

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



October 23, 2011

True Hospitality

Hospitality is a characteristic of a true child of God. But hospitality can too easily become an expression of social snobbery, the very opposite of what it should be.

“Then He also said to him who invited Him, ‘When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just’” (Lk. 14:12-14).

One of the warmest acts of kindness that a person can extend toward his neighbor is to invite him into his home and share a meal with him. Not only is the host supplying his guest’s most basic necessity, he is also signalling that his companionship is desired. For that reason, hospitality is often mentioned in the Bible as a mark of genuine godliness (Deut. 10:18-19; Job 31:31-32; Heb. 13:2; Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9; etc.).

But so much of what we call hospitality is a severely restricted version of the concept, at least in the Biblical sense. It is better defined as *cliquishness*, the mutual back-scratching of a tight little group of friends who have

much in common already. Their gatherings are an expression of a special relationship that is not shared with others. Those who do not fit into that small circle have no chance of ever getting in.

If our guest list is *permanently* restricted to a select number of peers whom we consider worthy to have in our home, based on their economic position, social background, moral standing, or shared interests, then we really have not grasped the meaning of hospitality. Our close friends may appreciate the kindness we extend to them, but to the rest of the world, our behavior is really little more than an expression of social snobbery. As far as Jesus was concerned, that kind of hospitality proves little about a person’s generosity. “If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same” (Lk. 6:33).

True hospitality is sincere, impartial, and unaffected by selfish motives. It is freely offered to all, regardless of their usefulness or their ability to repay the favor. Who can question the inner goodness of a man who regularly entertains

the poor, the crippled, and the socially inferior? His hospitality is clearly motivated not by mutual friendship or the desire for social advancement, but by the sheer joy of helping fellow human beings enjoy the good things of life.

Certainly there is nothing wrong with having a circle of close friends with whom we can enjoy special occasions. Even Jesus had a unique relationship with the apostles and a few other companions that He did not share with the multitudes. He valued their friendship, and enjoyed their time together. But His closeness with this select group did not limit His kindness to others. He was a friend to all humanity, and His life of service reflected that friendship.

If we desire to be followers of the Master, we, too, must demonstrate the same impartiality of our love for all men. And the best way to express that impartial love is to open our home to those outside our circle of close friends, especially to those who cannot repay our kindness. Whatever awkwardness may attend that act of generosity will be more than repaid in the resurrection.

– David King