

When I was a teenager, I traveled to Mexico on a choir tour. Part of the experience was to stay with different host families while we were there. On one evening my best friend and I went to the home of a lady who was probably in her eighties. She walked with a cane and you could tell that walking was painful for her.

When we arrived at her house, we realized that she lived in a very small one room house with one bed. I remember being so humbled by the whole situation. This lady who could barely get around wanted to offer all she had to strangers all for the glory of God.

The lady quickly made it clear that she was giving us her bed to sleep in for the night and she would be sleeping on the floor. Of course, my best friend Meredith and I tried to insist that was not happening, but in the end to receive the amazing gift she bestowed upon us we accepted her generous offer.

Never had I encountered such hospitality in my life. That someone who needed to rest in the bed far more than I did would inconvenience herself so that I could have a comfortable night of rest. During that week in Mexico I had many other experiences of being welcomed by strangers into their families.

Have you ever had an experience like this? Where a complete stranger offered you God's gift of love?

This experience reminded me that this is how God calls us to care for one another. **Through our faith in Jesus Christ we are all part of the same family.**

We currently live in a very divided time. We are weary of one another due to the pandemic; we are weary of one another due to the state of our country. With all this division it can be difficult to imagine that God continues to bring us together so that we may have a bigger impact on the world.

The Holy Spirit beckons to us to come home and break bread together so that we may remember who we are and what God is calling us to do. This is what the Sacrament of Holy Communion is all about. In the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup we remember that we are called to the same mission: to make disciples.

We make disciples when we treat our neighbors like family. All throughout the Old Testament we see that God called the Israelites to look after one another and their neighbors. God made a way for the least of these to survive and even thrive. God continues to make a way forward for us to be united as one family. This happens when we embody a ministry of hospitality.

In other words, this happens when we make room.

Making room for other people is an important part of our faith. When we live in the family of God, we recognize that our family is not stagnant, that it will continue to grow with each passing day. We recognize that our lives will never be too comfortable because making room requires us to always be prepared and to know that our plans could be changed at any moment.

Making room for others in the family of God can sometimes feel inconvenient and yet it is how Jesus Christ continues to extend the table of grace from here into eternity.

Have you ever had a houseguest stop by unannounced? When they did, were you worried about the state of your home or preparing the best food on the spot? I know I would be. Our culture teaches us that making room for others means that everything must be perfect. God teaches us making room for others is not about making space in our houses but making space in our hearts.

In our Scripture for this morning from Genesis we see how Abraham treated his guests like family. First, he did not wait for his guests to arrive at his door, but he ran out to meet them.

Much like the father in the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, Abraham's actions show care, concern, and urgency. In this action of making an effort Abraham honors his guests. He then invites the three men to rest a little while and be refreshed.

In this image God reminds us that the community of faith is a place of rest. When we are in the presence of one another we find a safe and comforting place that brings us renewal.

Next Abraham gives his guests some water and prepares food for them. But it is important to note that Abraham does not do this alone. He enlists the help of his wife Sarah. This action reminds us that our ministry of hospitality is communal. It requires all of us putting our best foot forward to help others in the family of God.

What is beautiful about this story is once Abraham encountered the “three men,” he gave them the best he had to offer. He offered them fresh bread, milk and curds, and the best calf. Sure, he could have given them a snack and sent them on their way, but part of the ministry of hospitality is developing a relationship with our guests. This is why fellowship time is so important to the family of God.

All throughout the Bible we see important events happen over the breaking of bread. For instance, here in Genesis we see that God shows up and receives the bread offered by Abraham. In Exodus we see the Israelites don't even have time to allow their bread to rise so that they can begin their journey to freedom. On the night before Jesus died, he broke bread to help his disciples understand what he had come to do. And in Acts 2 we see the early church met together to break bread, study the Scriptures, and pray.

The ministry of hospitality is how we continue to keep our faith alive. In our time of fellowship, we catch up with one another, learn important things to pray for and be there for each other. I so miss our time of fellowship on Sunday mornings and I'm sure you do as well. When we spend time together in the name of God we end up not only being welcomed by one another, but being welcomed by God.

What is interesting about our passage from Genesis today is that these three men were not visiting Abraham by accident. It turns out these three men were actually God in human form. God showed up in a tangible way before Abraham to continue the covenant that began in the chapter before our passage. Through this Scripture God reminds us that God desires to know us and spend time with us. God desires to continue to make room for us.

What is amazing about God is that God does not need us. God can do all the amazing and almighty things without us and yet God chooses us to be part of God's ministry. God makes room for us through offering us grace and mercy, we too are called to make room for God.

In this passage of Scripture Abraham gives us a wonderful example about how we can welcome God into our lives each day:

1) We must be prepared to welcome God. Just as Abraham ran to meet his guests, we too are called to be on the lookout for how God is moving in our lives.

We do this by starting each day by saying thank you to God. For instance, what would it look like if the first thing we said when we woke up every morning was “Thank you God for another day!” This simple statement reminds us that God goes before us, beside us, and in front of us.

Acknowledging that God is already at work from the moment we wake up connects us with our Creator.

God our Creator formed us out of God’s very own image. Each day through creation and the gift of one another we see God’s creative ministry at work in the world. We welcome God when we are thankful for all of God’s creation, including our neighbors.

Another way to welcome God is through the way we start our prayers. For instance, starting a prayer with “Almighty God” or “Everlasting God” is a way we can give thanks for who God is and welcome God into our hearts and lives.

2) We welcome God when we give our best.

We welcome God our creator when we live into the calling God has placed upon our lives. God had big plans for Abraham, after all he had renamed him and gave him a new identity as the father of many nations.

Through the sacrament of Baptism, we are claimed by God, given a new identity, and sent out by the Holy Spirit to do God’s work. As we are made in God’s image, we uniquely reflect God’s image through the way we live out our gifts in the world. In the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul shares that some are called to preach, some are called to be teachers, some are called to be evangelists, we are all called to do something with our gifts that builds up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Sometimes it takes us a while to figure out what our gifts are and how we should be using them. When we are giving God our best, we fully live into the calling that God has placed upon our lives.

I hope you have had some time during this pandemic to stand back and wonder what God is calling you to do next. I am sure Abraham never could have imagined how God would use him and yet he became vital to God’s mission. What are some ways you can give God your best this week?

Can you commit to pray at a certain time each day? Can you commit to checking on one of your neighbors who may need some extra help? Can you commit to reading the Bible and trying to understand God’s will for your life even more deeply?

In our discipleship process we are all striving to give our best to God. This week think about what else you can offer to God and be creative. One of my friends is very artistic and during this pandemic she sent a bunch of her friends a piece of paper and asked us to draw something.

Now my friend group is not particularly gifted artistically and yet in this act of trying something new, beautiful creativity happened and in the end we all proudly showed our pictures and how God was moving in our lives. Giving our best to God means we try new things for God’s glory.

3) We welcome God when we enlist others to serve.

Have you ever noticed in the Bible that God often paired people together to do amazing ministry? This is because God creates us, the body of Christ to build up one another to do the work of God. We enlist other people to serve by inviting them.

So many people are members of our churches today because someone invited them. You can do that for someone else. Who is someone that has been on your heart that you can invite to church or share the sermon or livestream? When we enlist others to serve, we share the ministry of hospitality.

The ministry of hospitality cannot happen in isolation. It happens when the people of God continue to make room so that all may know the good news of Jesus Christ.

The good news for our lives today is that God continues to make room for us.

As we honor God may we continue to always make room for God and our neighbors. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Resource

Keck et al. New Interpreter’s Bible. Vol I. Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN. 1995.