



A new pastor completely unknown to the congregation of his new church enters one Sunday morning. His appearance is rough and unkempt- unshaven face, dirty clothes, and the most frightening thing was that he was a stranger. The congregation, not knowing who he was, avoided him. He was altogether ignored and left alone until...When the moment arrived for this congregation to meet their new pastor a bedraggled and rather unkempt stranger stood up from the front row and walked to the pulpit. Looking out at his congregation he recites words of Jesus from the gospel of Matthew, “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me (25.35).”

On first glance I cringe remembering the many days I myself might have been less than welcoming. The pastors shocking display or prophetic act is not exactly the way I would want to be introduced to a new congregation. However we choose to interpret this story we must admit that it does a good job getting our attention focused on the strangers in our midst, the Sunday morning visitors, those unknown persons who enter our doors in search of something. This story should make us pay close attention to those who join us for worship. We should want to know them and learn their stories so that they are strangers no more.

Henry Nouwen writes, “Hospitality is the virtue which allows us to break through the narrowness of our own fears and open our houses to the stranger, with the intuition that salvation comes to us in the form of a weary traveler.” What a remarkable thing it is to remember that salvation came to the world in the form of Jesus when the world least expected it. We cannot discount the possibility that Christ enters the doors of our church and our lives often but we are unable to see. Instead we see a stranger, a weary traveler or homeless person. Jesus’ call for all of us who follow him challenges us to walk in different shoes. I am not suggesting we go as far as pastor in our story. Yet I cannot help but consider the difference radical hospitality makes in a persons life; persons I add that have come in search of something just like many of us. “Like the nomads, we live in a desert with many lonely travelers who are looking for a moment of peace, for a fresh drink and a sign of encouragement...(Nouwen).”

May we be attentive to those who God leads to our doors and may we offer each of them grand hospitality. May we learn who they are and help them find a place with us so they are no longer strangers. “Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me .”

This Week’s Daily Bible Readings					
God’s Faithful Word of Encouragement			Wednesday	August 15	1 Corinthians 16:1-24
Sunday	August 12	1 Corinthians 16:1-24	Thursday	August 16	1 Corinthians 16:1-24
Monday	August 13	1 Corinthians 16:1-24	Friday	August 17	1 Corinthians 16:1-24
Tuesday	August 14	1 Corinthians 16:1-24	Saturday	August 18	1 Corinthians 16:1-24