September 27, 2026

Hospitality

MAKING SPACE FOR THE STRANGER

SERMON: Seeing Jesus in the Stranger
SPEAKER: Beth Nolson
CORE SCRIPTURE: Matthew 25:31–40

WATCH SERMON | SERMON NOTES

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUMMARY

Beth Nolson continued our series on hospitality by inviting us to "See Jesus in the Stranger." Drawing from the inspiring story of Gander, Newfoundland, after 9/11, where thousands of stranded travellers were welcomed with profound care, the sermon highlighted three elements of hospitality:
1) Welcoming the stranger,
2) Providing for their needs, and
3) Contributing to mutual flourishing.

We explored two Gospel accounts: the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), who walked with the resurrected Jesus without recognizing him until he broke bread with them, and Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25), where he identifies himself with "the least of these." Jesus comes to us in disguise, and every stranger we meet is an opportunity to encounter Him, leading to divine encounters and mutual transformation when we choose to "lean in" rather than "lean away."

SHARE

Think about a time when you received unexpected kindness or welcome from someone you didn't know well, or from a community you were new to. How did that experience make you feel, and what impact did it have?

READ

Please have someone read aloud our core Scripture for this week: **Matthew 25:31–40**.

DISCUSS

Feel free to pick/choose what is most helpful for you. Remember the goal is to have rich, relational, authentic, Jesus-centered discussions.

1. What stood out to you the most about the sermon?

2. Beth shared the inspiring story of Gander, Newfoundland, welcoming 6000 strangers after 9/11.

What elements of their hospitality resonated with you most, and why? How have you seen those elements in our church or other places?

3. In Luke 24:13-18, the disciples' eyes "were kept from recognizing" Jesus. The sermon suggested this might be because they were looking for him in the place they least expected him, or that they saw him as merely a "foreigner." What does this passage reveal about our own potential blind spots when encountering others, and how does it challenge our assumptions about where and how Jesus might appear?

4. Beth highlighted two surprising twists in Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-40: that Jesus has been present all along in the vulnerable, and that the "sheep" didn't even realize they were serving Jesus. What does this tell us about the nature of genuine compassion and service, and how does it connect to the idea of loving God and loving our neighbour?

5. Jesus' story in Matthew 25 is a "cautionary tale," as Beth put it, inviting us to reflect on whether we "lean in" or "lean away" from the strangers and vulnerable around us. Considering Matthew 25:40 and 45, what specific areas in your life or community might God be calling you to "lean in" more intentionally?

6. The sermon concluded by emphasizing the mutuality in hospitable interactions – that both host and guest can encounter Jesus and experience transformation. Can you recall a time when extending welcome to a stranger led to a surprising blessing or insight for you?

NEXT STEPS

Beth invited us to reflect on the index card exercise, considering the strangers in our lives and our biases toward them. Take some time this week to prayerfully consider one or two specific, practical actions you can take to "lean in" to someone you've previously considered a "stranger." This might be as simple as striking up a conversation, offering a genuine smile, or looking for a way to meet a small need.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, You taught us that whenever we welcome a stranger, we welcome you. Open our eyes today to see past the disguises you wear. When you come to us as a person looking for help, give us hearts that are quick to serve. When you appear in the face of someone lonely, forgotten, or hard to love, grant us the grace to offer warmth and kindness. Forgive us for the times we have been too busy, too cautious, or too indifferent to notice you. Break down any walls of fear or judgment in our hearts. Let your love flow through us so that we never miss an opportunity to encounter you in the people we meet, and to host you as we welcome the stranger. Amen.*

CONNECT

Be on the lookout for community groups or workshops at **The Hub** that your group can come alongside to practice hospitality and serve the community.

CLOSING

May God bless you as you seek to see and welcome Jesus in the strangers you encounter this week.