

“SETTING THE TABLE”
“Hospitality and Call”

We begin a new sermon series “Setting the Table.” I dare say, most of us like to eat. In our culture and society food has in some ways become an issue. We have gotten used to eating so fast (most school children must eat in 20 minutes or less), or we are so concerned because of whatever diet we may be on that food is seen as problem, rather than a gift, a blessing. From the beginning, the Bible has shown how God is interested in food and providing for the basic needs of God’s beloved children. Beginning in the Garden of Eden, God gives food for human beings to delight in and enjoy. The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy was that human beings would worship God, give thanks for the gifts of the earth in bread and wine and to feast as a family together. In many Christian traditions, it is common to gather at the table to remember and give thanks for heavenly banquet and the bread and cup. Hospitality is in our religious makeup and it begins at the table. This week in our studies, we will be at the table with Abraham and Sarah and with Jesus along the Sea of Galilee. Even when we are afraid and uncertain, Jesus calls us to follow. This week, may you experience the call of Christ around the table and the blessing of God in each encounter.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Hospitality and Call”**

Daily prayer: *There is none like you O God in your love, your generosity, your gifting and your hospitality. And we thank you that you are in our lives, working in us and through us to let people know your kingdom is open to all. In the name of your Son, who opened the doors for all and broke down barriers that kept people from you, Amen. (adapted from a prayer by Rev. Abi)*

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, July 22, 2019 Genesis 18: 1-8
Abraham has a long history with God. In Genesis 12, Abram (who becomes Abraham) is called by God to leave everything behind and follow where God will lead. Abram and Sarai have no children but are promised that they will be the beginning of a great nation and will be “blessed to be a blessing.” Both Abraham and Sarah became old enough they took matters into their own hands and Sarah had her servant Hagar bear a

child and they adopted Ishmael. So, when we get to this text, the only child for Abraham and Sarah was Ishmael. AND Abraham had just been circumcised as an old man. So, resting in the shade of the text makes sense. Abraham sees these “men.” He doesn’t know them, has no idea where they came from or why they might be passing through. Immediately he offers hospitality. Not just a cup of water, but water for their feet, for their thirst, a cool place to rest AND a feast. The amount of flour was a lot, something like 25 quarts of flour. He kills a young calf, offers milk and butter. This is hospitality at its finest. Despite what must have been terribly painful and an uncomfortable procedure, Abraham still offers his best. Maybe he has a hint these are not ordinary strangers or maybe he remembers his call to be blessed to be a blessing. *Think of one time you have offered unusual hospitality. What was happening in your life? How did it feel? Today, find one way you can offer hospitality in a new way.*

Tuesday, July 23, 2019 Genesis 18: 9-12

These men then make a stunning pronouncement. Sarah would have a son within a year! SARAH!! Sarah, a very old woman was to give birth. Out of this incredible hospitality comes this unexpected and unbelievable good news. The promise was still part of Abraham and Sarah’s relationship with God, but it was a promise that was unfulfilled. I can certainly appreciate why Sarah laughed. It was ridiculous, she was too old, Abraham was too old. She might have cried at how often she longed for a child and yet did not have one. Instead she laughed. Was it hopeful? Was it cynical? After all, she did help create the feast for these strangers, perhaps it was fatigue and sheer astonishment that they should even think such a thing. *What has happened in your life that might cause you to laugh as Sarah did? Were you part of something that was so amazing or so hard and you received a word of grace and hope? Today, do something to offer one other person a moment of grace and hope.*

Wednesday July 24, 2019 Luke 5: 1-8

Jesus calls Simon, James and John in this encounter. These first few verses show how people are following Jesus because of his teaching and healing. The fishermen had a bad night of fishing. Jesus encourages them to go back out. They filled their nets to overflowing. What must that have been like? This man Jesus comes and preaches from one of Simon’s boats, then tells Simon to cast his nets again. Jesus gives Simon Peter a new experience and hospitality. Peter is blown away and overwhelmed. Peter feels unworthy. Grace and hospitality can feel like a condemnation...we are not good enough, faithful enough, caring enough, righteous enough to be given such a gift. Hospitality that is overwhelming can feel all wrong. Yet this is the gift of grace and hospitality that God gives us in Jesus. *Have you ever felt like Peter? Have you wanted the presence of God to go away because you felt unworthy? Today here this good news: God loves you! God love YOU! God’s grace is sufficient. You are loved and you are called into a deeper relationship with Christ.*

Thursday July 25, 2019 Luke 5: 8-11

Jesus tells Peter to not be afraid. Grace and hospitality can make us afraid. We become afraid that someone will see our flaws, our weaknesses, our sins, our failings. We are afraid we are not worthy. Jesus reminds us that we are called to follow. We are called to be the hands and feet and body of Jesus in the world. How did Jesus offer hospitality and grace? Where did Jesus go? With whom did Jesus share God’s love and grace? *Where is Jesus calling you? How are you called to be offering God’s love and grace to the world? In what ways can you offer hospitality to those who need it the most?*

Friday July 26, 2019 Genesis 18: 11-15

Sarah was afraid too. After she was caught laughing, she lied and said she hadn’t laughed. But the stranger’s response to her laughter and disbelief was to ask the question, “Is anything too difficult for God?” That is an excellent question for you and me. When we are discouraged, afraid and overwhelmed perhaps we should ask ourselves, “Is anything too difficult for God?” When we are uncertain how to live into the hospitality and grace we have been given and are called to give to others, perhaps we should ask, “Is this, or anything like this too difficult for God?” *Today, offer up anything you are facing that makes you afraid, or uncertain or overwhelmed. Ask God in Jesus to help you believe that you can do all things in the grace and love of God’s Spirit.*