

Judges 19:1-21

Jdg 19:1 NIV In those days Israel had no king. Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.

Jdg 19:2 But she was unfaithful to him. She left him and went back to her parents' home in Bethlehem, Judah. After she had been there four months,

Jdg 19:3 her husband went to her to persuade her to return. He had with him his servant and two donkeys. She took him into her parents' home, and when her father saw him, he gladly welcomed him.

Jdg 19:4 His father-in-law, the woman's father, prevailed on him to stay; so he remained with him three days, eating and drinking, and sleeping there.

Jdg 19:5 On the fourth day they got up early and he prepared to leave, but the woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh yourself with something to eat; then you can go."

Jdg 19:6 So the two of them sat down to eat and drink together. Afterward the woman's father said, "Please stay tonight and enjoy yourself."

Jdg 19:7 And when the man got up to go, his father-in-law persuaded him, so he stayed there that night.

Jdg 19:8 On the morning of the fifth day, when he rose to go, the woman's father said, "Refresh yourself. Wait till afternoon!" So the two of them ate together.

Jdg 19:9 Then when the man, with his concubine and his servant, got up to leave, his father-in-law, the woman's father, said, "Now look, it's almost evening. Spend the night here; the day is nearly over. Stay and enjoy yourself. Early tomorrow morning you can get up and be on your way home."

Jdg 19:10 But, unwilling to stay another night, the man left and went toward Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine.

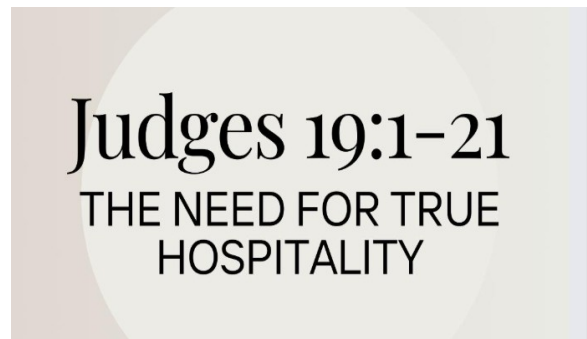
Jdg 19:11 When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, "Come, let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night."

Jdg 19:12 His master replied, "No. We won't go into any city whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah."

Jdg 19:13 He added, "Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places."

Jdg 19:14 So they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin.

Jdg 19:15 There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them in for the night.



Jdg 19:16 That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was living in Gibeah (the inhabitants of the place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the fields.

Jdg 19:17 When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, "Where are you going? Where did you come from?"

Jdg 19:18 He answered, "We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim where I live. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going to the house of the LORD. No one has taken me in for the night.

Jdg 19:19 We have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine for ourselves your servants -- me, the woman and the young man with us. We don't need anything."

Jdg 19:20 "You are welcome at my house," the old man said. "Let me supply whatever you need. Only don't spend the night in the square."

Jdg 19:21 So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink.

We are introduced in this passage to an unnamed Levite...

...his unnamed concubine, her unnamed father, the Levite's unnamed servant, and an unnamed old man in Gibeah. In fact, in all of chapters 19 through 21 -- what we're going to go through in the next few weeks here -- there is only one parenthetical reference in **Judges 20:28**, to one named individual: Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, a Levite who was ministering before the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle. And we'll get to that verse in a couple of weeks' time.

This week, it's worth noting that no one is named in the horrific events of chapters 19 through 21 because the breaking of God's laws, ungodly justice stemming from ungodly vows, the sinful depravity of the people, and the consequences of those sins could not be limited to just a few named individuals. **Essentially, all of the Israelites were rebelling against God.** All of the Israelites were doing what was right in their own eyes. These characters in this story -- they represent all of the Israelites. **So we must heed the warning of the book of Judges not to be in the unnamed majority.**

Rather, as we make our calling and election sure, we must be included in the minority whose names are written in the Lord's book of life.

Last week, our call to action, our point of application, was to **belong to the Good Shepherd** described in John chapter 10. And in **John 10:3**, it tells us that **Jesus calls his own sheep by name and leads them in and out of the sheepfold.**

In **Exodus 33**, when Moses said, "If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here," the Lord answered him with, "I will do everything that you have asked." Essentially, "I will lead you in and out. I will be with you. I will do everything you have asked **because I am pleased with you, and I know you by name.**"

As **Isaiah 43:1** states, the Lord, who created us, who formed us, who redeemed us, **calls us by name to declare that we are His.** We should not be in the unnamed majority, but in this named minority.

Now, getting back to the story -- a certain Levite from the hill country of Ephraim went down to Bethlehem and took a "concubine." In describing this woman as his concubine, rather than his wife, we can assume he

already had a wife. The Levite, who should have been consecrated to the Lord's service and subsequently consecrated in his marriage, acted selfishly to satisfy his sexual desires by taking what could, at best, be described as a secondary wife. And this is not even an ungodly polygamous marriage where this woman would be equal to the other wife or wives. The concubine was lesser than a wife, and meant to serve only one purpose.

And so, here's this Levite going and taking a concubine. There is no explanation in the text of how or why the concubine was unfaithful to him. However, after four months of her being at her father's house, the fact that the Levite -- and this is as the ESV puts it -- "the Levite arose and went after her to speak kindly to her and bring her back." That suggests that he was either reaching out to her because of godly compassion and care, or he was at fault for her running away. He was now trying to make amends.

Based on the Levite's words and actions through the rest of the story, it is highly unlikely that:

- he went looking for her because he was led of the Lord, or
- that he was obeying the Lord, or
- that he was honoring the Lord, and
- that he was honoring this woman.

When he went to persuade her to return, he was merely doing what was right in his eyes.

Now, maybe the Levite's father-in-law knew that the Levite could be appeased by catering to his base desires. For three days -- which was an expected norm of hospitality -- for three days, and then for a fourth day, and finally late into the afternoon on the fifth day, the Levite's father-in-law plied the Levite with food and drink and refreshment and enjoyment.

And the Bible doesn't clarify why the father-in-law did this.

- Was he trying to outdo the cultural expectations of hospitality?
- Was he setting the Levite up for a reciprocal action?
- Was he going to say, "Hey, when I come and visit you, this is what I'm expecting"?
- Was he trying to pay for his daughter's unfaithfulness?
- Was he just glad to have a drinking buddy so that he could have a good time?

Whatever the father-in-law's motivation, here's the critical point to note: **he did not address the underlying issue between his daughter and the Levite -- and ultimately didn't protect his daughter.**

When the Levite finally left Bethlehem with his concubine and servant, they didn't have enough time to return home before dark, and the Levite rejected his servant's recommendation to stop in Jebus for the night and instead pressed on to Gibeah because he thought the Israelites there would be more hospitable than the Jebusites in Jebus.

Jebus, by the way, is the city that would later be conquered by King David and renamed Jerusalem.

But the Benjamites in Gibeah were not hospitable at all. No one took them in for the night. An old man, an Ephraimite living in Gibeah, finally brought them into his house and took care of them. We'll learn more about this old man next week. This week, we're only considering that he showed them hospitality.

Hospitality is defined as the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, and strangers. Hospitality in the ancient Near East, including in the time of the Judges, was how a stranger or weary traveler could receive food and shelter. They depended on it. It was essential. It was necessary. There was an expectation of hospitality.

Throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, we have examples of hospitality that is offered and hospitality that is well received, and all the ways in which people serve each other. We have many examples of that in Judges. But we also have examples of hospitality that was withheld and that resulted in dire consequences. In fact, in Judges chapter eight, we read how Gideon slaughtered the men of Succoth and Peniel -- fellow Israelites -- he slaughtered them -- because they refused to feed his men, and didn't show hospitality. So we have all these examples throughout the word of God.

But biblical hospitality -- not the cultural norm, not what people came up with, and not what they practiced, and so on -- but biblical hospitality, as the word would define it, as the Lord would define it, goes beyond caring for physical needs. **Leviticus 19:33-34**, says:

Lev 19:33 "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them.

Lev 19:34 The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

This directive aligns with the Lord's greatest commandments -- to love God and to love others, to love our neighbors. Biblical hospitality is not limited to entertaining guests, visitors, and strangers. **Biblical hospitality is an expression of unconditional love, and compassionate care.**

We reflect God's character when we show hospitality.

We are called to welcome and care for others because it reflects God's love and care for us. We freely give what we have freely received. **We proclaim the gospel through our actions.**

And biblical hospitality is not so that we will be seen by others. It is not so that we will be judged favorably in the court of public opinion -- "Oh, what a generous person," or "Oh, what a generous church," "Oh, what a whatever."

Biblical hospitality is the evidence of our loving the Lord and doing everything, doing all things as unto Him. It is the evidence that is presented before the judgment seat of God, in the courts of the Lord -- not in the court of public opinion, but in the Lord's courts. What we do and how we serve others is actually brought up. Because listen to this.

Listen to Matthew 25:31-46 and listen to these verses even as you keep in mind the image of the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd knowing us, His sheep, by name. So in Matthew 25, starting in verse 31:

Mat 25:31 NIV "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.

Mat 25:32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Mat 25:33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Mat 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

Mat 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

Mat 25:36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Mat 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'

Mat 25:38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?'

Mat 25:39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

Mat 25:40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Mat 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Mat 25:42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

Mat 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

Mat 25:44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

Mat 25:45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Mat 25:46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

As a church, we have responded to various needs in this local body and the body of Christ. But I want to challenge you this morning, and **I want for us to be praying that we will respond to the call to hospitality.**

There are needs in our church, in our community -- ongoing needs. There will always be needs. There are needs in our state, the nation, and across the world, and we want to be deliberate, intentional, and organized about how we love and care for people.

But for now, let's pray. Let's pray for open hearts, open hands, open homes. And we say,

"Lord, You prepare us so that when the people come, we will receive them with biblical hospitality -- not anything else, not anything less."

And we want to ask the Lord to instill this kind of hospitality in us, this kind of burden for those that are in need. This kind of care that would extend into action needs to be done with wisdom and discernment, but it needs to come -- because the Lord is working in us.

We want to ask the Lord for the spiritual gifts

-- for the spiritual gifts -- not just some sort of "side thing," but these are the gifts that the Lord says He will give us. We want to ask Him for the spiritual gifts:

- of giving,
- of helps,
- of service,
- of administration.

We want to say,

"Lord God, You show us the ways in which we can be reaching the needs of the people around us."

So here is the challenge. But I want to really make one important point, and here's the critical point to note:

We will not be able to show hospitality to others if we haven't first shown hospitality to the Lord.

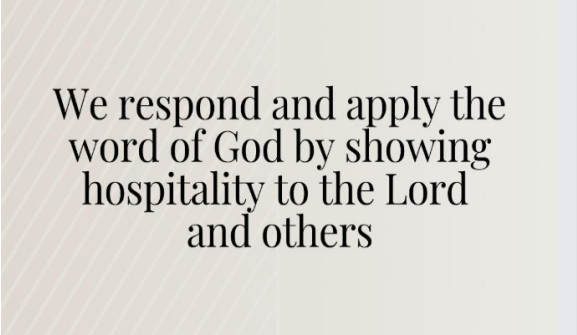
We will be able to serve and just -- receive first and then serve -- willingly and joyfully. We'll be able to serve others well, if we have first received and served the Lord.

Last week, in affirming that Jesus is all we need, when everything else is stripped away, we declared that Jesus was the center of our lives. Nothing else matters, and nothing in this world will do. If we know that Jesus is ultimately all we have -- "What else do I have? I have all that I need. I have Jesus."

If we understand, if we discover, if we are confident that Jesus is ultimately all we have, we discover that He is eternally all we need.

This week, our point of application is a direct follow-up to what we talked about last week because here **we must respond and apply the word of God we have heard by showing hospitality to the Lord and to others.** He's not just in the center of our lives and in the center of our songs and what we sing about or worship, but we must be deliberate and intentional in asking the Lord,

"How can I receive and serve You, to show my hospitality to You?"



We respond and apply the word of God by showing hospitality to the Lord and others

There are many verses in the Word of God that talk about hospitality. I'm not even going through all of those scriptures, but in **Revelation 3:19-20**, Jesus says this:

Rev 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

Rev 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 that person, and they with me.

These verses are often used to talk about the Lord's salvation. Typically, we talk about it as saying, "The Lord is standing at the door of that pre-believer and saying, 'Oh, here am I. Please open the door. Repent of your sin. Receive Me, and I will come in and give you salvation.'"

But the context for these verses -- the context is when John, the beloved disciple, the apostle of the Lord -- when John receives a revelation. When he receives a specific message from the Lord, and in this part of the revelation, **he's receiving a message for the seven churches -- seven churches of Asia Minor and really a message for the church as a whole.**

And in this case, this section is for the church in Laodicea. Listen to **Revelation 3:14-22**. I'll just read a couple of verses there in the middle, but **listen to the whole message to the church:**

Rev 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Rev 3:15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Rev 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Rev 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

Rev 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 that person, and they with me.

Rev 3:21 To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Rev 3:22 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The word of the Lord to those who have established a relationship with Him,

✕ but have now lost their first love.

The word of the Lord to those who started out hot, on fire, burning for the Lord.

✕ The word of the Lord to them who have become lukewarm

The word of the Lord to them, is that

- if you are depending on your wealth, and
- if you've just added Jesus to everything else
- instead of ensuring that Jesus is the center,
 - the sole center,
 - the sovereign of your lives,
 - the only one on the throne of your heart --
- if you don't have that as your reality --

the word of the Lord to each one of us is this:

- ➔ receive and serve the Lord and
- ➔ therefore receive and serve others.

His word is, "I stand at the door and knock."

His word to us believers is, "I stand at the door and knock."

Is there an intentional response? Is there a regular response? Is there a welcoming of the Lord into all of our lives, into all of our strength, our hearts, our minds, our souls? For us to say to the Lord,

"Lord, I hear You. I know that You are eager to have fellowship with me, to establish and maintain a relationship with me, to come in and to sup with me."

That was just a means of having that fellowship, of expressing that.

"Lord, I see that You are eager to come in and to partake of the meal that I have prepared for You."

There is something deliberate about my actions. I'm not just sitting there and saying, 'Lord, You come and do what You want.'" You're saying,

"I will prepare this meal for You. I want You to come in and to sup with me."

This is a very deliberate action.

And so, **here's the Lord saying**, therefore, in other words, **be hospitable, be a good host.**

Receive the Lord, fellowship with Him.

→ Let your heart, your life, your everything be filled with His presence.

And out of that overflow,

- out of that reality of being, and moving, and having your being in the Lord,
 - the abundance of your hospitable heart for the Lord
 - will result in a hospitable heart for others.

You cannot be hospitable to others

if you have not first welcomed the Lord.

- ◆ It's not a message for unbelievers, or pre-believers.
- ◆ **This is a message for the church.**

Before you start thinking about all these other things,

Have you been hospitable to the Lord?

- Is He "all in all" to you?
- And is He always welcome?

Or would you say,

- "Lord God, on Sunday morning at 9:58, I'll open the door."
- Or maybe 10:01. Don't do that -- 10:01 is late.
- Or are you saying, "Lord God, when I go over here, and
- when I do this thing, and
- when I've left whatever else that needs some attention,
- then, Lord, I'll open the door?
- Then I'll listen to You knocking?"
- But the rest of the time,
- I don't even hear You knocking, because I'm distracted
- by all that the world,
- my flesh, and
- the devil are speaking and saying, and
- the clamor that is there.
- I don't hear You knocking.

And, Lord, even when I hear You knocking, I say,

- "Oh, give me five more minutes.
- I haven't quite prepared.
- The house is not ready.
- The food is not ready.
- Wait."

Or even when I welcome You in, I say,

- "Oh, You're here again?
- Okay, well, all right, fine.
- How long are You planning to stay?"

This is the way that we deal with the Lord. We say,

- "Lord, You are welcome when I need You, when I'm desperate, when I have no other recourse."

- Then, "Lord, oh, please do come. Please, please, please, please come."

But when He stands at the door and knocks... all the time, we say,

- "Maybe not right now.
- Maybe not in this way."
- ➔ **We have to pray.**
- ➔ **We have to seek the Lord.**
- ➔ **We have to turn to Him and say,**

"Lord God, You've got to be my all in all. I want You to fill me, to be all of my attention. I want to serve You.

- If I'm going into a job, I want to do it as unto the Lord.
- If I'm driving my vehicle, I want to do it as unto the Lord.
- If I'm taking care of my children, I want to do that as unto the Lord.
- If I'm caring for my aging parents, I want to do that as unto the Lord.
 - I want to serve You, Lord.
 - I want to love You, Lord.
 - I want to show my hospitality to You, Lord.
 - I want to receive You, Lord."

Oh, if that's our cry, the Lord is faithful to answer that cry. He is faithful to fill us.

If Moses could say,

"Oh, Lord God, since You know my name, since You call me by name, Your presence must go with us,"

If he's able to say that and the Lord responds back to him by saying,

- ◆ "Yeah, I do know you by name, and
- ◆ I will do what you asked.
- ◆ I will be with you.
- ◆ I will go with you.
- ◆ My presence will be in you, and with you, and leading you.
- ◆ Yep. You got it."

How much more? If Moses could do that, then how much more should we be saying the same of the Lord? Should we be saying the same of the Lord? Should we be saying:

"Lord God, since You know me by name, since I am Your child, since You are the Good Shepherd, since You promised the Holy Spirit, oh, Lord God, come and fill me. Come and fill me. Your presence has to be in me. Your presence has to go before me. Your presence has to hem me in. Your presence, Lord, is what I seek. Help me to dwell in Your presence. Help me to minister to You. Help me to serve You. Help me to wash Your feet with my tears. Help me to anoint Your feet with the best that I can do. Lord God, help me to be hospitable and receive You."

Oh, that's the cry. That's the challenge. That is the call for a child of God.

Hospitality is not about anything else, than us receiving the Lord.

Hospitality is about us serving the Lord.

When we do -- individually, in our homes, in our church -- will there be a difference? Absolutely.

This is what we've got to be preparing for.

This is what we've got to be as a church -- a hospitable church.

Not because we have all sorts of resources, but:

A hospitable church because we have been serving the Lord.

Oh, I trust that you're hearing me,

but I trust that you're listening to the Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we thank You, we praise You, we worship You. You are indeed a God that answers and cares and does miraculous things in our lives. But I thank You, Lord, that You call for us -- even as we see these examples in this chapter, in this passage -- of Lord, of worldly hospitality, hospitality that is, Lord, based on expectations, based on cultural norms, based on all sorts of personal ambitions, or motivations. Lord, we keep coming back to Your word, and Your word tells us how and why we must be hospitable to You and to others.

Lord God, let Your word transform our thinking. Let Your word transform our actions. Lord, let there be such hospitality manifest in our lives, because, Lord, Your word is taking root in us and bearing fruit in us. Thank You, Lord. And, Father, as we do that, before we go chasing anything -- any program, any activity, any kind of need, trying to figure it all out, doing everything in our strength -- help us, Lord, to be so overwhelmed by Your presence in us that we can't help but serve others, that we can't help but love others, that we can't help but give generously.

Lord God, You come and do Your work.

Lord, I pray that even this week, Lord, we will be attentive. We will listen intently for Your knocking at the door. Lord God, we would not be so distracted. Help us not to be so distracted and so overwhelmed, so consumed with ourselves that we miss You knocking. Lord God, come do Your work. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.