEGIC HOSPITALITY

Today, as we look at loving our neighbors, we are going to look at hospitality. Specifically, strategic hospitality or intentional hospitality.

HOSPITALITY IS A DUTY

One of the first things we see when looking at scripture and it's reference to hospitality is that hospitality is a duty. It is something that the Christian should be doing. It is something that is expected of us.

In the book of Romans there is a list of characteristics or commands for those in the Church in chapter 12. In this middle of this list it says:

ROMANS 12:13

¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

One of the marks of a Christian is that we seek to show hospitality.

In Timothy, when defining what an Overseer or an Elder should look like, one of the things that Paul points out is that he would need to be hospitable.

1 TIMOTHY 3:2

² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable,

hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

Later in Timothy in Paul's instructions to the Church he is defining a widow that has lived a life of good works. Part of his definition for a widow that has lived a life of good works is that she has shown hospitality.

1 TIMOTHY 5:10

¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.

This is a common theme in the New Testament. We are supposed to show hospitality. We are supposed to be welcoming to those both inside and outside the Church. We are supposed to invite them in and take care of them.

Hospitality is a duty.

HOSPITALITY IS A HEART ISSUE

Hospitality is more than a duty though, hospitality is a heart issue.

The Jews were guilty of having a list of rules and checking them off. Just following them because they are rules, because they are duties. I am supposed to do this, so I will. I am not going to like it ... but I don't have to like it ... I will just do it.

But hospitality is not something that we begrudgingly do. We have God's Spirit living in us, we should be transforming into the image of Christ. Hospitality should be something that we do, because we genuinely want to. We desire to.

1 PETER 4:9

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

If you are grumbling and complaining, you are doing it wrong. This is not the heart that God wants for us to have.

Now ... many of you hear this and you might picture the following scenario:

You invite your neighbors over for dinner and maybe you decide you are going to play a few games while they are there. The night is going well, but they begin to not clean up after themselves, they are loud and keep the kids awake, or they are just really over staying their welcome.

So you begin saying things like, "Boy I sure wish you would leave already. I sure am having a bad time. I am just miserable having you in my house. If you wake the kids up one more time, I'll never invite you again. I could be sleeping, but instead I have to stay up and entertain you ... great."

That's grumbling and complaining. And none of us are guilty of that ... so let's move on.

But see, I don't think that is what this scripture is telling us. Not exactly. Cause most of us, we are not going to act like that.

Instead, our grumbling and complaining will be something that our guest might never know about ... but God hears it all.

Same neighbors, same problems ... but you don't vocalize it to them.

Instead, you have a quick moment with your spouse in the kitchen and you say, "I wish they would leave already. I am so tired. You need to try to get them out of here."

Or in your heart you are thinking ... "They seriously need to pick up after themselves, I am not their maid. They need to keep quiet, my kids are going to be cranky tomorrow and it is all their fault."

Ahh ... that sounds like some of us doesn't it? But maybe that doesn't sound like you. How about this, does this sound like any of you?

No one has even gotten to your house yet. You know that they are coming over. You know that you don't have near enough time to make your house look like the magazine that you want everyone to think it is ... so you are on a rampage. Everyone in your house knows to stay away from you right now. People are running around like your house is going to be invaded and if we don't get everything in place ... we will not survive this.

Or ...

The guests have left, the night went well, but you they left a mess. So you begin barking commands or complaining about how you just cleaned and now you have to do it all over again.

Hospitality is more than an action, it is more than a duty, it is more than something that we just do. Hospitality is a heart issue.

We are told to show hospitality without grumbling. Here is what is crazy ... this specific command from Peter is talking to the Church about the Church. He is telling you to quit grumbling about each other when you show hospitality. And if we grumble about each other, then you know we are grumbling about those outside the Church.

Hospitality is a heart issue.

HOSPITALITY IS A WAY WE LIVE OUT THE GOSPEL

When we talk about evangelism and making God known, I hear many Christians say that to them making God known is simply living in a certain way, people see how they live, and they know that they are different and it leads them to knowing God.

I get that. The way that we live, it is a bridge toward sharing the gospel. It opens up those conversations. Hospitality is not just a bridge to sharing the gospel, but it is a way that we can actually live out the good news of Jesus.

Let's look at a couple scriptures here and how God intertwines the Gospel message and hospitality

LEVITICUS 19:33-34

³³"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.

³⁴You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

I love God's reason here. God says you need to take the stranger in, you need to be hospitable to the stranger, treat them like they belong there. Why? God says ... because you were strangers in Egypt ... I am the Lord your God.

Do you remember how you were a stranger? How it felt to be in a foreign land? Do you remember how I saved you?

I am the Lord your God. This was a big statement. This was that one statement reminder that we see God use several times throughout the Old Testament that simply reminds the Israelites ... you were in slavery, I stepped in and saved you. I took you out of slavery and I brought you home. I am the Lord your God.

And why did God do that? For what purpose did He save the Israelites?

EZEKIEL 20:7-9

⁷And I said to them, 'Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.'

⁸But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. None of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

"Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

⁹But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

PSALM 106:6-8

⁶ Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness.

⁷ Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.

⁸ Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.

God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt ... not because they were virtuous. Not because they had done anything to deserve being saved. Not because they earned life in the promised land. He did it for His own name.

Grace is the hospitality of God to welcome sinners, not because of their goodness but because of His glory.

We see this same grace, this same hospitality continued by God in the New Testament. Talking to the Gentiles, Paul says:

EPHESIANS 2:12-19

¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Not being Jews, we were aliens and strangers, but now through Christ we have been taken in as members of God's household.

The ultimate act of hospitality by God through Christ is shown on the cross. Jesus died for us while we were sinners, while we

were far off, so that we could become members of the household of God.

THE ULTIMATE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY IS GOD'S UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO GLORIFY THE FREEDOM AND ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF HIS GRACE.

When we show hospitality, we are demonstrating and living out the grace of God. No wonder we are called to show hospitality and to do it without grumbling. It is a heart issue, because it puts the heart of God on display.

HOW CAN WE SHOW HOSPITALITY?

So, how can we show hospitality? How can we love our neighbors by showing hospitality? How can we show strategic hospitality?

Here is what is meant by strategic hospitality. It is hospitality that thinks strategically and asks:

- How can I draw the most people into a deep experience of God's hospitality by the use of my home or my church home?
- Who might need reinforcements just now in the battle against loneliness?
- Who are the people who could be brought together in my home most strategically for the sake of the kingdom?
- What two or three people's complementary abilities might explode in a new ministry if they had two hours to brainstorm over dinner in my house?

Don't underestimate the power of your living room as a launching pad for new life, hope, mission, and ministry.

INVITE EACH OTHER INTO OUR HOMES

One way to show strategic hospitality is to invite each other into your homes. Don't worry if it is perfect. We are family. You don't have to use your best dishes, we are completely content using paper products. The intent is not to impress, it is to fellowship and build up. It is to support and minister to. It is to lead and guide. It is to love and laugh. It is to dream and plan together.

When we invite each other into our homes, you never know what may spark from a conversation in the living room or a conversation around dinner.

Take a moment before you leave today, look around this room and say ... who do I need to invite over to my house? Or ... how has been inviting me over to their house that I need to accept that invitation.

INVITE OUR NEIGHBORHOOD/COWORKERS INTO OUR HOMES

The next way we can show strategic hospitality is by inviting our coworkers and our neighbors into our homes. Many of us have talked to our neighbors, but have you invited them into your home?

Be strategic about this too. If you think that your neighbor might be built up and find encouragement by meeting someone else, invite that person over too.

Jen and I invited a group of people over on one occasion ... I think we invited 3 or 4 different families over and before arriving we were the only common link. Not a single person that was there knew someone else, except for Jen and I. This was awesome. At one point I just sat back and watched everyone interact and laughed at the hodgepodge crowd we had put together.

Sometimes we are going to be nothing but the common link to ministry.

Draw a map around your house. Write all your neighbors names on that map and start inviting them over. You can do it one family at a time, or you can do it in groups. Get real with your neighbors, get to know them. Be completely vulnerable, invite them into your homes, and share a meal and time with them.

VISIT THE HOMES OF OTHERS

Another way we can show hospitality is by visiting others in their homes.

Some people are not able to leave their homes or it is harder for them to leave their homes. Meet them where they are.

I am not saying that you go, walk in, set down a meal and begin eating. But at least make your way to their doorstep. Bring them a meal. But come planned for them to invite you in.

I think too often we show up on peoples doorsteps planning to leave. We already have our excuse, we already have the reason

why we can't stay and visit. I was just trying to be nice and bring you this dish ... but I gotta run.

Plan ahead and schedule a block of time so that if you are invited in, you can say ... absolutely! I would love to!

But don't just show up on the door step of shut-ins. We can show hospitality by stepping into other people's homes too. Right now, we have people living in assisted living and nursing homes. We have people that are temporarily or even permanently finding their residence to be in a prison. You can't invite them into your home, but you can step into their homes.

Go, be hospitable, step into their homes, step into their lives, and show them the love and grace of God.

100 MEALS IN OCTOBER

I want to challenge you today with a little bit of a unique challenge.

For the month of October, I want to see if we can share 100 meals in our homes. I want us to be strategic and intentional about this. So here is what we are going to do.

Starting next week, we are going to have these cards sitting out on the prayer table in back. If you shared a meal with someone in your house that week, I want you to take one of these cards and just simply fill out the number of people that you invited into your home. There are categories on the card like: Church family, coworker, neighbor, etc.

The goal is that we have 100 of these cards filled out by the end of October. Technically, we have 1 week left in September, so starting now gives us an extra week to get to 100 meals as a Church family.

Filling out the cards though, will help us to not just see how many meals we shared, but it will also help us to quantify how many individual lives were touched because of strategic hospitality.

100 meals in our homes includes inviting someone over for breakfast, lunch, dinner, late night dessert. All of those options work.