



As I stepped across the threshold after an hours-long drive, I inhaled the warm aroma of dinner cooking—baking potatoes, grilling meat. Our friends hugged us warmly, exclaiming their joy that we had arrived. A bottle of wine sat breathing on the counter, and fresh flowers filled a vase in the center of the table. My friends’ home was tidy and warm, not sterile or flashy. They showed us to our room where the bed looked soft and inviting and towels were folded neatly in the bathroom. A handful of chocolates and two bottles of water sat on the bedside table.

I sighed with wonder and contentment. Our friends had prepared for us and were happy we were there. I entered the warmth of their hospitality, and my soul leaned in to feeling loved.

Hospitality—the gifts we give one another of welcome, nurture, open-heartedness, generosity, friendliness, and love.

Jesus exudes hospitality. Luke tells a story where we see this trait of Jesus fully displayed. Jesus is attempting to withdraw alone with his disciples. The men had just returned from a missionary journey, so certainly they want to share stories with Jesus and rest together. But the crowds learn of his proximity and come searching for him. Seeing the throngs approaching, Jesus does not sigh, roll his eyes, and move farther away.

Luke puts it simply: “He welcomed them.”

Jesus turns to the crowds with open-hearted friendliness and says, in essence, “I am happy you are here.”

Then Luke says he “spoke to them about the kingdom of God.” Jesus knows the people’s greatest need is to hear the good news of his father’s kingdom. So he speaks the invitation from heaven to them—he feeds their souls. On top of that, Luke says he “cured those who had need of healing.” Looking out at the crowd, Jesus sees the sick and hurting. He heals them.

The welcoming, teaching, and healing take some time. Meanwhile, the people's stomachs start to rumble. The disciples want him to send them away to get food in the nearby towns. Instead, Jesus asks them to sit down and feeds over five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus, the warm and generous host, cares for their hungry stomachs as well as their hungry hearts and satisfies their needs.

Hospitality bestows honor on a guest. It says, "I esteem you. I prepared for your arrival." It says, "I am attentive to your needs. If you are thirsty, I will give you a drink. If you are hungry, I will feed you. If you need to rest, I will let you sleep." And in the case of Jesus, he can also say, "Are you sick? I will heal you. Are you in pain? I will cure you. Do you need hope? I will give you my Father's kingdom. Do you need forgiveness? I will die for you."

Questions for Reflection

Prayerfully read Luke 9:10 -17 several times.

- What do you love about Jesus as he shows hospitality to the crowds? Tell him about this for a few moments.
- How do you long to experience the hospitality of Jesus? What needs do you bring him today? How does he respond to you?
- Who in your life needs to experience the hospitality of Jesus? Spend a few moments praying for them.
- Ask Jesus whom he would like to see you extend hospitality to. What is he inviting you to do? Talk to him about what you think you are discerning.
- Spend some time sitting quietly with Jesus, appreciating his hospitality.