



SOUTHSIDE

MIDWEEK NEWSLETTER

7.29.20

Rethinking Hospitality – Barrett

The Coffman family has always enjoyed our youth group summer interns and this year is no exception. Chloe Dyer and Jackson Schierling have done an incredible job with our teens this summer under very difficult circumstances. I know many churches who chose to not have interns this summer due to COVID. I am thankful we were able to have these two for the summer and Jeremy has done a marvelous job of creating ways for them to minister and influence our children. Each summer, Karen and I have invited the interns to our house for an evening to say thank you. So last night, we invited the interns to our front yard for corn hole and ice cream. Even with social distance, we had a delightful evening honoring them for their contributions this summer (For those interested in such trivial matters, JP and I did beat Jackson and Zack Wooten in an epic battle of corn hole, just saying).

As we were preparing for their arrival, I was reminded of the challenges of being social during a pandemic, especially when our gatherings cannot exceed ten people. Just last weekend, we had to cancel my parent's 55th wedding anniversary party because when my immediate family gets together there are nineteen of us. So, what does getting together look like during a pandemic? And what is the purpose of gathering with others when it is so challenging even to do something as simple as eating?

This time has reminded me of the true meaning of Biblical hospitality. I think most often we think being hospitable means to entertain, inviting friends and family into our homes for a meal and a night of fun and games. While there is obviously nothing wrong with this practice, this "entertaining" form of hospitality falls short of the meaning of biblical hospitality as practiced by Jesus and his early followers. In the New Testament, the word for hospitality is actually a combination of two words – love and stranger – it literally means "love of stranger." In other words, hospitality is the practice of making a stranger feel like they are part of your family. This kind of hospitality is an important attribute of God. Our God has always welcomed outsiders into his family. Our Father has always shown compassion for the strangers in society: the hurting, the lonely, the marginalized, and the poor. Our God is a hospitable God. As we read the New Testament, we learn that our hospitable God calls His people to also be hospitable. In Hebrews 13:12, the author wrote, "do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers (for emphasis)." In Romans 12:13, Paul wrote that we should make this kind of hospitality (the love of the stranger) a practice or habit in our lives.

This understanding of who God is and who He calls me to be encourages me to rethink hospitality during this time of masks and social distance. The primary space for the work of hospitality to occur in my life is not in my home but in my heart. The call of God to "love the stranger" has nothing to do with making room for a friend in my home and everything to do with making room for a stranger in my heart. Have you invited the strangers in our society into your heart? Do you have compassion for the hurting, the lonely, the marginalized, and the poor? My favorite definition of compassion is "your pain in my heart." Let's rethink hospitality and make room for the stranger's pain in our heart.

Contentment – Kevin

The past few weeks I've written about some endangered qualities in people's lives. So far we've thought about these three: commitment, courage and honesty. This week's endangered quality is contentment. How would you define contentment? You might say something like this: contentment is being at peace with where you are, with where you're headed, with whom you're traveling and with what you are carrying.

I get the feeling at times that contentment is not only endangered, but maybe something to even be ashamed of. Being content could be viewed as having little ambition, low motivation, lazy. If you're too content, you'll get passed by, passed up, and perhaps even passed off. But contentment isn't as much of a statement about one's level of productivity or achievement; contentment is a quality of the heart.

In Luke 12, Jesus warns us to be on guard against all kinds of greed. Take a moment and think through all the different kinds of greed we pursue. Then Jesus tells us "life doesn't consist of an abundance of possessions. (There's one kind of greed.) Following that truism, Jesus then shares a parable about a man who had this particular kind of greed while at the same time having little sense of contentment.

I have a few questions for you to think about this week. What would you say is the bottom line of this parable? What is Jesus teaching you about contentment? What is the relationship between your own level of contentment and being rich toward God? How much does it take to satisfy you? Just a little more? Will you ever have enough, be enough, know enough? What would being content look like in your life? Where do you sense a great deal of discontentment? When do you find you are very content?

Take some time to read through Luke 12 and 1 Timothy 6. See what can happen in your life when you give some attention to being content.

A Shepherd's Prayer – Bob

Two weeks back I received a call from one of our ministers. We spoke briefly. One decision made during that call stirred in me relief, regret and reflection. I had chosen to forgo driving for the 2020 teen Mystery Trip. I chose to reflect on some pleasant memories from those and other trips. Then, during Kevin's teaching time Sunday he revealed a man who experienced a transformative lifetime. My mind tuned to his experiences.

Long ago, God shared with us some of the history of this man named Moses. Imagine the number of good stories he stored away while steering God's family every minute of every day for forty years. God even gave him other events to write down for us in the Old Testament. Just imagine the wonder of Moses' face to face days alone with God. He had an enormous library of wholesome events on which to reflect during his steering years.

Briefly, brethren, ponder a few good moments with Christian friends that you recall. Find a pen and piece of paper to jot them down, then reflect on them for a bit. Take a few days and expand your list by recalling a positive current experience, a virtuous scene that has made you smile lately, a lovely story that you heard about, or some news you'd like to share that is pleasant. Those around you will appreciate your effort. Maybe we should all consider thinking about such things as a rule of our day. We'll be a better and happier Christian for the effort.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Philippians 4:8 ASV

Father, forgive our tendency to allow the world to dictate how we feel, and how we respond to world events. Give us the courage to always think in a positive and wholesome manner. Help us Lord to respond to others by identifying ways to improve the outcome before acting. May our ways be your ways. May our nature become more positive and Christ-like with each day. Amen