



Pastor Hanke's Blog

June 30, 2019

Turning Your Face Towards Hospitality

Bible Reference: Luke 9:51-62

I've shared with you before how I did not want to go to Chattanooga, Tennessee for my vicarage (that's a pastoral internship). I thought this placement was all wrong for me. I mean, I was a single guy and this was a family city. In fact, I came to despise the walking bridge there because it just screamed "families" and reminded me of what I didn't yet have. Oddly enough, there's a picture of that bridge in my office, but now it reminds me of everything I want a church to be. Let me explain.

In Chattanooga I met the Hamilton family at the church where I was serving. I hung out at their house every Sunday. I would have dinner with them and stay until they went to bed. I even hung out with them all day on Christmas. I became a part of their family. Some of you may think it is because I am relational that I connected with a family like the Hamiltons. The truth is, they did this with every vicar. The Hamiltons were gifted with hospitality. They weren't the only ones; there were so many in Chattanooga who were good at it. I may have known how to love people and be a friend, but I learned how to turn my face towards hospitality in Chattanooga. Now I often get asked how I can cook on Christmas or Easter after so many services. The answer is I love helping to create the right environment, or the right food, for people. It's a part of hospitality I learned in Tennessee. I have the same desire in my ministry. I want the church where I serve to be hospitable, and honestly, I expect my staff to lead in that way as well. This is what the Chattanooga walking bridge picture reminds me of every time I see it on my office wall.

Our reading this week has some unusual language right away in the first verse... "Jesus set His face towards Jerusalem." Basically it is telling us that Jesus was now focusing on what He came to do, namely, die and rise again. Jesus turned His focus towards His mission. The disciples were upset because many rejected Jesus and were not hospitable to Him, yet Jesus reminded His disciples that many will not understand His mission. This is true for us also. Many will not understand our mission, or why we would love people, especially if they don't deserve it. I believe the Church, at times, has become so protective that we have lost the calling to be hospitable to others. I believe the Church must first be hospitable, and in turn, that will open the door to real conversations about our faith.

God's Peace,

Pastor Will