

## ***Holy Welcome***

Matthew 10:40-42

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Prayer: *Uncreated God, above all gods that we create, we focus together on your gospel challenge to find it within ourselves to welcome one another. In this season of physical separation, give us imagination, give us courage, help us to find our own authentic voice; that we may welcome a stranger in your name... and by so doing... come to recognize your face in the faces of your children. Amen.*

My sermon title is "Holy Welcome" – there's a lot to the act of welcome, there always has been.

Scholars have come to understand that the nature of hospitality in the early church was likely the leading factor for Christianity's spread. Sad to say it wasn't all those brilliant sermons...by Paul. No, he didn't even claim to be a great preacher, you can see him apologizing in his letters in the New Testament for the ways he causes offense, in his writing and in his preaching. He still causes offense, and his apologies stand in scripture.

What made the difference was the life they built together. The way that Christians opened their homes to one another and were a refuge to each other –hospitality was an act of faith itself. Paul is a part of this world also, travelling and staying with friends. At a time when business people were travelling for work and trading, the hospitality that was extended by Christians to anyone else, calling themselves a Christian provided tremendous refuge, was very attractive to average decent people trying to get on with their lives. They built a world and prospered together.

Today I've asked some of our church leadership to reflect with me on how we extend a welcome in our day. Being an Open and Affirming church is a modern day corollary of this ancient practice of welcome.

Dear readers: the dialogue sermon transcript is not available in printed form. You are invited to go to our website and click on the sermon, once there, click on the *YouTube* button and choose closed captioning for a transcript. I recommend subscribing to our *YouTube* channel for improved accessibility for the whole worship experience.

May God bless you and keep you.

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