



Worship Service Theme: Hospitality

Helpful Elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Our theme for today is **hospitality**.

What is hospitality? [*get ideas from the group*] I think hospitality includes a sense of *welcome*, inviting people in to wherever you are: your home, or apartment, or room—especially people who might not typically be invited. I think it also includes *sharing* whatever we have. According to scripture, hospitality is a gift and something we can all do – bringing what we have to Jesus and asking him to multiply it to bless others.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 4

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

First Reading: From the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (58: 6-9)

“Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loosen the bonds of wickedness,

to undo the straps of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,

and to break every yoke?”

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry

and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover him,

and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”

⁸ Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,

and your healing shall spring up speedily;

your righteousness shall go before you;

the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;

you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Oh, How I love Jesus, p. 7

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 8

Second reading: From Matthew's gospel (14:13-21)

¹³ Jesus withdrew in a boat to a lonely place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed Jesus on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶ But Jesus said, "The crowds do need not go away; *you* give them something to eat." ¹⁷ The disciples said to Jesus, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." ¹⁸ And Jesus said, "Bring them here to *me*."

¹⁹ Then Jesus ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then Jesus broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave the bread and fish to the crowds.²⁰ And all the people ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken leftover pieces. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 9

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 10

Interactive Homily:

- Let's talk more about hospitality. What do you think hospitality means?
 - Inviting people in to where you live; sharing what you have with others; taking care of others with whatever you have
- Have you ever been to a party? What did you like about it?
 - Going to someone else's house or apartment; having someone else cook 😊; enjoying company of friends; conversation; dancing, celebrating, joy
- Where are some places where you could have a party?
 - Fancy settings, like a wedding
 - Simple places, like a park, beach, garden, or your backyard

- What do you think are the particularly important parts of a party? Is it the decorations or the table settings or even the location?
 - The people! Sharing together; not everything has to be perfect.
- In the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000, where were the people? Do you think it looked all fancy and decorated?
 - Out in the country, “a desolate/lonely place”
- But what happens? Why do the people stay?
 - The people want to be with Jesus ... so they stay
 - The disciples know the people must be hungry ... so they tell Jesus to send them home
 - What does Jesus say?
 - “YOU give them something to eat!”
- The disciples think there’s no way – “WE have only five loaves and two fish.” But what does Jesus say? “Bring them to ME.”
 - What does Jesus know about God? Is God limited to what is right there in front of him?
 - No – This is God’s party! God wants to provide, and God CAN provide...abundantly. Twelve baskets full of leftovers!
- So what’s the most important part of hospitality? Is it how much WE have, the fanciness of the place we live, the abundance of our food or energy?
 - No – bring what you have to Jesus! A spirit of hospitality trusts God to provide all that we need to bless and serve others. God will not run out of love, time, energy, whatever we need.
- What can we offer others, in the name of God’s love? Is it limited to a house, apartment, or room?
 - We can be hospitable wherever we are: at our dining table, watching a movie, sharing songbooks during church, in our rooms
 - Talking together, encouraging words, smiles; *helping people feel at home* with you.

Let us pray together in thanks for God’s blessings and the gift of hospitality.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

He's Got the Whole World, p. 12

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

Third Reading: Quotes on Hospitality

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it. —Hebrews 13: 1

Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. —author and theologian Henri J.M. Nouwen

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.
—theologian and professor Letty M. Russell

Hospitality isn't a sport or a competition. It's an act of love, if you let it be. You can twist it and turn it into anything you want—a way to show off your house, a way to compete with your friends, a way to earn love and approval. Or you can decide that every time you open your door [or heart], it's an act of love, not performance or competition or striving. —author Shauna Niequist

People will forget what you said, forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. — poet Maya Angelou

Hospitality: making your guests feel like they're at home ... even if you wish they were. 😊 — Anonymous

Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul, p. 15

Amazing Grace, p. 16

Fourth Reading: Cookies and Juice¹

A little boy wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with cookies and a few packets of juice and started his journey.

When the little boy had gone about three blocks, he met an elderly man. The old man was sitting on the park bench feeding some pigeons.

The little boy sat down next to old man and opened his suitcase. The little boy was about to take a drink from his juice when he noticed that the old man looked hungry, so the little boy offered the man a cookie.

The man gratefully accepted it and smiled at the little boy. His smile was so pleasant that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered the old man a juice packet.

Again, the old man smiled at him. The boy was delighted! They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word.

As it grew dark, the little boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave, but before he had gone more than a few steps, the little boy turned around, ran back to the old man, and gave him a hug. The man gave his biggest smile ever.

When the little boy opened the door to his own house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked her little boy, "What did you do today that made you so happy?"

The little boy replied, "I ate cookies with God." Before his mother could respond, he added, "You know what? God's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old man, also radiant with joy, returned to his home. His son was amazed by the look of peace on the old man's face and asked, "Dad, what did you do today that made you so happy?"

The elderly man replied, "I ate cookies in the park with God." Before his son responded, the man added, "You know, God is much younger than I expected."

¹ Modified from "Twinkies and Root Beer," author unknown.

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 17

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30

Extra Material:

Cat in Heaven

A cat dies and goes to Heaven. God meets the cat at the gate and says, ‘You’ve been a good cat all of these years. Anything you desire is yours. All you have to do is ask.’

The cat says, ‘Well, I lived all my life with a poor family on a farm and had to sleep on hardwood floors.’ God says, ‘Say no more.’ And instantly, a fluffy pillow appears.

A few days later, six mice are killed in a tragic accident and they go to Heaven. God meets the mice at the gate with the same offer that He made the cat.

The mice said, ‘All our lives we’ve had to run. We’ve been chased by cats, dogs, and even people with brooms. If we could only have a pair of roller skates, we wouldn’t have to run anymore.’ God says, ‘Say no more.’ And instantly, each mouse is fitted with a beautiful pair of tiny roller skates.

About a week later, God decides to check and see how the cat is doing. The cat is sound asleep on his new pillow. God gently wakes up the cat and asks, ‘How are you doing? Are you happy here?’

The cat yawns and stretches and says, 'Oh, I've never been happier. And those Meals on Wheels you've been sending over are delicious!' 😊

Hospitality in Ireland: In Ireland, you go to someone's house, and she asks you if you want a cup of tea. You say no, thank you, you're really just fine. She asks if you're sure. You say of course you're sure, really, you don't need a thing. Except they pronounce it *ting*. You don't need a *ting*. Well, she says then, I was going to get myself some anyway, so it would be no trouble. Ah, you say, well, if you were going to get yourself some, I wouldn't mind a spot of tea, at that, so long as it's no trouble and I can give you a hand in the kitchen. Then you go through the whole thing all over again until you both end up in the kitchen drinking tea and chatting. —author C.E. Murphy