

Memorize & Ponder

**Brentwood Presbyterian Church
December 15, 2013**

The Power of Hospitality

**1 Peter 4:8-11
(115, 118, 128, 125)**

In a few moments, we will be receiving new professing members into Brentwood Presbyterian Church.

They are a sign for us of God's hospitality.
That's what Peter is talking about
in the passage from his first letter
that we have been memorizing and pondering this week.

God's love, Peter is reminding his readers,
is the most hospitable, welcoming power in the world.
It is the power that welcomed home the prodigal son.
It is the power that calmed and instructed the faithful son.
It is the power that answers doubts and fears.
It is the power that revives in us
God's intention for our flourishing.

Some of you will remember 3 years ago
when Cindy Johal did her masters' project with us
here at Brentwood.
She was exploring how trust arose among people
as they came together to accomplish important things.
The core foundation she found here at Brentwood
for that kind of trusting collaboration
was the warmth and sincerity of the welcome people received.
Whether on their first visit or their 1000th visit,
people entered this sanctuary
and were greeted by the hospitality of Jesus Christ.

They felt accepted.
They felt their potential was being affirmed
as people worthy of welcome and love.
They were given an opportunity
to encounter the power of God's love
to transform their lives for the better.

It sounds simple.
In some ways, it is.
But in other ways, it's not.

Treating people the way God sees them is a constant challenge.
Many of the ways in which we have been socialized
in our culture, especially our modern urban culture,
make us think this kind of hospitality is naïve and dangerous.
You just can't trust people that much.
They sound different.
They look different.
They act different.
They're scary.
And we withdraw into our little ghetto garrisons
where we feel safe with the familiar.

There are churches that are like that.
There are neighbourhoods that are like that.
There are clubs that are like that.
There are families that are like that.

But not this church.
Not Brentwood Presbyterian Church.
We are a multi-ethnic neighbourhood congregation
seeking constantly to nourish souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.
We warmly invite people
to get centred in Jesus Christ in worship and learning,
to enjoy community with Jesus Christ in fellowship,
and to experience the compassion of Jesus Christ in service.
That's what genuinely hospitable churches do
as stewards of God's grace.
They make that grace real and known
to all who enter
and to all who are touched by the people
nourished to flourish in this sanctuary.

That's what our new members this morning are signing up for.
That's what we hope everyone who comes here experiences.
That's how we continue to practice what Peter is teaching.

*May God fill us all with the Spirit of LAFter this week,
with the joy of love, aspiration, and faith that we see in Jesus, the Christ,
as we go forth this week to bless the world.*

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