

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

by George Herbert [JP]

HOSPITALITY



Week 1:
Hosts and Guests -
The hospitality of God

Something to ponder from a Community Rule -
"Practice hospitality those who cannot return
it" [BK]

When we visit a dear friend, do we trample across the flowerbeds
to reach for cherries on an out-of-reach tree? Do we come into the
house treading muddy footprints into the carpet and throwing a
wet coat down on a polished table?
Then why don't we show the same respect for the beautiful home
God has invited us into?

When we are passed a bowl of food, do we just take as much as we
want without considering how much will be left for those further
down the table?

God, our host, has provided for all - so why don't all get a fair share?

What sort of guests are we? [JØ]

A verse that comes to my
mind and one that meant a
lot to me when I was a young
Christian is Jesus' invitation
to us in Revelation 3:20:

"Here I am. I stand at the
door and knock. If anyone
hears my voice and opens the
door, I will come in and eat
with him and he with
me." [SS]

I have been thinking about the topic of HOSPITALITY, and the story of Zacchaeus came to mind. Jesus was a guest in his home, and good things came from that when Zacchaeus offered to repay the money he had taken from the taxpayers. But what about the self esteem of Zacchaeus who had been ridiculed for his short stature and was hated because of his job? Jesus must have helped him greatly with this and given him a renewed confidence.

Being a host and being a guest is good for us all. As humans, we need and thrive on interdependence. Sharing, listening and respecting each other is all part of this.

In answer to today's question about being a guest of God....

I am grateful to Him...He enables me and totally blesses me by having me as His guest! [MD]

Being a guest of God is at one level dwelling in our earth, his beautiful creation and all else created by him, plants and animals. Taking our responsibilities to his creation seriously, caring and conserving animals and plants, caring for the environment.

At a deeper level, it is God himself that we are called to dwell in. Jesus used the language of dwelling to describe his relationship with God the Father. The word dwelling implies being "at home" with and in God.

Our language is full of expressions of being "at home" or 'home from home' used to describe a feeling of safety, comfort, security and love. Home is where the heart is could be taken to be very apt for Christians seeking to be guests of God. [SJ]



One passage in the Bible that comes to mind when thinking about the host/guest relationship is the story of the Road to Emmaus. It starts off with the two disciples as hosts and Jesus as the guest; the disciples invite Jesus to come and stay with them because it is nearly evening. However, during the meal when Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them, Jesus took on the role of host.

With regard to the question of what difference it makes if we consider ourselves to be guests of God:

1. It means that as a church we should be inclusive of all, regardless of their gender, age, race, or sexual orientation, because God invites everyone to be part of his church.
2. If we think of ourselves as guests of God on this planet, it means we should do our best to care for the environment, for example by trying to reduce our carbon emissions and avoiding plastic waste. [JP]

When referring to the Communion bread the word 'host' derives from a different Latin noun (*hostia*) meaning sacrificial victim, than the word 'host' meaning one who entertains guests which is derived from the Latin noun '*hospes*'.

However, what particularly struck me in the light of this morning's service was the fact that it says that the Latin noun '*hospes*' means both 'a guest or visitor' and 'one who provides lodging or entertainment for a guest or visitor'. This perhaps supports Sarah's comment in the chat about the roles of 'host' and 'guest' being interchangeable. [JP]

Good hosts give unconditionally and don't count the cost - this involves challenges and for humans the limits imposed by their circumstances. Good guests are open to and accepting of what is offered and accept it graciously – the challenge is how to decline graciously if we cannot accept, not so much what is offered by God, but by the interpretation of "His Word" by humans. [DC]

Suggestions of music:

The hymn, *Let us build a house where love can dwell*, with the challenging refrain 'All are welcome in this place.' [CK & DC]

Sheep may safely graze (God offers us a safe place). [JØ]

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry. The second verse speaks of Jesus being our guest. [SS]

A definition of hospitality - 'Hospitality is making your guests feel at home when you really wish they were'. The more I think about it the more I can read into it - hospitality costs! [JØ]

