

Jesus as a Guest in the Gospel of Mark

HASHTAGS: #Hospitality #Mark #Jesusasguest #Guest

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In Mark 6:6–13 Jesus sends his disciples out into the villages to proclaim the gospel, the good news to all who would listen. He also instructs them to accept the hospitality of those who offer it. Often our understanding of hospitality is limited to the role of the host, and how churches can include and welcome in outsiders. Though vital, this is only half the equation.

My research focussed on guesthood, as I examined how Jesus received hospitality. Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus was often invited into people's homes, endowing the role of guest with eternal significance. Through a narrative study of the gospel of Mark, I found that Mark portrays Jesus as a guest who is interruptible, humble, and allows himself to be served.

This has a range of applications for leaders to consider, as they seek to lead churches who participate in Christ-like hospitality. Discussion within and between leadership groups could help to reframe hospitality not as merely a service given, but to consider the ways that as churches we can accept hospitality offered, even when it is uncomfortable or unfamiliar.

Insights

Interruptible: In Mark 1:29–34, Jesus is a guest in the home of Simon Peter, and he pauses to heal Simon's mother-in-law. Jesus shows that being a guest sometimes means being interruptible and prioritising the needs of others. Even when invited as a guest, Jesus demonstrates that one need not be bound to a specific role.

Welcome through acceptance: Mark 2:13–17 demonstrates a key example of Jesus embodying humility and acceptance, as he was invited to dine with Levi the tax collector and other sinners. His example calls the Church to be willing to associate with those on the margins of society, and to accept the invitation to participate in hospitality with those that might cause us disrepute.

Probe

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Richard, Lucien. *Living the Hospitality of God*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2000.

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Receiving without reciprocation: This research found that though often Jesus as guest also participates as a host, in Mark 14:3–9, he accepts the gift of hospitality from the woman at Bethany who poured expensive perfume on his head, without any reciprocation. Acceptance of hospitality honours the host.

Honouring and dignifying: Being a guest blesses and honours the host. It values and expresses appreciation for their gift, and dignifies them, especially (but not exclusively) when they are on the margins of societal norms.

Discuss

1. What challenges arise when we find ourselves receiving hospitality rather than offering it?
2. What might it look like for the Church to receive hospitality well?
3. How can we cultivate a culture of hospitality that celebrates the grace of receiving—from others and from God?
4. What might mutual, grace-filled hospitality look like in the life of the Church?