

# Building a Resilient Church Culture: Part 5 - Sacrificial Hospitality

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 07 August 2022

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] I invite you to take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 13. I've made this case in a broadest of sense in an introduction.

We've talked about it in brief each week leading up to now. For the sake of time, I'm trying not to repeat myself over and over again. But your elders think that we are already living in the midst of a time of soft totalitarianism, a culture that expresses us to get on board with its directives, its truths, and that it's going to find us increasingly uncomfortable living in the days in which we live, particularly concerning issues of sexuality, gender, gender roles, etc.

I think you know what I'm talking about, and this won't be the only assault against the church in the coming years. If you are new to this study, I think you'll be well served going back and listening to the recordings of it.

Those should be available on our website. We're glad to have you catch up to where we are in our thinking together. But each week I've begun with three prerequisite statements. I think that they need to be repeated.

Once again, as I've already stated, sermon series are not our normal practice. We typically preach verse-by-verse expositional sermons. This means that we take, for the main point or points of the sermon, the main point or points of the text.

[1:47] And it helps us to avoid error, to just walk through a text together. I think men who are being really honest with themselves know that they're given to error.

It's altogether possible to come up with ideas and be thinking off in a direction that's not biblical. And so it's good for us just to walk through the text together.

So that's what we do as a general habit, as a health for the church. But from time to time, it's helpful to think about something topically, to have some thoughts and to look to the scripture for it.

But it's altogether possible to read what we want to into a text. And so I just want to caution you.

Anytime you're hearing topical preaching, anytime you're hearing preaching at all, be discerning, but especially when you're hearing topical preaching.

Secondly, I'm not trying to be an alarmist, but we do think that there's some work to be done here.

Back when we originally preached just a single sermon on this, it actually felt a little alarmist at that time, and much less so now, just a few months later.

[2:55] But we love you. We want your good. We want the glory of God in our church. And so we believe this is important for us to be doing this work of thinking about these things together.

And then lastly, the week that we're able to spend on this, frankly, the amount of time I'm comfortable spending to topical preaching, is not nearly enough. And so we need to be talking about this, pressing at each other's thinking, working on it together, ask questions, go to the Word. This is not the last time we need to hear this and be exhorted in these directions. So how do we build a resilient church culture? We've covered a number of things.

We've said that it's going to be a work. We're going to have to be the secondary means in God's primary work in our lives. We're going to have to be a strong church. We're going to have to stand against the tide of soft totalitarianism.

It's going to be destruction. It's going to have to be ingrained in who we are. We've already talked about our need to define and hold to the clear mission of the church.

[4:01] The church's mission is to make disciples and then as members of the church to be disciples in the places that God sends us. And we've talked about our need to do robust theology, knowing what God has commanded and what He has promised, and carefully doing the work of theological triage in order to maintain unity in the church, for the sake of standing firm and unified on matters of first importance.

I think the enemy would do a good work, and I mean that from his perspective in the church, to get us highly distracted from matters of first importance, that we would turn and devour one another. Last week we considered our need to know accurate histories so that we will have knowledge of how we arrived at where we are, and especially how God orchestrated that arrival.

And today we are going to consider the church's need to practice sacrificial hospitality. I have not said to this date in our study, but I want you all to know that these five things that your elders believe that we need to be working on are not foreign to you.

We've already been working on these things because they are entirely biblical things. And isn't it wonderful when you submit yourself to God's Word how He will work out the details?

[5:27] We don't have to come with some brilliant sociological perspective and be extremely aware of all of the things going on around us to just pick up the Word and do the things that the Word has commanded us to do.

And so I'm grateful for that, that we've already been about these kinds of things. But we do think we'll have to do them all the more. The particular activity of sacrificial hospitality, broadly speaking, you all excel at.

And so don't hear this as a rebuke of any kind, but as an encouragement to press on. Keep loving one another sacrificially. So the word hospitality, and I do promise we're getting to our text, but there's a lot of setup here.

The word hospitality in the English Standard Version translation of the New Testament appears four times in the noun form, hospitality, and two times in the adjective form, hospitable.

In Romans 12, 13, we are told to seek to show hospitality. And in Hebrews 13 and verse 2, the author of Hebrews exhorts us to not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

[6:53] I'm thankful that ESV left the word unawares in there for us. Likely, the author of Hebrews is referring to Abraham's hospitality in Genesis 18 and Lot's hospitality in Genesis 19, both instances where angels were unknowingly hosted, or they were hosted unawares, and as we'll see later, of great importance, their feet were washed as part of that hospitality.

One of the prerequisites to enroll a widow in the care of the church recorded in 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 10 is that she has shown hospitality and has washed the feet of the saints.

And in 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 9, we are instructed to show hospitality to one another without grumbling. So a heartfelt, unbegrudging display of hospitality.

Then in 1 Timothy 3.2 and Titus 1.8, Paul states that a character requirement for an elder is that he is hospitable, gives leadership in this kind of welcoming.

Hospitality in the Greek literally means friendship to the stranger. It's a compound word and it means friendship to the stranger.

[8:21] Hospitality seeks to welcome in those who may not feel welcome otherwise and give them a sense of belonging. And I say that our hospitality will need to be sacrificial because sometimes loving people in this way will be easy.

You may find that you easily connect with someone, you may have similar likes and dislikes or just easily get along. But often loving people in this way will be hard.

It requires sacrifice on your part. It's not always so easy to get along with people and to show them love. As a very minor example of this, and please hear this as a minor example, Clay Naylor is one of my best friends.

And when we first met, we had very little in common. It's been growing, I think, as I've become more manly. But when I first met Clay, I didn't hunt.

I rock climbed and whitewater paddled. And Clay was a hunter to the core. Drove a big Chevy truck with pipes. I was uninterested in things like that.

[9:34] He wore big belt buckles. I think he's still got some big belt buckles. I think he's wearing cowboy boots this morning. I've never owned a pair of cowboy boots. But we had the Lord Jesus in common, right?

And that was enough to unite us together. And of course, we've become really dear friends across much time. We're going to have to be able to give of ourselves for the sake of others in a hospitable way.

So let's look at our Lord's example to make this point further. It's John chapter 13. I'll begin reading in verse 1, and I'll read through verse 17.

Before I read, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good. And so we would do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

[10:44] And I want to read that to you again. That last little phrase has struck me again and again this week. Now, before the feast of the Passover, this is his last meal with his disciples, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Gave of himself all the way to the point of death. What a precious phrase that is. He loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.

Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

[12:20] Jesus said to him, The one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you. So he takes a metaphor that's both physical and he makes it spiritual and goes back to it being physical and back to spiritual once again.

Verse 11, For he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, Not all of you are clean.

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I have done to you?

You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. This is just an astounding text, right?

What an amazing picture on this last night before the suffering crucifixion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[13:39] Jesus washed their feet. It's our first observation from this text. Jesus washed their feet. This was a job that was reserved for the very lowliest of servant.

In this day, people wore sandals, I think you know, and it was a dusty and dry place. And probably in our day, we're more aware of what sandal wearing does to feet than maybe in some decades past.

If you wear sandals, your feet get sweaty, and dirt sticks to your feet, and it gets more sweaty, and you end up with kind of a smelly paste on your feet. And so people would come, washed, to somebody's home for dinner, and the way they were welcomed into the home as a servant would wash their feet, get them totally clean.

They reclined at table, and feet were more prominent in the eating of meals in this day because of the way that they reclined at table. So Jesus makes himself the lowliest of the household to set an example for them.

Now note, they are already reclining at table. Their feet have already been washed. They didn't have the actual need to be washed at this point. So he's doing it figuratively to show us what must be done, the way in which we ought to serve one another.

[15:05] It takes great humility to serve other people in this way. I don't think we're meant today to literally wash people's feet. Perhaps they need that, and maybe that was a way that you could serve them.

But more regularly, in other ways, will we serve others. to recognize that we are meant to be servants of all.

Jesus said in Matthew 20, verse 25 and following, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

It shall not be so among you. But whoever will be great among you must be your servant, and whoever will be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The greatest, the highest example of Jesus' service to us was that he gave his very life for us. But also don't miss that he served, right? Here he is, washing the disciples' feet.

[16:16] And so in the kingdom of God, the first will be last, and the last will be first. And we live in an age where dynamic and big leadership is very admired.

And the type of leadership that Jesus seems to be blessing here is the type of leadership that is meek, and it is humble, and it is service-oriented. Notice secondly from the text, Jesus did not only wash the feet of those who loved him.

Notice how John sets the text up in verse 2. He says, to start this whole episode, during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.

He wants it to be clear to us, the intention of Judas' heart, which Jesus would have been aware of, and we see some further evidence of that in the text as the chapter goes on.

He knew full well what Judas was going to do, and yet, I believe, he washes Judas' feet. Verse 12 says, when he had washed their feet.

[17:32] There's no reason to think that he excluded him from this act of love and of service. We are so apt to only serve others when they receive it well, give us the acclaim that we want, right?

When it makes us feel good to serve, rather than us doing so sacrificially for their good, not necessarily for ours.

But Jesus did not only wash the feet of those who loved him. Third observation, Jesus washed their feet to set for us an example.

Let's not miss verse 15. He says, I did this so that you would do it for one another, so that you would serve others in this way.

And I think it's off of texts like Genesis that's being referred to in Hebrews 13, verse 2, Genesis chapters 18 and 19, or 1 Timothy 5, 10, that this kind of service was meant to be a thing that we are to be doing for one another.

[18:41] We do this and we're motivated to do this out of the hospitality we've been shown by God in Christ. All of us wants cast off, all of us wants not welcome because of our sin, but in Christ, God has welcomed us.

then He gives to us this same work to be done. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 14, the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died.

And He died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

[20:01] That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Because we've been welcomed by God in Christ, reconciled to Him because of the death and life of Jesus, we've been given this same message.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. Ambassadors sent into the world to declare a message from our King.

We implore you on behalf of Christ, this is the message, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

If the church is going to stand against the rising tide of soft totalitarianism, it will be true as we spoke about in the clear mission of the church that the church will advance against the gates of hell.

But the question is, will this church advance against the gates of hell? If we will, as a secondary means, we'll have to be sacrificially hospitable.

[21:28] We're going to have to involve ourselves in each other's lives in a way that displays the love of Christ. Again, John chapter 13, Jesus says, they will know you are my disciples by your theology, the way you come and sing, the times you gather, the times you don't gather.

How will they know? By your love for one another. To be a compelling community together because we love each other and we show each other this kind of hospitality will be something beautiful for those Christ is calling to Himself.

and we will also have to display this kind of sacrificial hospitality for those outside the faith, welcoming them in that we might share this good news, that we might herald the gospel, this ministry of reconciliation, that we might get them to sit long enough to see displayed before them the love of Christ, that they might hear and believe the gospel.

And a book that I would commend to you entitled The Gospel Comes with a House Key by Rosaria Butterfield. She wrote this, radically ordinary hospitality, I'm using the term sacrificial instead, radically ordinary hospitality characterizes those who don't fuss over different world views represented at the dinner table.

The truly hospitable aren't embarrassed to keep friendships with people who are different. and she goes on to make the case that these friendships are formed for the sake of gospel reconciliation, right?

[23:09] Not just for the friendship, but to share the good news with people who are dying without this gospel of reconciliation. So practically, this is going to take different forms to exercise hospitality, right?

We're going to have to be hospitable in our public gathering together, so come to our public gatherings to serve and not to be served.

So much conversation about the church is what does it do for me? We've all heard the phrase, I just wasn't getting anything out of it. We ought to be asking the question, how can I be a blessing to others?

I would suggest to you that if you come to the public gathering of the church with that question in mind, how might the Lord use me this morning? How might I bless others? How might I show sacrificial hospitality to others that in the process you will also be blessed, served?

Romans 12.10, Paul says, love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

[24:24] Can you imagine a church of people and again you do this in great measure but can you imagine if every one of us was seeking to out honor the other? We're always going, no, no, no, I got it.

No, no, let me jump in. No, no, I'll take the lesser position. You take the greater position. Let me serve you again and again and again and again.

That would be a compelling community of Christians, would it not? a group of people who love each other in this way. Come to our public gatherings to serve, not to be served.

I think you'll find yourself being served in the process. Open up your home and spend your resources. Hospitality will cost something, right?

It's expensive to feed people, especially as prices are rising. But all that you have is the Lord's and you are meant to be a steward of it, not selfish with it.

[25:30] I pray for myself and for all of us that we would have the mind of Paul as he wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 15 where he said, I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

I don't think a single one of us on our deathbeds or for the eternity beyond will wish we just had a little more for ourselves. Who wish we just spent more on us.

I think that we will regret the things we did for ourselves and we will wish we had been more sacrificial for the sake of others. Store up treasure in heaven, right?

Give of yourself for the life to come. Charles Spurgeon in a really wonderful address. This is the quotation on your bulletin this week.

I love that this quotation comes in a fairly strong and long address where he's talking about the insufficiency of his preaching.

[26:38] preaching. And if you know much about Spurgeon you'll know that even in his day he was called the prince of preachers. He knew this about himself. People had called him the prince of preachers.

So in this address he suggests to people that you could correct the errors of my preaching if you'll spend time with people and you'll ask them what they thought and answer their questions etc. So it's on the heels of this that he said this.

Preaching is important. Public evangelism and exhortation is important but it's often our kindness and personal relationships that helps people cross the line into faith.

Now Spurgeon was a good Calvinist. He wrote a little book called The Defense of Calvinism where he said Calvinism is the first sentence in the book. Calvinism is the gospel. He believed in first order causes but also in the second order causes as well.

The Lord uses preaching and public evangelism and exhortation but often what Spurgeon is saying he uses our kindness and our personal relationships to help people cross the line into faith.

[27:51] So we see in this text Jesus giving us this example of sacrificial hospitality. Helping people, welcoming them in that they might be restored to God.

And fourthly, Jesus gives to us a promise. Verse 16 he says, Truly, truly, I say to you.

Anytime there's that repetition in Jesus, Jesus says this again and again and again throughout the gospels, truly, truly, he's saying not only truly but really, truly, he's emphasizing it. The only time we see a triplicate in the entirety of text is holy, holy, holy, right?

But here Jesus will go twice, truly, truly, right? This is an axiom. This is a thing to hang your hat on. I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him, right?

So if you are my disciples, right? If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them, right? Set aside, happy are you if you do them.

[29:01] And I think that Jesus means both in this life and in the life to come, that we would give of ourselves for the sake of others to the glory of our God.

We say in our house often, the life best lived is lived in service to others, right? So to the degree that when my boys are acting selfishly toward one another or to their parents or to others, I say, boys, the life best lived is, and I make them fill in the blank, and they know it lived in service to others.

And they often say it begrudgingly, but they know at least that the life best lived is lived in service to others. others. I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

Let that be true of each and every one of us toward each and every one of us. Let's pray together.