

## Hospitality

Marian

### Scriptures:

1 Peter 4:9-10

John 13:35

1 Corinthians 13

1 John 4:16

Matthew 25:31-45

*"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:9-10)*

I chuckled when given the topic of hospitality. Although I love inviting friends for morning coffee or afternoon tea, the thought of cooking a meal for visitors fills me with anxious trepidation! Will the meat be tender? Will the vegetables all finish cooking at the same time? Will they like the meal I've chosen to prepare? I would have to admit that this type of hospitality is definitely not my special gifting!

So what does Peter mean when he says, *"be hospitable to one another without grumbling."* Clearly the words that follow tell us that hospitality means so much more than inviting friends round for a meal or an overnight stay. We've just arrived home from a wonderful few days in Llandudno. It was the generous gift from my sister for my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. From the moment we arrived at the Hotel until the time of our departure, we were treated to the most wonderful hospitality. Nothing was too much trouble, and service was always with a smile. But, there was a cost which had to be paid.

Biblical hospitality is very different in that it gives without expecting anything in return and it welcomes strangers as warmly as it welcomes friends. Biblical hospitality reflects the gospel and it shakes the gates of Heaven for the souls of our neighbours and loved ones. It nurtures and grows the Kingdom of God. It longs to see genuine unity among God's people in response to Jesus' words when He says, *"By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."* (John 13:35). In 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul tells us exactly what biblical love looks like, and in his first letter John tells us, *"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16b).*

Without love we will never give or experience genuine biblical hospitality. It is only when the sacrificial love of God flows through us, that we will extend the same welcoming hospitality toward the stranger as we show to our friends and family. I am witnessing many churches waking up to see that God has not called us to become holy huddles, known more for our detesting of sin than our love for sinners. Instead He calls us begin to build communities of radical grace and warm welcome to all, to make disciples, not by rules and regulations, but by the sound teaching in Scripture that gently guides lost souls into the better pathway Jesus has prepared for them, embracing them lovingly into the riches of His mercy and grace.

I've read Matthew 25:31-45 many times, but in preparing this devotional my eyes have been opened to see the importance of Biblical hospitality in eternal terms and it is quite spine chilling! Whilst we all believe that salvation comes through the precious, sacrificial blood of Jesus alone, the responsibility to respond by extending love to strangers and friends alike will make all the difference on the day of judgement! When we feed the homeless, visit the sick or the prisoner, it is tantamount to doing it for Jesus Himself. What an encouraging challenge this is!

**Prayer:** Precious Jesus, thank You for opening my eyes to see the importance of showing true Biblical hospitality to everyone. Help me to embrace those the world shuns. May I always be among Your channels showing hospitality to everyone I meet, and leading the lost into Your Kingdom of mercy and grace. In Your Agape Love I pray, Amen.