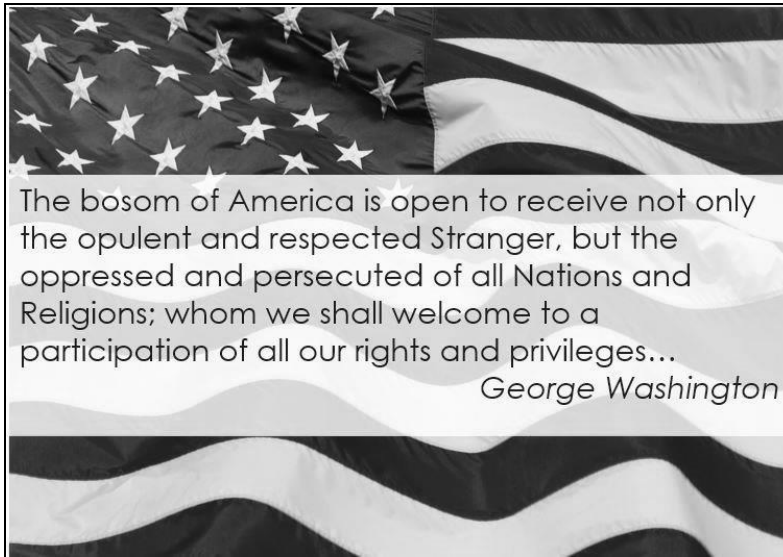


OUR NATION'S HISTORY OF HOSPITALITY



Scripture:

Psalm 13

¹How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ²How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

³Consider and answer me, O LORD my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, ⁴and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

⁵But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Matthew 10:40-42

⁴⁰Jesus said: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



Today's lectionary passage is about welcoming and hospitality the Jesus way. Jesus has just chosen the twelve and now the disciples are in an intensive discipleship training, like boot camp.

Earlier in Matthew 10 Jesus gave his disciples the authority to heal diseases and to cast out unclean spirits. He told them to go out

and proclaim the good news that the kingdom of heaven was near, to travel lightly and to not take any money for their work, only to accept shelter and whatever food was offered to them.

The new disciples were to bless the homes that received them with peace, and if they were not welcomed, then to shake the dust off their feet and move on. Jesus prepared the disciples

to be hated by their own family members and friends, and that they should expect to be persecuted and flogged. And he reassured them that the Holy Spirit would speak for them and through them if they got handed over to the authorities. But then he adds, "Have no fear!" for those who kill the body can not kill the soul."

INTENSIVE TRAINING

Considering the intensity of this training, it is surprising none of the disciples bailed out on him after all this! Incredibly, they all stayed on course, except for Judas.

The line right before this passage today in Matthew 10:39 says, "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life, for my sake, will find it." Basically, Jesus was teaching them to not cling to material things in life, but to keep their eyes focused on the kingdom of heaven and be willing to risk everything for God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WELCOMING

With today's verses about the importance of welcoming all as if they were welcoming Jesus himself, he was teaching them his way of radical hospitality. Jesus was so determined to welcome all into his fold. He wasn't exclusive like the other rabbi/teachers of his time. His inclusive welcoming ways really irritated the Roman authorities because when the people divide up in tribal or nationalistic ways, they can be pitted against one another by inciting fear and insecurity. When people feel insecure and fearful then the government has more power over them. Many dictators in history have created a sense of insecurity and fear to get control.

But Jesus said, "Do not fear. Be not afraid!"

Jesus welcomed everyone into his ministry. And here in today's passage he was emphasizing how we must look for opportunities to welcome and offer care to all those who come to us, but especially to those he called "the little ones" the most vulnerable and powerless.

Giving a cup of cold water seems like a very small gesture. Yet, it can be earth shattering to the one receiving it. According to Jesus, there is no small gesture of hospitality. Anything done in faith and love has cosmic significance for the ones involved and, indeed, for the whole world.

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S FAITH

Things done in faith and love have cosmic significance. George Washington's faith sure did. That is why his gesture of asking to take communion in my previous church in Morristown, New Jersey had a big impact on the congregation. At the time some of the people in Morristown were loyalists (loyal to the crown) and some were patriots (on the side of the revolution). George Washington endeared himself to the Morristown congregation when he participated in the Lord's Supper with our church in the Spring of 1777. And he was very grateful for our church's hospitality as well.

Reverence for God was in the Washington family DNA. George was known to have a routine where he prayed from nine to ten p.m. nightly (From a book: *George Washington's Prayers* by Robert Pelton.)

How did George happen to be born in Virginia? George Washington's great-grandfather was an Anglican Vicar in England before the family took a boat to America. They fled England after the English Civil War began. Religious persecution led to George being born in Virginia rather than England.

His quote on the front of the bulletin shows how he would be appalled at the idea that America was no longer welcoming persecuted and oppressed refugees. George and the other founding fathers and mothers of our nation were adamantly against any kind of faith based discrimination because many of their grandparents or parents or they themselves had fled religious persecution.

Reverend Dr. David Lose, writes a blog called the *Working Preacher*. He encourages us to realize that each and every act of mercy rings through the eons and across the universe. Christ's love for the world is a love we can

share anytime anywhere with gestures that may seem small in the eyes of the world but loom large in the life of those who receive them.”

You in this congregation are already doing many of these acts of hospitality that affect Santa Rosa and beyond. There are no small gestures. You are building up the kingdom of God and making this world better when you do small things with great love, as Mother Theresa used to say, through offering your cups of cold water, your hugs, your smiles, your helping hands, your free breakfasts, your bags of food, your snacks for the Boys and Girls across the street and through the way you prayerfully listen on our phone prayer chain. These are just a few examples that show you are caring for God’s little ones in meaningful ways.

HUMBLE HOSPITALITY FROM NATIVE AMERICANS

And our nation benefits if we remember that our roots grew out of hospitality and welcoming the stranger. Humble hospitality and welcoming from Native Americans literally saved the Pilgrim’s lives that autumn when they were starving at Plymouth Rock.

According to the historical archives in the Native American Museum in Washington, DC, "It's well documented that the first Europeans who settled in the New World could not have made it through the first few winters without the assistance and care from American Indians.

"The Wampanoag who lived in the area taught the Pilgrims how to smoke and dry meat and fish and how to plant the three sisters, corn, beans and squash, in mounds fertilized by fish.

"They also taught the colonists how to navigate from place to place by water and over land, how to tan hides for clothing, how to identify toxic plants and berries and explained the medicinal and culinary use of indigenous herbs."

THE FRENCH

Also our country’s independence would not have been won if it had not been for the hospitality and partnership with the French. Outside my previous church on the Green in Morristown, New Jersey there stands three life size statues of the men who worked well together and helped win our freedom from England.



The sculpted work of art is called The Alliance.

The three men are George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Marquis de Lafayette.

May 10, 1780 was a pivotal day in the Revolutionary War. Lafayette, told General Washington that he had convinced his king, Louis XVI (16th), to send an expedition to aid the Revolutionary cause. The French, who were strong supporters of the rebelling colonists, had already loaned our government fifty-million lyres in direct financial support, equal in buying power to more than one-hundred-million dollars today.

Lafayette had gone home to France to ask for more, and his King agreed. The Continental Army badly needed the encouragement. They had endured another winter of hardship in Jockey Hollow near Morristown and General Washington faced a serious threat of mutiny among his troops. Washington was elated and the morale among his troops soared when the French promised to send six-thousand elite troops and supplies. The alliance proved to be the turning point in the tide of the Revolutionary War.

MARTHA WASHINGTON’S HOSPITALITY

Another form of hospitality that helped to save our country was less publicized but it significantly impacted our troops energy to win our independence. This form of hospitality came from Martha Washington herself. Cokie Roberts researched the actions of the founding mothers for her book: *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation*.

Roberts discovered that when George Washington had to camp for many months during the Revolutionary War, Martha was often called to join him. She spent half of the war at his side.

Martha came to Morristown and saw the terrible condition of the troops. They were cold and starving, so she organized the local women to sew socks for the men and convinced local farmers to donate their food.

When she arrived at Valley Forge in 1778 she found another horrible situation. Fifteen-hundred horses had died of starvation and the men were not much better off. Many of them were threatening desertion by chanting: “No Bread, No Soldier!”

Martha got to work and paid \$20,000 from her own money to send supplies from Mount Vernon to the soldiers. She also set up another sewing circle that made quilts and wool socks.

Martha even went out among the soldiers with a basket of “comforts” ministering to the sick, and giving them a cup of water to soothe their thirst. A brigade of guards followed because the British threatened to kidnap her, but she went out to the soldiers anyway.

Who knows? Maybe our soldiers would have gotten so discouraged we would have lost the Revolutionary War if it wasn't for the hope inspired by Martha's welcoming ways and organized hospitality! In gratitude, a folk dance song was written for Martha Washington called Lady Washington's Reel. It is also sometimes called Lady Hope's Reel because she gave them so much hope.

A video was shown to the congregation:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zC5ttoKvTrk>

THE PRACTICE OF GOD'S WELCOME

Remember: “Hospitality is the practice of God's welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God's actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis.” (Letty Russell)

Your gestures of welcome and hospitality, whether big or small, have cosmic significance. Whenever you show hospitality you are participating in God's actions in the kingdom of God and welcoming Jesus into your life.

We all must remember these lessons from Jesus, from our Native American friends, from Lafayette, and from Martha. Something as simple as giving a cup of water, making bread, planting seeds, or sewing socks for someone can change their life and your life, too. More hospitality with love is what the world needs now.

Benediction:

Let us go forth to walk in God's light. We will show others the way of God's heart. Let us go to bring hope and healing to the world. With a gift as simple as a cup of cool water, we will join Jesus in serving those around us. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will no longer be strangers but all embraced by God's love.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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