



The Dangerous Act of Hospitality

Exodus 23:1-9 February 19, 2017

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Thank you for your extraordinarily warm welcome. It is very, very good to be with you today. I've been looking forward to this, and I can tell from this morning and a little research I did about your church that we love the same things and the same Lord. I'm grateful for that. Let's ask our Heavenly Father to bless our time together.

Father in heaven, Your goodness knows no bounds. There are no limits to it. It is beyond measure. We thank You that You've given us Your Word, that You've not been silent but have given us the words of life. We thank You, Holy Spirit, for Your presence and Your friendship and the way in which You draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that in You all things hold together. And, Lord, we pray that we would be transformed, that our hearts would be kindled, our affections stirred and our wills moved. Might we leave with a keen interest in finding a way to apply and implement what we will learn here today. Lord, we ask it not only for our sake, but for the sake of our neighbors and friends, many of whom are still strangers to You. We ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

Please turn to Exodus 23:1-9. You may be wondering why a guest preacher would take you to the dark corners of the Old Testament, but it's where we're going. I will be speaking about "The Dangerous Act of Hospitality."

You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. ² You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, ³ nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

⁴ If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

⁶ You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. ⁸ And you shall take

no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clearsighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

⁹ You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

I want to draw your attention again to that last verse, as this is what we will focus on today: *“You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.”* Now, perhaps your translation might say, *“For you shall oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.”* They are called to make room, to not only think of themselves. They are to not oppress the strangers, but rather to anticipate their arrival and to be empathetic and hospitable to them. As we will see, this calling on their lives is really a calling to the dangerous act of hospitality.

As we dive into this, it’s very important to situate this particular passage in the book of Exodus. We know what has just happened. They were recently in slavery in Egypt. They were dead on arrival. They had no way of getting out themselves. But God sovereignly and supernaturally rescued them. He drew them out of the water, and in the Old Testament this is like their Easter story. This is their resurrection from the dead. They were dead in sin, dead in slavery, and God raised them from the dead through the exodus. And because their lives were rescued, they now belong to God. They are His people, His kingdom commonwealth, a new creation. They belong to Him body and soul, and now they’re being told how to live.

This is really the first crucial element of hospitality. We see that it naturally grows out of gratitude. Because of what God had done for them in Egypt, they are now called—as His commonwealth and kingdom people—to live a certain way. One thing to keep in mind is the way the New Testament actually has the same kind of pattern, the same way of thinking about these things. In Romans 15:7 we read, *“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.”* You see the same pattern. Because of what God has done for you in Jesus Christ—in raising you from the dead, in saving you, in rescuing you—now go be welcoming and hospitable to other people.

Israel lived with a deep awareness that their new identity as strangers and sojourners was as people who had been rescued by grace. Here you see that hospitality is a reflection and a reenactment of God’s hospitality to them. In fact, their hospitality to strangers and sojourners in their midst also reflects Christian hospitality. Out of a deep awareness of the goodness of God, we welcome strangers and foreigners in our midst.

I want to ask you a question, because lots of us have different ideas when we talk about hospitality. When I say “hospitality,” what comes to mind for you? What do you think of? A meal? Entertainment? Conversation? Lodging in your home? This is the picture we have. So normally, we don’t associate the word “dangerous” with those forms of hospitality. When I was a kid, I would see my mom practice hospitality. She would have “high tea parties,” with polite, triangular cucumber sandwiches and little quiches. This was my understanding of hospitality. But there is an ancient Christian tradition that has its roots in this passage in Exodus which shows a dangerous, challenging and sacrificial component to this form of hospitality that naturally grows out of gratitude.

My grandparents lived in a small town in the Netherlands, the town of Ommen, where my grandfather pastored two tiny Baptist churches. For 55 years, he served the gospel ministry, together with his wife, my grandmother, and their five children—my mother was their oldest daughter. My mother was born in 1943; three years after World War II entered the Netherlands. So my grandfather was a church pastor in the middle of the War.

It so happened that the German Waffen SS decided to confiscate the church building where my grandfather’s church was held. They decided they needed it for their regional headquarters. Let me describe the building for you. On the bottom level was a basement which held a fellowship area and a kitchen. On the main level was the sanctuary, and then above it was a lookout room—an attic of sorts. And it was this part of the building that the Nazi soldiers wanted to use as a vantage point because it allowed them to see for miles.

Somehow my grandparents decided, after their church had been confiscated by the German soldiers, that it would be a great idea to hide Jewish families and resistance workers in the basement of that same church. So soon after the Waffen SS confiscated the top floor, they began to hide Jews in the basement, right under their noses. They figured that would be as safe a hideaway as they could find.

I remember as a child, every time I visited my grandparents, they would tell us this story over and over again. I think it was the defining moment of their lives. As a kid, I always wondered why they took those risks. It would have been so much more sensible to leave the brazen takeover of their church facilities unchallenged. I mean, weren’t they concerned about the possible consequences? I know I would be, wouldn’t you? What would have happened if they had gotten caught? What would happen to them—and to my mother? What would happen to their Jewish neighbors and the resistance workers?

I would ask them, “Didn’t you fear for your life or wonder what was coming? How did you provide for all these people in the basement?” One of the things you have to know about my

grandparents is that even though they served two churches, they actually were never able to draw a salary from either of these churches. So all the money they had, all the food they had, was simply people in the church bringing them gifts. They might bring a couple chickens and some bread, or the green grocer would bring potatoes and other vegetables. They might find some eggs on the doorstep. This is how they lived off the land, through the generosity of others. It wasn't like they had an excess of resources. But somehow they did not consider the scarcity of their own resources as an insurmountable obstacle in this struggle against the darkness.

In one of my last conversations with my grandmother, then well into her ninth decade, I asked her what kept them from complacency. What spurred them toward such dangerous hospitality? I'll never forget her reply. With her wrinkly hands, she described it this way: "During those cold winter war days, we trusted in the coming Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of Jesus, there is always enough. We knew God would protect us and provide for us. Because of that, we simply provided food and shelter for people who desperately needed protection—even though there was a bit of a risk."

"A bit of a risk"—imagine that. As far as she was concerned, this hazardous venture of opening the church to the Jews was an inevitable response to and a natural expression of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. This is naturally what people do. She thought, "I have been welcomed by God through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as a natural way of reciprocating for what He has done, we welcomed other people." That the church building was swarming with Nazi soldiers was just a logistical challenge as far as she was concerned.

I remember one time I asked, "Grandma, were there ever any close calls? Did you ever fear being detected?" She said, "Yes, there was one time. It was after hours and there was supposed to be no one in the church building. I was in the sanctuary level of the church with a young German officer—22 or 23 years old. As we walked through the sanctuary together, there was clearly a noise—voices—coming from the basement." My grandmother said she looked at the soldier, and she knew that he knew, and he knew that she knew, that there were people in the building. She thought, "This is it. This is the moment when we'll all be found out."

She said to me, "I'll never forget how that young soldier quietly walked over to the church organ in the corner of the sanctuary and started playing hymns—hymns he had learned in his Lutheran church as a child growing up. And every time there was a noise downstairs, or he feared his colleagues might detect the refugees in their midst, he would go to the organ and play those hymns."

Dangerous hospitality is a natural outflow of the gospel. The literal Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*, which means love for the stranger. We rarely ever hear that word. The

related word we hear most often today is xenophobia, which means fear of the stranger. That we know all about.

[And by the way, just to be very clear, if you think I'm giving subtle commentary on a recent executive order by our President, this is not at all what I'm talking about. I'm not even worried right now about Syrian refugees. I'm talking about you and me, about St. Charles and Wheaton, about your house and mine, about your neighbors and mine.]

Here's what's at stake. We are Kingdom people, a gospel community, and there should not be a gap between what we profess to believe and sing about—as people who have been welcomed to God's Table—and how we actually live. If we then practice exclusion and fear of strangers, the credibility of the gospel is at stake. This includes our treatment of people who are different from us, who are vulnerable, who are needy—people who are our very neighbors, who may be classmates or colleagues at work.

This is particularly important because our children are watching us. They hear what we sing and profess. But if there is a huge gap between what we say and the actual way we live our lives, it will be difficult for them to believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will produce a cognitive dissonance in their minds. Hospitality actually makes the gospel more credible. Welcome has always been the signature style of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. So dangerous hospitality is simply a fitting response to the gospel.

It's also a sacrificial way of life. You can imagine that for these Jews who had just been rescued, the proposal God gives them is going to cost them money. It would be inconvenient. They are in a court of law. It would be more expedient for them to bear false witness. They are told not to do it. It could be expensive. What they are told to do is not popular. It says in Exodus 23:2 that there would be many people who would be bearing false witness against the poor and vulnerable. “But even though it is popular to do that, even though everybody else lives this way, you are to be different because you belong to Me.”

He gives the example of a donkey in a ditch. But this is not an animal that belongs to your friend—it belongs to a person who is your enemy, the person who is at odds with you or even hates you. “But if you see a donkey lying under its burden in a ditch,” he says, “you are supposed to go to it. And even though it's an inconvenience, you still should rescue it.”

As a kid growing up, the church we were part of had people from all over the world—65 different countries and every denomination you could think of. My parents frequently had people from all over the world in our home. That was normal. And one thing we loved the most is that my father and mother were great storytellers. They would tell stories from their own childhood.

As I said, my mother was born in 1943—but so you get the picture, my dad was born in 1923. There's 20 years difference in their age. Dad was a very black man—"blue-black"—born in the South in 1923. Mother was born in Holland in 1943. The things they had in common were they were both Baptists, they both loved Jesus and they both loved music. He spoke English; she spoke Dutch and a little English. That was about it.

I remember my father telling us stories about what it was like growing up in North Carolina in the 20s and early 30s. It was a racialized and deeply segregated society. After he returned from serving in the armed forces in World War II, my father decided to become a musician. He had great talent as a singer, so he went to Howard University to study music. While he was there, he also moonlighted as a cab driver in D.C. He told us the story of how one day he was driving his cab and stopped six inches over the "Stop" line in traffic. There was a police officer sitting there, waiting for him. He motioned him to stop and then yanked him out of the cab and put him in prison for two days. This is the sort of life my father knew when he was young.

There were two elderly white ladies who lived together who heard my father sing at a concert and believed he had a talent that was one in a million. They took a liking to him and did something no one—least of all, my dad—would have expected them to do. They invited him to their house for dinner. Remember, this is early 50s, the time when black people did not have dinner with white people. But these two women decided they believed in him. They did instruct him to wait until dusk to come by, so the neighbors wouldn't see him. They also asked him to use the back door, as they didn't want to make the sacrifice of their neighbors talking.

So he did as they asked, arriving at 6:30. I remember him saying that it wasn't simply the meatloaf and potatoes with gravy that made a difference to him. What made a difference was that they acknowledged him as a person. He was treated as a human being. Someone knew his name and acted like he mattered to them. They wanted to hear his story. They wanted to share a meal with him. Even though they had little in common, their hospitality breathed life into him.

And that's really what hospitality does. It breathes life into people, as we acknowledge their humanity. As you might imagine, these two ladies were immediately ostracized in their church community and were pressured to never do it again. They actually became known as the "nigger lovers." Hospitality is always a sacrificial way of life. But rather than being overwhelmed by the heartlessness and the need, they simply saw this person and thought, "He needs a home-cooked meal. He probably misses his mother. This probably doesn't happen that often." As a result, he felt recognized and known.

See, what we actually find here in Exodus is that the reason this commandment is so clear—“Do not oppress the sojourner because you know the heart of the sojourner”—is because what God is inviting them into is what I like to call a “Kingdom economy.” It’s a different economy. It’s not the economy of the world, because we actually know the way the economy of the world works. Here’s how I would summarize it: “My well-being at your expense.” It’s cut-throat, dog-eat-dog.

In contrast, the Kingdom economy says, “Your well-being at my expense. Whatever it takes, whatever it costs, I desire your well-being—physically, spiritually, emotionally. I want it to go well with you, even if it costs me a lot.” The only way to accomplish this comes through a deep and abiding awareness of the superabundance of God’s saving work for us.

Here’s another way to describe it: It’s like the difference between having a “scarcity mentality” and an “abundance mentality.” Have you heard that before? Some people have a scarcity mentality. It would have been so easy for the Jews to say, “We just got here. The kitchen’s not done. The tent is kind of small. There are people who have been here much longer and it would be better for them to host other people. We really don’t have time or energy or resources.” That’s a scarcity mentality. “Maybe somebody else should be kind and hospitable to these strangers. We’re not sure if we have enough money, or enough connections, or the right house, or enough time.” The scarcity mentality is ignorant of the Kingdom economy and it acts as if God is not real.

On the other hand, the abundance mentality says, “In God’s Kingdom there is always enough. In God’s Kingdom there is always provision. There’s always room at our table. Because just as we have been accepted at His Table, there’s always room for yet one more stranger at ours.” This mentality comes from a deep and abiding awareness of the cost of our own welcome at God’s Table. It says, “God, thank You for this opportunity to make room for other people. Thank You that you’ve given us this tiny little barbecue and somehow it’s going to be sufficient. Thank You for a 700-square-foot apartment. We don’t have a big mansion, but we’re going to welcome our neighbors into our home.”

Here’s the third way of looking at this dangerous practice of hospitality. Hospitality is strangers welcoming strangers. Notice that in the text. “*You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*” You know the heart of a stranger, so you can empathize with them. You can relate to their plight and understand what it’s like to be a stranger with no connections, because you yourselves were strangers. Hospitality is strangers welcoming strangers. They understand what it’s like to have been a minority, to have been on the outside looking in.

What's amazing here is that God is actually using their experience of lowliness and displacement as fertile ground, as the main motivation for their own hospitality. "You know what it's like to be a loner. You know what it's like to be on the outside and because of that, I want you to make room for other people." It's their own experience of vulnerability and complete dependence on God that becomes the major motivation for doing the same for others.

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever felt excluded or left out? Of course you have. Basically all of us have gone through middle school at some point. Middle school was where I realized I was neither black enough nor white enough—I was neither American enough nor Dutch enough—and I just never felt like I fit in anywhere. I think one of the reasons why I'm so passionate about recovering this ancient practice of hospitality is because I know personally what it feels like not to fit in. And you know what it's like not to fit in.

There can be any number of reasons why you didn't fit in, or maybe even right now you feel like you don't belong. Maybe everybody in your class was smart. They had it together. They knew exactly what the assignments were. But somehow you never felt like you could get it together. Maybe all your classmates are athletes, and you're not, and you just don't fit in. Maybe you are poorer than everybody else around you. Maybe there was a physical challenge or handicap that you had or have that makes you feel like you don't fit.

Maybe it's because you don't feel you can live this perfect American life, that somehow you can't get it all together—and so you know what it's like to be a stranger, to be on the outside. Maybe you struggle with mental illness—something we don't talk about—like depression. It's an invisible challenge that you have. You feel everybody else belongs, but you don't. But what this passage is telling you is this: do not let the suffering of your loneliness and your exclusion be wasted. Instead use it as the motivation to bring life and joy and comfort to somebody else.

I see a lot of school-age folks here—some middle school, some high school. There is a kid coming to your school right now who feels like they do not belong. What would happen if you, in the name of Jesus, would welcome them? You would show them where their locker is. You would have lunch with them. Imagine the simple act of hospitality—strangers welcoming strangers. Do not let the painful experiences of your own loneliness and exclusion be wasted, but let God use them to bring life to others.

Hospitality also develops an eye for the invisible ones. You can imagine that the Jews who had just been rescued from Egypt might not have been thinking about anyone else but were focused on their own survival. No one else was on their radar. It's funny how that happens to us. We think primarily of ourselves. But this passage puts their enemy on the radar—the people who hate them—as well as the oppressed, the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable. And God is

saying to them, “I want you to pay attention to these invisible ones. I want you to develop an eye for seeing the needs of these vulnerable, marginalized ones.”

I wonder, do you know who the invisible people in your life are? There’s someone who is bagging your groceries—have you ever looked them in the eye? Most of the time I think, even when we’re in line in the grocery store, we’re on our phones. We don’t make eye contact. They ask us how we’re doing, but we don’t make eye contact or have a genuine conversation. This is a person. It may be your barista at Starbucks. It may be the secretary at the doctor’s office. No one is there really going there to see her or him; we go to see the doctor or the dentist.

They are the invisible ones, and we are surrounded by people we never see. We never learn their names. We never figure out what they are about. What would happen if your church became known—in every neighborhood, at every grocery store, at every doctor’s and dentist’s office—as people who have an eye for the invisible ones? Maybe you feel like you’re the invisible one.

Maybe you’re the one who’s ignored and just kind of taken for granted. No one pays attention to you. But you now know the power of recognition and acknowledgement. You need to develop an eye for the invisible ones. We need to ask the question: who in our church is falling through the cracks? Or at your place of work, do you know who’s falling through the cracks? Do you know who’s dying on the inside? If you are in middle school, you have classmates right now who are hurting. Do you know who they are? Do you know what’s killing them on the inside? Hospitality develops an eye for the invisible one.

One of the rules I came up with in our church in the Netherlands had to do with the wide variety of people who came to our church from all over the world. A lot of the people who would be stationed in Holland were there either because of the international criminal court or ICTY, which stands for the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. So they were prosecutors and magistrates and lawyers and judges and ambassadors—those kinds of people. And they would come to our church.

But we would also have refugees and graduate students and people who were stranded or living on welfare. Because a lot of people didn’t really talk about their work at church, you couldn’t always quite tell who was who. So you wouldn’t know if she’s a judge, a graduate student or a refugee. Sometimes you just couldn’t tell.

I made a couple mistakes with these folks so our rule of thumb was this: everyone gets the royal treatment. “Okay, lady, I have no idea who you are, but I am going to assume that you are the daughter of the king of Zamunda. I don’t know where you’re from. I have no idea. But everybody gets the royal treatment.” Can you imagine if everyone in this church had that attitude

in St. Charles? Everyone that we meet—we don't know who they are—but they are sons and daughters of the prince of Zamunda. Everyone gets the royal treatment. This face-to-face welcome and recognition of others is really a way of developing a heart and an eye for the invisible ones.

Hospitality also anticipates the needs of the vulnerable ones. It anticipates these beforehand. Notice that the text is talking about hypothetical situations. There are poor people coming your way. They're not here yet, but they're coming. There are marginalized people coming your way. They're not here yet, but they're coming. There are going to be people who hate you. Maybe they're not here yet, but they're coming. They are your enemies. But He's saying, "I want you to anticipate beforehand—before it actually happens—and have the attitude that says, 'We are going to do whatever we can to make the way for them.'"

So if you know that there will be deaf people in your church, you make provisions for them. If there are going to be handicapped people in your church, you make provisions for them. Maybe they're not even here yet, but they're coming. So you anticipate the needs of people who are coming your way.

This skill is I think a disposition of the heart that's absolutely essential. I wish we had time to look at how John Calvin did this in Geneva during the Reformation. Remember how the Protestants all over France were being ostracized and persecuted, and he decided to make Geneva this welcoming place of hospitality. Here's what he said. I wish we had two hours to talk about this. Here's what Calvin said:

Let us therefore learn from this passage to be kind and dutiful to fugitives and exiles—and especially to believers who are banished for their confession of the Word. No duty can be more acceptable and pleasing to God, and on the other hand, nothing is more hateful or abominable in the sight than barbarity and cruelty.

What if you just begin asking the Lord every morning, "Is there a need that I can anticipate? Is there something that I can do? Is there some way that I can do good to my neighbor, body and soul? God, won't You show me? Give me an eye for the invisible ones and help me anticipate the need of the vulnerable ones."

The sixth crucial element of hospitality is that hospitality always shows up. What I mean by that is it always shows up in the particular structure or practice or policy or place. For my grandparents, it was the kitchen. The kitchen was ground zero for their struggle against the darkness. They even called it "our kitchen struggle." Hospitality shows up in a particular place, through a particular practice, in a particular policy—in your office at work, or at school, or in your church. In a very concrete place, it is going to show up specifically, tangibly. It's a meal that's

been cooked. It's a prayer that's been prayed. It's a to-do list that has been dropped in lieu of a conversation. It's time that has been made for another. Whatever it is, hospitality always shows up in embodied structures, practices and policies.

Hospitality also recognizes there are limits and boundaries. As you can imagine, as the Jews were traveling through the desert, they really had no ability to be hospitable to absolutely everyone. There were limits even to their hospitality, and they realized pretty quickly that it was patient and painstaking work.

I remember vividly when we started churches in the Sacramento area, our denomination dropped us in a town where we did not know a single person. [I don't recommend planting churches this way, by the way.] So we moved to this town and I did not know a single person. They said, "Go plant a church and let us know if you run into any problems." So I would go to the local Starbucks and see if I could meet someone. I'd go to the gym and see if I could strike up a conversation with somebody on the treadmill. These initial conversations were a little surreal. Imagine this. In a town where I don't know anyone—I'm there to start a church. I'd invite them to a Bible study in my home and the conversation would go something like this: "Um, we'd like you to come to our church."

They'd say, "Well, who are you and where are you from and why are you here?"

"Ah, we're here to start a church."

"Oh. Where does your church meet?"

"Ah, in my living room."

"Okay. Ah, how many people are there?"

"Well, you would be the first. But you're welcome...."

And they would say, "Are you a cult or something like that?" This is California.

I remember the first Christmas there. My wife Betsy and I tallied up 21 people whose names we knew, with whom we had either had coffee or a meal. So we decided to invite all 21 of them to a birthday party at our house for one particular guy who showed tremendous interest initially in the gospel. So we had Brett's birthday party, and 13 people confirmed. We couldn't believe it. Thirteen people in our house, in this new town. A few months ago we didn't know anybody there.

This is one of those moments when all the kids' toys are cleaned up. You make the house look like no one lives there. My wife has made a birthday cake. Candles are on it. Music is playing. And we're excited, because 13 people are going to come over for this birthday party. They're coming at 7:00. So 7:00 comes, and no one's there. We figure, okay, we're on California

time. Ah, 7:15 comes. No one there. Then 7:30. No one there. No one comes the entire evening. I know, it's kind of heartbreaking.

So we realized that if we are going to do gospel-centered hospitality for the long haul, we have to realize there are limits and boundaries to it. It is going to be painful and require patience and painstaking work to tend to the needs of other people. If you do it in your own strength—or you do it out of guilt or you do it just to entertain—it does not last and it will not be life-giving, either to the guest or to the host.

My hope is that for you, New Covenant Bible Church here in St. Charles, is that you will be so overwhelmed by the tremendous cost to Jesus Christ for you to be welcome at the Communion Table, that you will be able to say, “Whatever the cost, whatever the limits, whatever the boundaries—we want to do this, because we realize that in a few moments, we get to sit at this Table at the cost of Somebody Else’s life. It was my life at His cost.”

We try to teach this to our kids too. We want them to be young men and women. I’ve got four kids who are hospitable to their classmates. They realize somebody is going to come into their house and play with their toys. There’s going to come a time when we’ll have eight more people show up at a dinner party than we expected.

We have a rule about this, by the way. Let’s say my wife makes guacamole. I don’t know about your kids, but my kids? They don’t just eat guacamole, they inhale it. They cannot wait for the closing prayer. They say, “Dad, don’t pray one of those long priestly prayers. Just go short.” They’re hovering over the guacamole. So if we have eight extra people, and I have hovering kids ready to inhale the guacamole, we say, “FHB.” How many of you know what FHB means? Only the pastor knows. Now you all know. It means “Family Hold Back.” So you’ll see my kids go to the back of the line, just hoping and praying that nobody else touches the guacamole.

Friends, because of the super-abundant grace with which God has saved us, may this congregation be a place of life-giving hospitality, doing whatever it takes in body and soul for those who are strangers. So we prepare to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, may you remember the cost of your welcome at this Table, your well-being at Christ’s expense.

Let’s pray.

Father in heaven, we thank You for the grace and welcome we get at this Table, and we pray that from this place a conspiracy of goodness, an avalanche of grace and hospitality, would come from this congregation into St. Charles and the greater Chicago area. Lord, make it so. And now so renew us by super-abundant grace at Your Table, where we as a family do not have to hold back, but get to take freely. We get to inhale whatever is there. Lord, move us and remind us of Your goodness once again. In Jesus’ name we pray. And everyone said, “Amen.”

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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