



A few weeks ago, we had to cave into getting new tires on a vehicle, and so I went to the place after scheduling an appointment so many days in advance. Of course, that didn't matter whatsoever. It took much, *much* longer than anticipated. And obviously my schedule was much, *much* more important than everyone else's, whether that be the other customers or the workers doing what I didn't dare trust myself to do. The frustration was rapidly increasing on the inside of me. To top it off, when it was all ready to go, a service truck had blocked me in as it was there to pick up the old tires from the service department. And so, even more waiting ensued, and the patience wore even more thin within me, because, of course, my schedule was more important than everyone else's.

Then, all of a sudden, this older gentleman emerged from the side door that was meant to only be for the professionals to go in and out of from that heavy-duty machinery area. He was using a cane and wearing his black with gold-lettering veterans hat displaying his service in the Air Force. You could tell he didn't exactly know what was going on. He was looking for his wife, for starters. They had brought in their car for new tires as well, but he didn't know all the details about their vehicle as the manager went through the standard questions of year, make and model, and whatever else, to try to set everything up. And then, the strangest thing happened.

When there was finally a break in all the action at the front desk of people coming and going, when the manager could have easily gone away to take a break from all the chaos, from all of us annoying customers who insisted that the whole world should revolve around our holy schedule; he, instead, walked up to the older gentleman, sitting by himself on a bench, and asked if he could get the veteran a bottle of water. Soon enough, the manager came back and didn't just give the older guy the cool beverage on a hot day and walked away. No, he sat down beside him, and asked about his story: the story behind the hat, the story of his life.

It wasn't anything extravagant. I didn't get much of the details, as that storage truck that further put a wrench in my high-and-mighty plans finally pulled away. I don't know if there was any mention of God or Jesus or Holy Spirit or anything of the sort, but I still have a feeling it was a most beautiful rendition of the words we heard from Hebrews this morning: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Now, I didn't exactly see the confused gentleman as an angel when he walked through the door that was not meant for him. I doubt the manager saw him that way, either. Nevertheless, he did it anyway. He got some water and sat down beside the veteran. Nothing extravagant, and yet it was: it was extravagantly beautiful, extravagantly holy, a humbling extravagant way of bringing Jesus himself to life.

But it isn't just that Jesus could be in the guy behind the counter, who came down from his high-and-mighty perch, of sorts, and sat down beside the precious child of God (and yes, still a child of God regardless of age or physical or mental conditions). Actually, it's also possible that Jesus was just as much brought to life by the guy who came out of no where, who came in and out of the place he was not supposed to go. After all, I have a feeling Jesus has done and continues to do exactly that for us.

Because, as much as we lift up our schedules as holy, as tire installers and grocery store cashiers and bank tellers and construction workers and other strangers in the world should make sure they do not dare mess any of it up for us; we also have a tendency of preferring Jesus come and go as we please, too. We invite in Jesus in on Sunday mornings, during some weekday prayers, and maybe some random funerals and weddings along the way. We don't exactly have time for our Lord otherwise, since we have so much else going on. But I like to think Jesus comes in through the side door amidst our heavy-duty obsessions of getting from A to B, our judgments of others, our guilt and pains and worries galore: the part of our human warehouse we would much rather Jesus not walk through at all.

Nevertheless, I like to think Jesus comes in un-announced over and over again, and sits down in the depths of our heart to remind us to take a moment and have a conversation with the one who loves us always, who will never stop from showing up. Take a moment and hear the story: hear the story of how God did not wait around for everything to be perfect in the world before showing up in Jesus Christ. Hear the story of how Jesus will show up in tire installers and older veterans with canes. Hear how Jesus continues to extend the greatest hospitality to us, the hospitality of love and compassion and grace that will setup shop in the midst of our hearts, and never be taken away.

So, yes, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." However, today, we ultimately give thanks to God for treating us as if we are angels, as if we are worthy of Jesus coming into our life, including during the times when we may not always open the door, but our Lord will burst through anyway with the very love from the cross and out of the empty tomb; the love of God that will never be taken away from us, and the whole world. And for that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!