

A Sermon preached by the Revd Martin Tanner in St Marys Church,  
Market Drayton on Refugee Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at 10.30am

Genesis 18 v1-16 "Radical hospitality"

**There is despair. And there is hope!**

-The plight of the Syrians is desperate.

-But the good work of Sanctus St Marks is a beacon of hope.

Sally Smith and her team are doing amazing things in Stoke.....

**Now, what Sanctus is doing is ancient practice.**

It goes back to Abraham and the story in Genesis 18 of how he and Sarah welcomed visitors near the oaks of Mamre.

Let us look in detail at what happened.

*V2-3 "Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them he hurried from his tent to meet them and bowed down low to the ground and said, 'Stay, please do not pass by' "*

**First, there is a genuine WELCOME.**

Nothing is reluctant or half-hearted. Abraham *hurried* to meet and greet the visitors. A genuine welcome.

Then Abraham says, V4, *"Let a little water be brought and then you may wash your feet and rest under the tree"*

**Second, the visitors are MADE COMFORTABLE.**

One of the worst moments of my life was crossing a desert in intense heat. There was only one thing I wanted and that was SHADE.

The desert just went on and on and on. Relentless sun bore down upon me. I could feel life slipping out of me. And then there was a tree! I have never been more thankful for the protection that tree gave me and the cool under its branches. I was comfortable.

**And those visitors to Abraham would have felt the same under the great oak trees** (terebinth) **at Mamre** (just north of Hebron). It would also have been why Abraham pitched his tent there. And Abraham offers further comfort as he gives them water to wash their feet and get rid of the dust of the journey.

(2)

1 Welcome. 2 Made comfortable.

**And, third, NEEDS ARE MET.**

In V5 Abraham says to the three visitors: *"Let me get you something to eat so you can be nourished and go on your way"*

To make this possible in verse 7 we read that Abraham *"ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant who hurriedly prepared it"*

Abraham is about 100 years old but he is still "running"!

He is not being tardy or reluctant in his hospitality towards these three unknown and unexpected guests. He gives them a nourishing meal. He gives them the sustenance to continue their journey.

**A real Welcome INCLUDES meeting needs.**

**Fourth, from verse 9 onwards, there is a CONVERSATION**

As it turns out, a very significant conversation that reveals two surprises. First, that these visitors are actually God's messengers and Second, that Abraham will soon have an heir through Sarah.

This isn't cocktail-party chat but real, deep, meaningful conversation that is actually life-changing.

**Genesis 18 is the BIBLICAL BLUE-PRINT OF TRUE HOSPITALITY.**

And we can sum-up what Sanctus St Marks are doing and what Abraham did in One Short Phrase.

**And the phrase is: RADICAL HOSPITALITY**

**Biblical hospitality is radical hospitality.**

"Radical" because it gets to the "root" of true hospitality.

True hospitality is NOT just a smile and some warm words.

**True hospitality is about really meeting the needs of the guest.**

So after Abraham has welcomed the visitors with words he ALSO offers them REST, COMFORT, NOURISHMENT, CONVERSATION.

True hospitality like this is LOVE in action. **And love blesses BOTH PARTIES.** Yes, Abraham put himself out to welcome the visitors BUT Abraham didn't go unblest himself. The visitors blessed Abraham and a year later Isaac was born.

(3)

**NOT ONLT is hospitality good for the individuals concerned it is also PART OF THE GOSPEL and good for the CHURCH.**

Here is a quote. Sorry, I don't know its source. But it explains why radical hospitality is part of the gospel:

***"People want to know YOU CARE before THEY CARE about what you know"***

"Before" is the key word.

**Show the genuineness of your faith, so others may come to a genuine faith themselves.**

It is part of the mission, part of the outreach, part of the witness of the church.

Guess what?

Sally Smith says that Muslims are now coming to church. PTL!

**Show the genuineness of your faith, so others may come to a genuine faith themselves.**

IN CONCLUSION, please write this down on your Order of Service and take it away and remember it.

The quote, "*People want to know YOU CARE before THEY CARE about what you know*" and the example of Abraham in Genesis 18 of radical hospitality can all be summarised in one verse of Scripture from

**Romans 15 v7**

**Please write down:**

**"WELCOME ONE ANOTHER, as CHRIST has welcomed YOU"**

If YOU have been welcomed, WELCOME OTHERS.