

**Sermon 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**  
**Philippians 2:5-11, John 12:1-8**  
**God's Heart for Hospitality**

*Ruth*

(There is NO audio recording of this sermon available this week

<https://www.northwestchchparish.org.nz/sound>

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading      Philippians 2:5-11**

<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was<sup>[a]</sup> in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Gospel     John 12:1-8**

**12** Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. **2** There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. **3** Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them<sup>[a]</sup> with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. **4** But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, **5** "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii<sup>[b]</sup> and the money given to the poor?" **6** (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) **7** Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it<sup>[c]</sup> so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. **8** You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

This is the Gospel of Christ.

**Praise to Christ, the Word.**

### **Sermon 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent God's Heart for Hospitality**

This message has been on my heart for a long time, so I hope that some of this resonates with you and may even challenge you as it did me.

I want to talk about God's heart for Hospitality. I believe that God is pleased with hospitable people and that this hospitality looks different for everyone, but ultimately that as Christians we are called to it. But this starts by knowing why God thinks this is important, and that is because God is hospitable to us and always has been. One of the ways that God shows us his hospitality is by granting us all his Holy Spirit, and this means that no matter who we are, that same Holy Spirit is in all of us. I have the same Holy Spirit as Jo, as my daughter, as Margaret, as Janine, as Russell, as Colin. The Holy Spirit isn't juvenile, and he also isn't old and tired. Children and adults have the same Holy Spirit and this is a unifying thing! It means that all of us have the same thing in common, even though we come from a variety of different backgrounds and Christian experiences. Jesus died for all of us and this means we all belong to the Kingdom of God, and we have

a shared responsibility to encourage each other, and teach younger generations about God.

**Considering these things, what is one characteristic of God that you are thankful for today?**

I want to dig a little into something called accommodation theology, and don't worry, it's not as complicated as it sounds. In a sentence God, who is Holy, makes accommodations for us, therefore we as the church, unified in Jesus, are called to accommodate others. Throughout the Bible, we see God being accommodating to Humans. In our weakness, he stoops down to our level so that we might see his character. There are many examples of this - In the Old Testament, God walked with us in creation. He created the tabernacle and the temple, creating a safe place for the Israelites to worship him. He created boundaries surrounding his face being hidden from us, he led the Israelites through the desert with a pillar of fire and smoke. The bible itself is an accommodation of God's word in human language so that we might know His heart. Ultimately, he was accommodating in the incarnation, in Jesus coming to live with us, in his dying and in his resurrection so that we might know God. While he was here, Jesus constantly accommodated the sick, the poor, the marginalized, and criticized those who refused to do likewise. In the New Testament, Paul writes extensively about this, in that there are at least four books devoted to talking about accommodating others, and without getting too far into it, here are some key points.

In Philippians our New Testament reading, (on screen – keep on screen) Paul teaches us that Jesus took the form of those he wanted to serve, and that we should be like Jesus. Mind you, he didn't mean that we literally change form, but that we consistently look to serve others in all that we do. In Ephesians, Paul calls the church to include all those on the outskirts – the poor, prostitutes, and slaves, he says that all are equal and unified in

the Kingdom of God. In first Corinthians, the issue arose of some in the church eating food that was sacrificed to idols. Paul tells them that mature Christians shouldn't be eating this food even though personally they might be fine with it, because not doing so was important to other Christians in their church. He asks them to put aside their own wants and desires to serve others in this way.

The point that Paul makes repeatedly throughout all these books, is that accommodating others is both important individually and in each specific church context. This is the same today – each parish, each church has a different outreach into the community, each church has different problems to solve within their communities. One thing is clear however, as our knowledge of God increases, and as we mature in faith, we have a mutual responsibility both individually and as the church to accommodate others in our community.

**What do we already do in this community that accommodates others? What do we do well as a church?**

Accommodating others is a key part of God's heart for Hospitality. As we have heard and discussed this is something we do well as a church, we accommodate others in a variety of different ways. But I want to look at hospitality specifically, and why God thinks it's important. So, let's have a look at the definition of Hospitality.

**Hospitality – the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, and strangers.**

In the Gospels, Jesus talked consistently about being hospitable with others, and showed us by his example - Jesus ate with prostitutes, with the poor, with the blind and calls us to do likewise. he also chastised those who stopped others from being hospitable to him, and we can see this in our

Gospel reading, when Jesus praises the Mary's extravagant act of worship when she poured the perfume over his head.

Hospitality starts with love for others, because this is what Jesus taught, to love our Neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39), and this love can look different for different people in different seasons of life. When we were living in Nelson, hospitality looked very different from what we do now. We lived in a tiny flat, with a kitchen with a very small benchtop. We couldn't have people in our home often because it meant moving furniture around and moving the table to the middle of the room to have a meal. So, we had to be creative in the way we could be hospitable, for us this meant going out for a meal and paying for the other person, it meant being generous with our time, and helping with meal trains and other parts of church life. Now we can have people in our home often because we have a bigger space, and even then, it has changed with our daughter now being a part of it all.

We discussed in our groups before about what this parish does well to accommodate others. We have an amazing group of people who are generous with their time, with money with resources. We have prayer warriors who pray for people, and for this community we are in and the programs we run. We are one church united in Jesus Christ. And yet, even then there are things that we can all do better to accommodate and be Hospitable to others.

I know that people have been praying for young families to come and be in this parish for years now. We have been here for a full year today. We want to get to know you, and we want you to get to know us. I know the people here, are Holy Spirit filled people. That same Holy Spirit who is always the same is in all of us, and because of this we can talk to other people knowing that it is something that connects all of us as Christians.

We don't have to be afraid to talk to new people, and to others in church because we all belong in the Kingdom of God.

So here is the last question for you.

**How can we be Hospitable to others in our week? What does it look like for you in this season?**

As mature Christians as part of this parish we have a mutual responsibility to make sure that people feel welcome here – it is something we do already, but it is something we can do better. Hospitality doesn't look the same for everyone, maybe it's texting or calling a friend to check in with them, maybe its inviting people around for a meal, being a part of a program at church, or offering prayer for someone in the supermarket, maybe for this season it's about receiving Hospitality from others not necessarily giving it. It honestly doesn't matter what it is, God only asks that we do it with our whole heart, and not halfheartedly. For all of us it's a challenge to talk to those we don't normally talk to in church, the people we know and those we don't.

Writing this message has been really challenging to me over the last few weeks, and I hope that this challenges you. Have a think. Ask God for guidance. Ask him to show you where you can get better. I know that God will show you these things, because he has shown me.