



SPLENDID STRANGERS

Luke 10:1-12; Hebrews 13:1-2

OPEN

What are you noticing about the art and practice of hospitality in our culture today?

We sometimes say a particular person has the *gift of hospitality*. What does that mean?

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 10:1-12 and Hebrews 13:1-2

- Remember the context of this passage. What did Jesus just tell his disciples before he sent them out in pairs to be his witnesses to others?
- In Ancient Near East Culture (ANE), hospitality was not just an art, but part of the fabric of society. Consider this:
 - Travelers could come and stay for days, maybe weeks, maybe months. you received them as they were. dirty, smelly, unknown, tired, scared, alone, perhaps injured, soaking wet, freezing cold, it did not matter. Customs held that you would receive a stranger.
 - The host was to provide a meal, clothing, water to wash, a place to sleep, feed for animals. The host might also send the guest off with additional provisions for their journey.
 - To host a stranger was assurance that they would do the same for you.
 - To offend or refuse a stranger was a mark against your community.
 - Welcoming a stranger had two purposes, it helped provide protection for the traveler but it also provided protection for the host (should that traveler come with magical powers or military strength, it was believed the host might find themselves immune from any danger because they provided hospitality to the stranger)

- If this was how ANE culture worked, then why do you think Jesus gave them such instructions and even warnings about the hospitality they would receive as they traveled? What was the message of the gospel dependent upon as they traveled through the towns?

DISCUSS

"Otherward" people are hospitable. They both recognize and embrace opportunities to open their lives and be fully present for the sake of others."

- What would it take to be people like this in our time, in our culture today?

What do you think about this quote from Henri Nouwen?

Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines.

What do you think bonds people together?

Brainstorm ideas (whether small, simple ways or larger, more involved ways) in how you can grow in hospitality with others.

How can we move from regular hospitality to *divine hospitality* (bringing the presence of God into the mix where we realize there are not *others*, only people in community giving and receiving in a variety of ways with one another)?

NEXT STEPS

- Reflect on the Bible verses and your own sense of extending hospitality to others. Where do you sense joy? Where are you feeling challenged?
- Take a step this week to extend divine hospitality to one or more people (whether in large or small ways). Reflect on your hospitality experiences. Where did you see God in the midst of your interactions with others?