

What is Radical Hospitality?

“They also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison and did not help you? He will reply, I tell you the truth whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” Matthew 25:45.

“When hostility is converted into (“radical”, my emphasis) hospitality then fearful strangers can become guests revealing to their hosts the promise they are carrying with them. Then, in fact, the distinction between host and guest proves to be artificial and evaporates in the recognition of the new found unity” Henri Nouwen.

The above quotes speak to the heart of a discord that is present within the Christian Church. It is a battle cry of marginalized Christians fighting for their voice to be heard. This cry is the acknowledgement that they are not “strangers” and are tired of being ignored as the “least of these”.

Marginalized Christians (MC) are immersed in the saving grace of Christ Jesus as well as partakers of the promises in the Word of God. MC have been placed on the edges of life, whose dignity has been taken from them because the societal Church designates a person as either worthy or not.

There is a Christian patriarchal position within the Church that causes those who are rejected and ridiculed to feel as if they cannot measure up to the status quo of what others would feel is necessary to be a part of the Body of Christ. This then heaps on more wounds to an already broken spirit from a place that is to show them love. Church is a place for those who are experiencing abandonment, oppression, inhospitality and marginalization to feel the rawness of acceptance and the ability to see what grace is all about. Rather than inheriting the kingdom of God and all that it embraces, marginalized Christians are made to feel disinherited. As Disciples of Christ, He demands that we love one another (John 13:34-35, 1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

MC’s seek the same spiritual formation and direction as other Christians. They seek to stand in their redemption so as to work towards their sanctification. In order for this to take place, one must be in community with other believers. MC’s desire to have the availability to worship, hear God’s Word preached and to be a part of the ministry of Christ. This demands an opportunity to be a part of a community of believers who are more interested in reaching out to the estranged than keeping safe within the confines of their injustice. This is a call to radical hospitality.

The challenge to Christians everywhere will be the uncomfortableness of creating radical inclusion and validation that whomever has opened their hearts to Christ Jesus is welcomed not in spite of but by virtue of their identity in Him.

The Call to Christian maturity is to seek intimacy with God, and it is by this maturity and grace that we may be united as one (John 17:21).

There is a battle cry for marginalized Christians. In the field of spiritual formation and direction, many have written on the importance of having a relationship with God, knowing who we are in Christ Jesus, and the importance of loving others. As Spiritual leaders of Christian denominations, we must see the importance of challenging one another to risk changing thoughts and behaviors that cause injustice, isolation, oppression and marginalization. For some Christians, this may cause an uncomfortableness or indignation to the personal and perceptual ideologies of their understanding of the truth of Christ. We must begin affirmative action with radical hospitality to reach out to those who feel as if they do not belong, labeled marginalized and outcast.