

This message was prepared by Rev. Pamela Graf Short by the People of Prayer of the Tontogany Presbyterian Church for the first day of September, the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost in the year of our LORD two thousand and nineteen.

Hebrew 13, The Message

1 Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love.

2 Be ready with a meal or a bed when it's needed. Why, some have extended hospitality to angels without ever knowing it!

3 Regard prisoners as if you were in prison with them. Look on victims of abuse as if what happened to them had happened to you.

4 Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex.

5 Don't be obsessed with getting more material things. Be relaxed with what you have. Since God assured us, "I'll never let you down, never walk off and leave you,"

6 we can boldly quote, God is there, ready to help; I'm fearless no matter what.

Who or what can get to me?

7 Appreciate your pastoral leaders who gave you the Word of God. Take a good look at the way they live, and let their faithfulness instruct you, as well as their truthfulness. There should be a consistency that runs through us all.

8 For Jesus doesn't change - yesterday, today, tomorrow, he's always totally himself.

9 Don't be lured away from him by the latest speculations about him. The grace of Christ is the only good ground for life. Products named after Christ don't seem to do much for those who buy them.

10 The altar from which God gives us the gift of himself is not for exploitation by insiders who grab and loot.

11 In the old system, the animals are killed and the bodies disposed of outside the camp. The blood is then brought inside to the altar as a sacrifice for sin.

12 It's the same with Jesus. He was crucified outside the city gates - that is where he poured out the sacrificial blood that was brought to God's altar to cleanse his people.

13 So let's go outside, where Jesus is, where the action is - not trying to be privileged insiders, but taking our share in the abuse of Jesus.

14 This "insider world" is not our home. We have our eyes peeled for the City about to come.

15 Let's take our place outside with Jesus, no longer pouring out the sacrificial blood of animals but pouring out sacrificial praises from our lips to God in Jesus' name.

16 Make sure you don't take things for granted and go slack in working for the common good; share what you have with others. God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship - a different kind of "sacrifice" - that take place in kitchen and workplace and on the streets.

17 Be responsive to your pastoral leaders. Listen to their counsel. They are alert to the condition of your lives and work under the strict supervision of God. Contribute to the joy of their leadership, not its drudgery. Why would you want to make things harder for them?

18 Pray for us. We have no doubts about what we're doing or why, but it's hard going and we need your prayers. All we care about is living well before God.

19 Pray that we may be together soon.

20 May God, who puts all things together, makes all things whole, Who made a lasting mark through the sacrifice of Jesus, the sacrifice of blood that sealed the eternal covenant, Who led Jesus, our Great Shepherd, up and alive from the dead,

21 Now put you together, provide you with everything you need to please him, Make us into what gives him most pleasure, by means of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Messiah. All glory to Jesus forever and always!

Hebrews 13, NRSV

1 Let mutual love continue.

2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

3 Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

4 Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

6 So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them.

10 We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat.

11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

12 Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood.

13 Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.

14 For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

15 Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.

16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you.

18 Pray for us; we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.

19 I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you very soon.

20 Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

21 make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Our Bible passage for today reads like a mom sending her kids off to school:

Be nice to your friends

Talk to at least one new kid

Respect your teachers

Don't bully anyone at recess

Share the good part of your lunch,
and not just the parts you don't like

And don't forget Jesus loves you
and is sending angels your way.

We don't know who wrote the book of Hebrews,

but it sounds to me like an enthusiastic mother with a PhD in theology.

One minute the instructions are pretty clear;

kind of exciting really,

after all you might meet a few angels.

The next she is expanding on the theological nuances of sacrifices, city gates and songs of praise.

If we go back to chapter one she starts her letter or thesis or whatever it is like a tale in a storybook:
L-o-n-g ago GOD SPOKE!
God spoke to our ancestors!
What? How?
O there were many ways—through the voices of prophets mostly!

She spends a great deal of time waxing on and on about who Jesus is
and how it is that Jesus is the author
and perfecter of our faith;
that his death was not in vain,
but was somehow necessary for the salvation of humanity and all of creation.
And when the professor in her stops long enough to take a breath
Up comes the story teller:
O! I must tell you,
by faith Abel brought a sacrifice;
by faith Abraham and Sarah has a child;
by faith a mother hid a babe in a basket;
by faith Rahab hid the spies;
by faith Gideon;
by faith Jephtha;
by faith women received their dead by resurrection.
By faith others suffered mocking
and flogging and chains and imprisonment.
O the cloud of witnesses around us is so great!
Says the story teller.

And then when we get to chapter 13 it must be graduation day
or leaving for college day
or some such ending or beginning
because now she has resorted to post-it notes,
followed by more chatter about Jesus
and then back to post-it notes and finally a blessing.

I think my favorite part of chapter 13 is this:
for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace...
it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace...

Maybe that is what this mother was doing all along. Trying to strengthen the hearts of her children with a little grace.
Reminding her kids they really do love each other; And setting them up to see the world differently than everyone else sees it.

The writer of Hebrews sees everything through the grace of God as lived out in Jesus.
Through Jesus' sacrifice
Through Jesus' suffering
Through Jesus' love

For the writer or Hebrews, whoever she may be,
the grace-filled sacrifice of Jesus turns our hearts inside out and our minds upside down.
Like a globe where the southern hemisphere becomes the northern,
The sacrifice of Jesus is a counter direction to

All our bickering
All our self-absorption
All our fears
All our worries
All our excuses

for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

Stepping to the Cross of Christ
is like stepping over the equator.
All things run in a different direction.
I am convinced that when our lives are ordered
around the incarnation,
around the cross,
around the resurrection
around the ascension of Christ,
they are thus ordered around
 Gratitude and hope
 Love and life
 Sacrifice and presence.

We make daily decision about
 About Money
 About Community
 About Marriage

Based not on
 Lust and complaint
 Fear and annoyance
 Boredom and loneliness

Rather our marriages will be marked by faithfulness
Our communities by welcome
Our money by sacrifice

for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

So as this author sends her kids off to dormitory life, near the top of her list is grace for the stranger.
Near the top of her list is hospitality.
*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2).*

I confess that I get more excited about entertaining angels than I do people.
It sounds kind of cool.
Maybe even prestigious to entertain angels.
Such thoughts certainly miss the point.
Hospitality is not about prestige.
In the ancient world there was a certain hopefulness, an excitement, about welcoming strangers,
but not because it was going to gain you popularity points,
or even because it would make you feel good about doing something nice.
No, rather the opportunity to extend hospitality meant that you—you *yourself* may indeed receive a divine message;
that you may, through the love of stranger,

be blessed by the love of God
and who would want to miss that?!

for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

The word that gets translated “hospitality” is particularly important in our current culture.
It is philoxenia.

“Philo” as in Philidephia, the city of brotherly love. Philoxenia: Love of the stranger.

Do you hear that last part: Xenia? Surely you have heard the word “xenophobia” “fear of the stranger.”

We are encouraged daily to fear the stranger with great and trembling fear;
to assume that the stranger will take and take some more.

But the Bible tells us just the opposite.

From Abraham’s and Sarah’s visitors

to Ruth and Naomi

to the Good Samaritan

to the incarnation of Jesus,

what God’s story tells us over and over again is that strangers bring blessings—and outsiders?

Well, they escort us into the courts of God’s love.

for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

Like the children of the author of Hebrews
you are entering a new season of life together:

An ending and a new beginning.

Don’t be afraid. The LORD is your helper.

Let mutual love continue.

Welcome your new pastor as though you are welcoming Christ.

Those of you gathered for worship today are the core of this community of faith.

Like the core of an apple, you hold the seeds for what this community will grow into.

Those of you gathered for worship today are like the notes of a song.

You have the opportunity to set the tone.

If Christ is the melody,

you are the major cords that build the harmony.

If you are anxious about money,

everyone will be anxious.

If you are hopeful that hope will grow into a fruit tree providing food to the stranger and shade for the prisoner.

for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

When your building needs repair, you can sigh and say, “AHH!! Where will that money come from?!”
or you can say,

“Hey! We get to employ someone who needs meaningful work.”

When someone asks for food or rent or diapers you can approach them with suspicious annoyance
or you can see it as an opportunity to feed and shelter and cloth Christ Jesus.

According to this passage our personal budgets
and our church budgets should reflect
Mutual love
Hospitality to strangers
Support of prisoners
Care for the abused
Respect for leaders
Let your budget awaken the joy of your new pastor
and your offerings be a sacrifice of praise!

for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

Finally, the author of Hebrews combines her mother's heart with her theology as she offers a blessing based on who God is and so in one short verse she holds fast to
A God of Peace
A God of Resurrection
A God of Shepherding care
A God who is so bent on keeping covenant that this God is willing to die in order to make you complete.

Now may the God of peace,
who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great shepherd of the sheep,
by the blood of the eternal covenant,
make you complete in everything good
so that you may do God's will, working among your community
that which is pleasing in God's sight,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Lexical Work

Show hospitality

philoxenia: love of strangers

Original Word: φιλοξενία, ας, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: philoxenia

Phonetic Spelling: (fil-on-ex-ee'-ah)

Definition: love of strangers

Usage: love to strangers, hospitality.

HELPS Word-studies

5381 *philoneksía* (from **5384** /*phílos*, "friend" and 3581/*xenos*, "a stranger") – properly, warmth (friendliness) shown to strangers; (figuratively) the *readiness to share hospitality* (generosity) by entertaining in one's home, etc.

Commentary work

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1751

Commentary, Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16, Erik Heen, Preaching This Week, *WorkingPreacher.org*, 2013

In these missing verses, Hebrews makes a typological comparison between the death of Jesus and a sin offering in the cult of the Tabernacle (the “tent of meeting” that provided the holy space of worship during the desert wanderings of the people of God). This analogy comes as no surprise to one who has followed Hebrews to this point. But then comes a critical shift in the text. **The *place* of Jesus’ sacrifice** is also seen to hold typological meaning. **Jesus’ death did not occur within the holy grounds of Tabernacle or Temple, but on the profane ground of a Roman killing field:**

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered *outside the city* gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him *outside the camp* and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. (Hebrews 13:11-14).

Here the “high” cultic imagery of Hebrews at long last finds its “goal” (*scopus*) or center -- the cross of Christ. In doing so, the cultic pattern of worship is shattered to birth something new. **The holiness associated with the sacred places of Israel’s religious “cult” is redeemed for the sanctification of a most unholy and profane world by means of Christian service to those in need.**

This theological insight of Hebrews is similar to the synoptic tradition that reports the ripping of the curtain that closed off the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple at the point of Jesus death (Mark 15:38). Similar too is the Johannine interpretation of the oral tradition of Jesus that understands the body of the crucified and risen Christ to be the new locus of God’s very *kavod*, God’s own glory (John 2:21). The profane becomes holy and the holy profane.

The closing exhortations in Chapter 13, including the demand to practice radical hospitality to strangers, prison visitation, observation of proper boundaries in matters of sexuality, and the proper stewardship of material resources all flow out of this sense that Christ -- God in God’s own self -- **is to be encountered in cruciform mission to a wounded and sorrowful creation, made holy by God’s own reclamation of everything “outside the camp.”**

So, what is proper worship of God now that the sacrifice to end all sacrifices has occurred in Christ (10:12)? Hebrews tells us in the final verses of today’s text (verses 15-16). There are two parts to it. The first aspect of this more commonly thought of as “divine service” -- what we do in church as we gather to praise and thank God through Christ for the work of Christ (12:15; cf. 4:14). We do this “in the name of Jesus,” as the text says, because it is Jesus who took upon the Sin of the world in his death on the cross for us.

In this service we can offer only the “sacrifice of praise” for what Christ has already done because the “vertical” dimension of the atoning sacrifice is already complete in Christ. The second aspect of what constitutes divine service -- the “horizontal” dimension -- is another matter. As the final verse in today’s text puts it, “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, **for *such* sacrifices are pleasing to God.**”

It is no accident that “hospitality” is in the “emphatic” or lead position (13:1) in the list of the marks of Christian identity incarnate in service. The other Christian virtues mentioned flow out of this one practice. At one level it is astounding that this beleaguered, suffering, and vulnerable community -- one that had experienced the *loss* of property (10:32-34) -- is asked to open itself up as a patron to strangers. Is, then, the practice of

hospitality “the cross” that this community must bear? If hospitality is seen as an obligation or duty of Christian discipleship, one might draw this conclusion. If so, it may be a false conclusion.

The Greek word that is traditionally translated in English by “hospitality” is *philoxenia*, literally, “love of the strange.” Many ancients were locked into lives of routine and did not stray far from their places of birth. Life was difficult and mobility was limited. One way in which the world became “larger” was to open one’s home (however poor) to those that came from “outside.” Hospitality was provided, then, by those who had “love of the strange,” by those who were curious about the wider world.

The unknown seekers of hospitality brought news (and stories!) of the wider world and broke open one’s little provincial world. There was a kind of marvelous exchange, then, of mutual benefit between host and guest. The guest received protection (inns were dangerous places), food, and company. Hosts were led out of themselves and their “little” worlds. Those locked into deadly routine were engaged by that which was “outside” the camp. It is an approach to the outside world with which some contemporary parishes might wish to become better acquainted!

Obviously too, the OT traditions of hospitality are in play here as well. The reference in verse 2 of entertaining “angels without knowing it” is thought to refer to Abraham and Sarah’s reception of the three visitors in Genesis 18:1-15 at the oaks of Mamre. But, of course, the people of God themselves not only practiced hospitality but were long “sojourners” (guests) in foreign lands (11:8-10). The experience of being an alien or sojourner, vulnerable before others and dependent on God as host, was fundamental to Israel’s identity.

Rather than an obligation, “love of the strange” seen from either the Greco-Roman or the OT perspective provides the opportunity to be blessed by exposure to the wider world that God cares deeply about. But that is not all. In the church’s “love of the strange” one actually encounters Christ and so are led out of ourselves (13:13; cf. Matthew 25:37-46). Hospitality, then, is a gift that feeds and nourishes *us* as well as our guests.

From Hebrews’ perspective, the truth is that we are all sojourners in a land that does not belong to us but, ultimately, to God. Since this is so, Hebrews reminds us that those baptized into the death and the resurrection of Christ are to acknowledge with gratitude God’s ongoing favor to us who are only sojourners. Hebrews also points out, however, that those who are marked by the sign of the cross have a tendency to fall in love with “the strange.” Rather, it’s more like God has fallen in love with us.

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=658

Commentary, Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16, Bryan J. Whitfield, Preaching This Week, *WorkingPreacher.org*, 2010.

But love also has an external dimension. As we show love to our brothers and sisters, we do not wall ourselves off as members of a distinct tribe. **We are also to show love to the stranger through the gift of hospitality** (13:2). In the first century, hospitality was a practical virtue because inns were disreputable places. There were no Ramada Inns or Motel 6s. Though our circumstances are different, hospitality--paying attention to the stranger--remains a vital demonstration of love. We must become welcoming and inviting congregations. The writer reminds us that when we are hospitable, we too receive gifts because we may entertain “angels without knowing

it" (13:2). Perhaps the writer was thinking about Abraham (Genesis 18) or Gideon (Judges 6) or Manoah (Judges 13). For all of these characters, hospitality led to new stories of good news, new possibilities, new life, and new avenues of service.

A second mark of the trail is to show care in times of distress. The writer mentions two crises in particular: those who are in prison and those who are being tortured (13:3). In both cases, the writer underscores the depth of compassion in its sense of suffering-with-others. Our life is a life in the body, and just as Jesus as our great high priest identifies with our tests and shares our vulnerability (2:14, 18; 4:15), so we should identify with those of our sisters and brothers.²

The third mark is fidelity: we should honor marriage, and we should be faithful to our marriage covenants. Such faithfulness sets us apart from the broader culture and strengthens the bonds of the community. Infidelity is not a private matter. It weakens the fabric of community, and those who are faithless bear responsibility for the wreckage their lack of steadfastness produces.

Contentment with what we have is the fourth mark of the trail (13:5). We do not greedily seek more to secure our lives. Rather we are to trust in God's promises of presence and protection. Quoting first from Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 (see also Joshua 1:5), the writer reminds us that God will not leave us or forsake us (13:5). Yet, God is not simply present. As Psalms 118:6 demonstrates, God is our helper, so we need fear no human action or institution (13:6).

A fifth mark is loyalty and constancy. We should remember those who have spoken the word of God to us, for their faithfulness stands as an example for us (13:7). The ultimate example of faithfulness, of course, is Jesus (12:1-3), who "is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8).

The final mark is proper worship, and, in particular, proper sacrifice. That advice is no surprise, since worship has been central to this sermon. We are to make an offering of thanksgiving in response to the blessings we have received under the new covenant. First we are called to offer a sacrifice of praise as we confess Christ's name. But acceptable sacrifice moves beyond the arena of worship and confession. As those who have received grace and trust in God's provision, we are called to extend such grace toward others through doing good and by sharing what we have. We honor our generous God by living with open hands. We do not cling to our resources in order to secure our own lives in the face of an uncertain future. Instead, we share what we have as divine gifts entrusted to us as stewards of God's bounty.³

This final mark, with its focus on acceptable worship, underscores the unity of all these admonitions. Having called us to give thanks and offer our acceptable worship to God (12:28), the writer now spells out the various dimensions of that worship.⁴ Acceptable worship does not find expression solely in ritual acts in the assembly or sanctuary. It infuses all of life. Thus in our love for each other or for strangers or in our care for those in crisis, we are worshipping God. In our sharing that reflects our trust in God rather than possessions, we are worshipping God. In our faithfulness to our covenants and to the example of those who have gone before us, we are worshipping God.

Commentary, Hebrews 13:1-2, Amy E. Steele, *The African American Lectionary*, 2008.

As a doctoral candidate in ethics and society, I am conscious of the ways the historical black church impacts various communities. I believe that most pressing in our contemporary context is making Christianity relevant to a swelling number of people who do not attend church. One way the church becomes relevant to a context larger than itself, is by painting a clear ecclesiological picture of who it is. **If the church claims as its ethos a “welcoming and healing” environment based upon Jesus Christ as a central and mediating figure, then the resulting atmosphere should reflect his message, “Let them come.”** One way to assure that this ethos is communicated is to architect the building and orchestrate the members to this end.

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=f371852a-b435-46d7-818a-94a2b142ee73%40pdv-v-sessmgr01>

Brueggemann, Walter, "A Chance for the Center to Hold," *The Christian Century*, 1992.

THERE IS a pervasive sense among us that things are falling apart. But this sense is directly countered and refuted by the naive conclusion of Psalm 15:5: "Those who do these things shall never be moved." The verb "moved" here means "to totter," to be destabilized, to have the solid ground taken from under oneself. The same verb is used for the shaking of the very foundations of ontological reality. Thus the culmination of worship, according to this Psalm, is an assurance that the world in which we live is reliable and can be counted on. This is a stunning affirmation, just when one senses that the world in all its political, economic, social and moral turmoil is indeed "tottering." The assurance given here, however, is not a cosmological one, as if the Psalm were reflecting on the molecular structure of the universe. It is rather a conclusion permitted and authorized only by liturgical practice that is concerned with moral reality. **It is nothing other than liturgical-moral reality that makes the world reliable.**

The moral claim of this affirmation is further extended in Ezekiel 18 and Hebrews 13. In both cases it is startling that the moral practice that guarantees the world concerns the right practice of money (Ezek. 18:7-8, Heb. 13:5) and the right practice of sexuality (Ezek. 18:6, Heb. 13:4). **Israel understood—long before Marx and Freud—that money and sexuality are the primary zones of life where responsible humanness is enacted, and where abuse and distortion are most readily practiced.**

... The outcome is market economics which makes the neighbor dispensable, which turns greed into "opportunity," and gives great power the "right" to seek its unbridled interests, and which reduces sexuality to a commodity transaction.

The communion of Psalm 15 knows that the "glue of reality" is attentive to neighbor relations (Torah), which are not an optional extra but belong to the covenantal core of created reality. In order to enter into the presence of God, the community must struggle with and for the human infrastructure. And when it departs from God's presence, this community departs with an "untotterable" world that cannot be undone by the powers of chaos.

The link between order and neighbor-practice occurs because the moral connection belongs to the very heart of the God who orders the world.

There are, to be sure, dangers in such a moral dimension to communion. One danger is a sectarianism that makes access to God conditional. In our own time and place, the recovery of the moral condition of communion easily tilts toward legalism and self-righteous moralism. The other danger is a denial of the problem of theodicy. These dangers, however, are no reason to renege on the core claim of the Torah tradition. Human conduct matters decisively for how God will be available and how the world will be shaped in time to come. Walter Brueggemann 710 The Christian CENTURY

<http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=5e497a7b-5d6f-4ea2-94a9-afb2ca7e3336%40sessionmgr4006>

Jones, Peter Rhea, "A Superior Life: Hebrews 12:3 - 13:25," *Review & Expositor*, 1985.

Richard Foster speaks of contentment as a means of opting out of the status race and the maddening pace, points out how restless greed brings misery into our lives, and reminds that "Greed has a way of severing the cords of compassion/"56

Jesus Christ is then the same in his priesthood via-a-vis the unchanging procession of priests (7:23). Rather he is a priest forever like Melchizedek who had neither beginning of days nor end of life (7:3). He was resurrected and exalted to the right hand. It is testified that he lives (7:8) and has become a priest by the power of an indestructible life (7:16). He continues forever (7:24). Consequently he is able to save for all time (7:25). Note that Jesus alone is priest, that church leaders are not called priests, but that the people of God are priestly (1 Pet. 2:9f.; Rev. 5:10).

Jesus Christ is also the same in his leadership. As the people of God faced a crisis of leadership, they were requested to remember and imitate leaders who died without giving up their faith (ekbasin).^{*0} Perhaps Stephen or James or even Peter and Paul are in mind. They were encouraged to draw inspiration from their witness, but likely the writer, as at 7:23, was suggesting also that Christian leaders come and go but our Leader (12:1-3) abides and will lead us home to the city whose builder and maker is God (11:10). Southern Baptist leaders like E. Y. Mullins and George W. Thietz are gone, and the question of the nature of true Christian leadership is in debate. In Hebrews 13 authentic leaders were faithful preachers of the Word (v. 7a) who preached not themselves but Christ Jesus, faithful witnesses (v. 7b) proved faithful by their ministry, and faithful shepherds who cared about people rather than power (v. 17).

Jesus Christ is the same in his grace. Not only must the meaning of 13:8 be drawn in relation to 13:7 but also to 13:9 and its reference to strange and diverse teaching about food. This may be a temptation to return to legalism and Judaism or to turn to something like the Colossian heresy (2:16). The changeless Christian teaching is strengthening the heart by grace (v. 9b). During his ministry Jesus associated with sinners from baptism to

crucifixion and told parables of a Pharisee and a Tax Collector (Lk. 18:9-14) and of a Compassionate Father and an Angry Brother (Lk. 15:11-32). In Hebrews the new covenant of Jeremiah is quoted extensively in chapter 8 with its concluding promise, "I will be merciful toward their iniquities" (v. 12).⁶¹ The teaching of Jesus and about Christ is unalterable in contrast to the false claims of strange teachings. The writer reassures with an absolute confidence in 13:8, like the spirit of Isaac Watts' moving hymn, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past."

Omar, A Rashied, "Embracing the 'Other' As An Extension of the Self: Muslim Reflections on the Epistle to the Hebrews 13:2," *Anglican Theological Review*, 2009.

Verse 2 is part of a subsection (13:1-6) that deals with exhortations concerning community life, family life, and personal conduct. The first two verses contain a double exhortation to "brotherly" conduct, namely "brotherly love" (philadelphia)⁹ and "hospitality" (philoxenia). **Aside from its occurrence here, philoxenia¹⁰ occurs six times in the New Testament.** In contrast to its usage outside early Christian literature, the word in New Testament texts is always used metaphorically for love toward "brothers" and "sisters" in the faith, though not limited exclusively to one's own faith tradition. In Greek literature this usage is practically unknown and the word is understood as physical love of brothers and sisters. Our author, however, becomes concrete right away and illustrates this attitude toward fellow Christians by readiness to receive one's neighbor in one's home.

The ideal of hospitality was widespread in antiquity: by hospitality the "alien" becomes part of one's world and ceases to be felt as a menace. For the first generations of Christians, hospitality was particularly needed in receiving missionaries and offering refuge for migrants. This teaching has enormous implications for healing our world from the proliferating disease of xenophobia.

The biblical teaching is clear: giving hospitality and lovingkindness to strangers, who are always to be seen as children of God, even the presence of God—with the consequence of blessing—establishes itself as a pattern early on in the Jewish tradition, and hence in Christianity.

This Qur'anic verse is further supported by a Muslim teaching found in the hadith literature, commonly called the Prophetic traditions, the second most sacred source of Islamic guidance after the Qur'an. Imam Muslim (d. 865 CE), who compiled one of the two most widely respected and authoritative compendia of these traditions, records that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: God will (question a person) on the Day of Resurrection (saying): 'O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me.' The person MUSLIM REFLECTIONS ON HEBREWS 13:2 441 will reply: "O my Lord, how could I visit Thee when Thou art the Lord of the worlds?" Thereupon God will say: "Did you not know that a servant of Mine was sick but you did not visit him, and were you not aware that if you had visited him, you would have found Me by him?" God will then ask: "O son of Adam, I asked you for food but you did not feed Me." The person will reply: "My Lord,

how could I feed Thee when Thou art the Lord of the worlds?" God will ask: "Did you not know that a servant of Mine asked you for food but you did not feed him, and were you not aware that if you had fed him you would have found him by My side?"¹¹

<http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=48a4ac84-13f9-46c7-99a5-cb456783cb7f%40sessionmgr4006>

Stevenson-Moessner, Jeanne, "The Road to Perfection - An Interpretation of Suffering in Hebrews," *Interpretation*, 2003. (See also, "Hebrews," issue focus of *Interpretation*, 2003.)

We can rework the moral development and spiritual stages within the parable in yet another way. The robber exhibits the infantile if not immoral position: what is yours is mine. The priest and Lévitte depict the narcissistic or self-absorbed worldview: what is mine is mine. Perhaps they had pressing responsibilities. "The Samaritan, in caring for the neighbor, exhibits the traditionally feminine' altruistic posture: what is mine is yours."¹⁴

Is there a place for self-sacrifice along the road to perfection? A last look at the Samaritan parable as paradigm raises two interrelated theological questions. Exegetically, we must consider the christological import of the text. Commentators have noted that, whereas we cannot assert that the Good Samaritan is Jesus Christ in the parable, we can say Jesus Christ was a "unique realization" of the Good Samaritan.¹⁷ Thus, to say that Christ intended the Good Samaritan to represent himself as he related to suffering is more than we can know. Christ, however, demonstrates a fourth level of moral response to suffering: what is mine is yours. This is ultimate suffering, which for Christ culminated on the cross in Jerusalem. Authentic self-sacrifice is at the core of the Christian gospel. Christine Gudorf, a feminist ethicist, adds: "The moments of self-sacrifice, such as we find in the crucifixion of Jesus, are just that—moments in a process designed to end up in mutual love."¹⁸ Unless those of us who teach and preach in the church are clear on this last point, we could be guilty of perpetuating an interpretation of suffering and self-sacrifice that is self-annihilation. Misbegotten self-sacrifice extinguishes the self. We must remember: the Samaritan finished the journey. This journey presumes a distinction between self and other. The journey presupposes a sense of self.

https://www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Statistics_2_Perpetrators.pdf