

03.09.25 ~ Lent 1

**“The Hospitality of Jesus”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Psalm 91:1-6, 9-16** <sup>NRSVUE</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- <sup>2</sup> I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust.”
- <sup>3</sup> Surely he will save you  
from the fowler’s snare  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- <sup>4</sup> He will cover you with his feathers,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- <sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
<sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- <sup>9</sup> If you say, “The Lord is my refuge,”  
and you make the Most High your dwelling,  
<sup>10</sup> no harm will overtake you,  
no disaster will come near your tent.
- <sup>11</sup> For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways;  
<sup>12</sup> they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- <sup>13</sup> You will tread on the lion and the cobra;  
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- <sup>14</sup> “Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him;  
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
- <sup>15</sup> He will call on me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will deliver him and honor him.
- <sup>16</sup> With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation.”

**Leader: These Words of Assurance Are from God.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Romans 10:8-13** <sup>TLB</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For salvation that comes from trusting Christ—which is what we preach—is already within easy reach of each of us; in fact, it is as near as our own hearts and mouths. <sup>9</sup> For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord and believe in your own heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be

saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation.

<sup>11</sup> For the Scriptures tell us that no one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. <sup>12</sup> Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect: they all have the same Lord who generously gives his riches to all those who ask him for them. <sup>13</sup> Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

**Leader: These Words of the Apostle Paul Are of God.**

**All: Thanks be to God!**

**Please pray with me:**

Lord of all things, we thank you for our time spent with you this week and today. We gather again to worship you with varying emotions; some of us are fearful, grieving, joyful, exhausted, and expectant. We seek your fellowship even as we sing your praises; we humbly ask you to center us in your spirit so that we can feel your presence and assurance. You are sovereign. Help us to hear **your** message of kingdom purpose and hospitality. Please clear our minds, Lord, to receive your direction from these passages; let us apply it as **your** voice renews, refreshes, and strengthens us for the weeks to come. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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Good work, everybody, for getting to church on time! This one is the harder of the two time changes each year. So well done! As you know, I attended a 3-day local conference by Missio Alliance, a BGAV branch of thinkers, publishers, professors, and pastors. The topic was Awakenings: Wholeness and Beauty. It was affirming after having spent last year "Finding Beauty" in scripture, relationships, ministry, the arts, and generally speaking, all of life and living. I will be sharing bits and pieces over the next several months, but it was intense and there is a lot to process. Thank you for your priority and support for staff development; we are moving in the right direction, let me assure you! Also let me remind you yesterday was International Women's Day and March is the Baptist women in Ministry Month of Advocacy. I learned new language about the continuum of advocacy and discovered that you and I are in the Sponsors category for women in ministry but are quickly moving toward the Champion category. I'll explain more in the future. That's good news.

The psalm for today expands on last week's supernatural hospitality illustrated in Christ's transfiguration with Moses, Elijah, and the disciples. Rather than the generosity of building shelters or tabernacles to venerate and memorialize these three men, we were challenged to accept them and God's power to bring a teaching, mountaintop experience. This psalm is about security in life, and how we get it through our belief in Jesus, the Christ, our Savior. This is an appropriate topic for us in these uncertain times.

This time we speak not of man-made or human built tents, but of God. He is the Almighty ruler of our world, the ultimate shelter. It is because of his love for us, his creation, that he shelters and protects us at all; the writer uses the metaphor of a large bird's wings. Sometimes shelter is what we think of as hospitality (a room, a meal, warm transportation, a party), but the psalmist develops that thought from basic comfort to necessary safety and deliverance. He sees those wings defending us from fear, terrors, predators, and even pestilence and plague. According to the writer, God sends angels to protect and watch over us; more importantly, God even sent his own son to save us, teach us, and to redeem our sin and human mistakes. Through the Triune God's divine power, Jesus does the same for us if we receive and accept his love, grace, healing, and mercy. He is truly our Host. Did you hear that word growing up? I never understood it when they gave the "Host" during communion; there are several definitions, but in the communion context, host means the wafer signifying the broken body of Christ. To me as a child, "host" meant Jesus was my friend, but keep listening because it will make even more sense at the end of this message. The psalmist

reminds us that no matter what we hear or read, we are safe and secure in our faith in the Lord. It is not passive faith, so yes, there is work to do to live it out, but we are promised the fullness and joy of eternal life if we believe. Much better than a tent, or a house, or possessions. This psalm leads us to Jesus as friend, confidant, healer, protector, and host.

In the second passage context, the apostle Paul goes back to Moses and his farewell speech in Deuteronomy 30, reminding the people that they must follow the law—something greater than themselves. And we know what happened when they refused. We also know that since Christ came to fulfill the law, Christ is a new choice for the Jews and Gentiles. Is it that simple? That the hospitality of Jesus is just belief in him? Yes, all that was needed to receive salvation was to believe in their hearts and confess it with their mouths and still is for us too.

For Jews, this must have felt impossible, but Paul used his own testimony, conversion, and strong conviction to help them believe in the truth of Christ's incarnation, teaching, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to help them understand. Paul applied the historical facts of Jesus to help the people accept it in both mind and heart. The hospitality of Jesus welcomes all but is not located in a fellowship hall, sanctuary, or a mountaintop. The ultimate hospitality of Jesus is eternal life, which we cannot understand until he comes again. The earthbound place of Jesus' hospitality was the manger in Bethlehem, the streets of Nazareth, temples in Capernaum, the fishing boats and shores of the Sea of Galilee, the home of Mary and Martha, the upper room with his disciples, the gardens of Gethsemane, Pilates and Herod's courts and prison, the hills of Golgotha at Calvary, and even the provided garden tomb. Those are

places where Jesus walked and welcomed people with generous hospitality. However, the true hospitality of Jesus is none of those. With salvation, he offers us his whole self not only physically but relationally—heart to heart. We meet Jesus and his generous hospitality within our hearts, not our minds. Oh yes, we must learn a little about him and study him and his ministry intellectually, but our relational salvation happens in the heart. Can you wrap your mind around that vague type of hospitality? It's not about having tea, coffee, shelter, or a meal together; it's about receiving the heart of God through his Son and that is necessary for life itself. We are the new temples of God through Christ's incarnation and our own salvation. Through his love, forgiveness, healing and joy, there is only one place to meet Jesus, and it can be the church, but more often it is in the quiet still places of one's vulnerable heart. He starts to prepare our hearts even before we ever do. We must be willing and open to receive his hospitality and to accept it. You might be surprised to realize how many Christians are not secure in their salvation. What about you? It might be a good time to renew your relationship at a heart level, not just a Bible Study level. Take this season of Lent seriously and as you work through the devotionals, open your heart and ears to hear a new message of love and grace, a new message of security amid this chaos of life. Surrender to it and to Jesus' generous gifts of hospitality, welcoming you to his open arms, like the wings of a giant bird. He is that kind of host, always ready to receive you, especially as a repentant sinner. He loves you and your faith in him will sustain you! <sup>10</sup> For it is by believing in his heart that a person becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation." Will you accept this hospitality to **receive**

Christ's salvation and eternal life, and then live it out every day? That profound question is the *Vital Hospitality* of Jesus. Amen! ||

**Let us pray.** Lord, we thank you for your teaching, your example, and your presence. Open our hearts to accept the generous salvation that comes from our relationship with you. Help us feel your presence daily and motivate us to answer your call to hospitality for 2025. Let us lead others to you by heart first then mind as we share lives together in community. It is in Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.