

## Hospitality in Luke's Gospel Narrative

Elto Solibut<sup>1</sup>, Art S. Thomas<sup>2</sup>, Wolter Weol<sup>3</sup>

Manado State Christian Institute

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### Abstract

*Hospitality is one of the themes echoed in Christian theology with various forms of effort. This is inseparable from the fact that the Indonesian nation is a plural nation. Plurality on the one hand is a beauty, but on the other hand plurality also contains its own element of sensitivity. Therefore, the theme of hospitality is a reference to suppress and prevent potential conflicts in the midst of the reality of the plurality of this nation. This paper would like to present several passages of the Bible that reflect hospitality based on the narrative of the Gospel of Luke. The reason researchers chose Luke's Gospel is because of its universal nature; touch all aspects in a plural context. The research method used is a literature study research approach. From the results of this study, it was found that hospitality has socioreligious values that include mutual respect, courtesy, acceptance, help, and a sense of solidarity, which can be widely implemented. Thus, as a Christian the implications of his faith make hospitality has no fixed place, but rather a plural reality.*

**Keywords:** *hospitality, Gospel of Luke, Christian, pluralism*

(\*) Corresponding Author: [eltosolibut@gmail.com](mailto:eltosolibut@gmail.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

It is a reality that the Indonesian nation is a pluralistic nation. Plurality on the one hand is a beauty, on the other hand pluralism can have the potential for conflicts, ranging from religious, ethnic, cultural and political conflicts. For example, the Poso incident from 1998 to 2001 and the Ambon conflict in 2001 are two series of events that have left a very heartbreaking wound for this nation. The slogan "Bhineka Tunggal Ika" is often just a slogan.

Sadly, these conflicts also do not only occur to those of different ethnicities, cultures and religions, but also to fellow groups or communities. Generally, this can be caused by differences in ideology, political views and others. Tension, friction, mutual attack and drop, spreading provocative issues often occur, both in real life and through cyberspace. Situations like this indicate that although hospitality has been part of tradition, it does not always guarantee integrity and security in religious, cultural, and political life for the sake of the integrity of the nation.

The Church, as part of this nation, lives in the midst of pluralism. The Church must be able to present itself as the salt and light of the world in diversity. But what often happens is the opposite. He lost his identity and even became a stumbling block. Therefore, this paper wants to offer a theological concept to the church about hospitality in the midst of the plurality of the Indonesian nation. This reference is based on answers to such questions as whether the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke describes hospitality? How did Jesus carry himself in the midst of the diversity of religious, cultural and political ideologies?

Some of the related studies are, research conducted by Tembang which highlights extreme attitudes in religious life. She reflects on the dialogue between Jesus and a Samaritan woman in John 4:1-30 as an offer for a life of religious moderation in a multicultural society (Tembang, 2023). Meanwhile, Suprabowo, through his theological review of Luke 10:25-37, provides a number of ideas as steps to reconstruct hospitality in the *new normal* period, namely hospitality must be based on compassion, creating collaboration in handling Covid 19, and the use of digital technology media in creating interaction between humans without limits (Suprabowo, 2020).

By focusing on the narrative of the Gospel of Luke, the results of this research are expected to make a significant contribution to the way of looking at others through the practices of Christian life in the church.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a literature study. Literature study is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading and recording, and processing research materials (Zed, 2010). The technique of collecting data in literature studies is to conduct a review of books, literature, records, and various reports related to the problem to be solved (Nazir, 2003). The main data sources to be used are books and journal articles, as well as other secondary library sources. This study also uses a narrative approach by selecting significant data to be analyzed to produce a complete idea and conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Hospitality

The word *hospitality* in English translates into Indonesian as "hospitality" or also known as "hospitality", derived from the Latin word, *hospitalitem*, which means hospitality to guests, and from the word *hospes*, which means guest, and host. Collins' dictionary defines hospitality as friendly behavior; Friendly to guests or first-time visitors. Meanwhile, hospitality in Greek is called *philoxenia* from the root word *philos* which means "love of friendship" (Adiprasetya, 2013).

Thus, hospitality has connotations that contain a wealth of values, including politeness, openness (acceptance), appreciation, and solidarity. Through hospitality, anyone is invited to bring kindness and care indiscriminately. In this case, hospitality certainly does not only apply in actions, but also courtesy in words. The two are fully integrated.

### **The Socio-Cultural Setting of Luke's Gospel Community**

Early Christianity grew and flourished in a vast area of Roman rule. The Roman state, which was built in 753 BC, expanded by controlling several areas that covered the Mediterranean region, namely the southern part of Europe, the western part of Asia and the areas in the North of Africa (Tjandra, 2000).

The years 85 – 90 AD were the period of the reign of Emperor Titus Flavius Domitianus. Domitian was a true *autocrat*. He is anti-corruption and prostitution practices. He also pays attention to the field of religion. The temples of ancient gods that have been destroyed are being rebuilt. However, he was anti-foreign religions, especially those that attracted followers of the Roman society (Tenney, 2013).

It is a historical fact that Christianity was born in a society that has a very diverse belief system. These beliefs have basically grown and taken root over the

centuries long before Christianity became global. The Romans adhered to an *animist* belief system. They believe in the existence of demons and spirits, so they also have a custom of worshipping the spirits of the dead. They also worship certain objects that are considered sacred. And no less popular is the worship of gods. There were many Roman gods who had their own duties and fings. This is also true in the Greek belief system. This is what Paul found according to the Bible's testimony in Acts 17:22. In its development, the Roman gods fused with the Greek gods when their culture succeeded in conquering Rome. For example, Jupiter the god of the sky is equated with Zeus, Juno with Hera, Neptune with Poseidon, Pluto with Hades (Tjandra, 2000). In contrast to the polytheistic Roman-Greek religion, Jews and Christians adhere to a *monotheistic* belief system – both worship the One God, the truly living God. Nevertheless, there are many things that show that there is a distinction between Judaism and Christianity. One of the most fundamental examples is that the Jews rejected Jesus as the messiah promised by God through the Book of the Prophets. Their rejection of Jesus' status was based on excessive expectations. In their minds, the messiah is an earthly king who has superior power to free them from the invaders (Tjandra, 2008).

The history in which Christianity was born and developed is also colored by literary diversity. There were four languages spoken in the Roman world, among which were Latin, Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. Latin is a *juridical* language and is usually used by writers. Aramaic is the language spoken in the Near East. When Paul made an apologetic act against himself in Acts 22:2, he was using Aramaic. Whereas ancient Hebrew is no longer popular. It is only used by the rabbis in certain interests, for example in terms of theology. Greek is the most common and widely known language. What is difficult to deny is to look at the fact that the New Testament letters are found in Greek (Tenney, 2013).

The frequent occurrence of civil wars in Rome resulted in social life being chaotic. The existence of pagan religions, the teachings of Seneca, could not help them, thus creating a distressing situation. Crime becomes inevitable, such as political fraud, immorality, fraud in business, superstitious fraud, divorce, and even murder. A picture of this dire situation can be seen in Romans 1:18-32. Such a situation and condition were apparently also experienced by the people of Lukas' community. Kingsbury (1988) wrote:

“Socioculturally, the Lucan community lived in an area where the Jewish and Gentile populations were both strong and where both subjecting it to harassment and persecution. The situation of these Christians is aptly described in Acts 14:22, where Paul and Barnabas say,” ... through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God.” A survey of the Gospel alone reveals that the Lucan Christians have endured, or must endure, such afflictions as the following: the hatred of others (6:22, 27; 21:17); social ostracism, including exclusion from the synagogue and the cursing of one’s name associated with this (6:22); verbal abuse of various kinds (6:22, 28); arrest by the authorities as a result of one’s own family bringing charges against one (21:16); judicial harassment, such as being flogged in the synagogue or jailed or hauled before Gentile authorities (21:12) and even death (11:49).”

#### **Hospitality in Luke's Gospel Narrative**

Jesus described Himself as a wanderer. He walked from village to village, city to city without having a permanent place to live. It said: *"The wolf has burrows*

*and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"* (Luke 9:58). Jesus as a wanderer on His ministry journey, He was often greeted with a friendly atmosphere. The following are some of the acts of hospitality experienced by Jesus as well as Jesus' own hospitality to the people He met.

#### ***Respect a Pharisee (7:36-50).***

The story that Luke highlights in this passage is the story of the forgiveness given by Jesus to one of the women who was very notorious for her sins. But behind this story, there is something quite interesting, namely the action of a Pharisee to Jesus who graciously invited Jesus to eat at his house.

Of course, the above is not something common and commonplace considering that the relationship between the Pharisees and Jesus was not good. The Pharisees are one of the sects in Judaism. The people of this group, along with the scribes and the Sadducees, often confronted Jesus. It was considered a threat to Jewish culture. Therefore, His actions and teachings always receive supervision from the community. His existence without a place to live still makes it difficult for Him to escape from the gaze of society (Andrianti, 2013). But instead of rejecting Jesus, he invited Jesus to a banquet with him (36).

The Greek word used in this text translated "inviting" is *προσεκάλεσεν* (*prosekalesen*). The King James Version of the Bible renders him *desired him*, which means "to desire." Therefore, it was clearly the Pharisee who took the initiative to open the door of his house and wanted to share a table with Jesus. Jesus was considered a special guest. It is not known what his motive was for wanting Jesus, but it can be said that he still had a positive mind about Jesus. This can be seen how he addressed Jesus as a teacher (40). Thus, although the relationship between the Pharisees and Jesus was not harmonious, unlike Simon's, he had *respect* for Jesus from all the confrontations that existed at that time. On the other hand, with Jesus, his presence to fulfill the invitation was an act of appreciation for the efforts made by Simon, the Pharisee.

#### ***Enthusiasm for Guests (10:38-42)***

Luke relates that when Jesus and His disciples arrived in a village, He was greeted by a woman named Martha. From Luke's statement, Martha had a sister, Maria. Seen in this account, Luke recounts a very contrasting choice of attitude between Mary and Martha. Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet to listen to His teachings, while Martha was busy preparing everything for Jesus (39b-40a). Indeed, in this story, the character of Martha gets the most attention, and is often raised in sermons as an example of a bad attitude in the context of worship service. But if explored further, there are reasons behind why he behaves this way.

Verse 40: "*while Martha was very busy serving...*". The phrase "very busy" in the LAI translation comes from the Greek word: *περιεσπᾶτο* (*periespato*) singular 3rd person verb *imperfect passive indicative* from the root *περιεσπᾶω* (*periespaō*) which literally means "separated", "pulled from the surroundings", "confused", "made to worry" (Suryowati, 2020). The various meanings of the above word indicate that Martha prepared various kinds of banquets for Jesus. He was confused as to what to do first with what was available, for Jesus came suddenly. It was this condition that made him complain to Jesus that Mary would help him. Especially in the tradition of the Jewish family the brother who was responsible for taking care of the guests (Mary was Martha's sister. Cf. Yoh. 11:1).

In the tradition of Judaism, the practice of providing good service to guests has its roots in the stories or stories in the Old Testament. One of them is Genesis 18:1-15 which describes how Abraham welcomed three guests who mysteriously appeared while he was sitting at the door of his tent. He ran to them and then gave them water to wash their feet, then prepared food and drink needs (Christiani, 2022).

Consider these three texts: "*he ran from the door of his tent to meet them...*" (Genesis 18:2), "*A woman named Martha received Him into her house,*" (38), and "*When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to get Him. But Mary stayed at home*" (Jn. 11:20). From these three verses, it can be seen that the presence of guests should be welcomed as a form of reception. The last two verses also show the presence of Jesus, always preceded by Martha's remarks. Martha showed herself to be a person who was friendly to guests. This tradition of hospitality is called *hachnasat orchim*. It is part of the Mitzvah which consists of the 613 commandments of Allah recorded in the Torah (plus the 7 Rabbinic commandments to 620). This tradition has no limits; to whom and when. That is why *hachnasat orchim* or receiving guests, is an activity that is allowed on the Sabbath (Suryowati, 2020). Against this background of Jewish law and culture, it is possible that Martha made the choice to provide the best service to Jesus. His capacity as a host, he feels that he needs to be responsible for the presence of his guests. Therefore, although many interpreters give a poor assessment of her attitude, Martha is only a person who places herself as a traditional Jewish woman. He chose this attitude as a form of his obedience to the tradition of hospitality and his love for Jesus.

#### **Merombak Stigma (19:1-10)**

The next story comes from a man named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus's profession was that of a chief tax collector, and a rich man (2). But behind the glory of his wealth, he felt emptiness in life. He had a problem of social relations, namely rejection in the midst of the Jewish community. The problem is not because of the profession, but the position is used to exploit the poor by charging more than they should. This is the reason why the tax collectors are hated by the Jewish community. They were considered great sinners, which according to Drane they were Roman collaborators (Drane, 1996).

When Jesus crossed the city of Jericho, Zacchaeus did not want to miss this opportunity. He was enthusiastic to see who Jesus was (3). It is possible that Zacchaeus once heard Jesus who was widely talked about by people as a friend of tax collectors (Leks, 2003). His physical limitations did not prevent him from finding a way to see Jesus, namely by climbing a fig tree (4). However, who would have thought that this alternative effort would then attract Jesus' attention to offer to take a hike in his house (5). Zacchaeus then went downstairs. He received Jesus with joy (6). He ignored everyone's mouths and focused his attention on Jesus (Suwantie, 2020). Therefore, it is certain that Zacchaeus would be friendly to Jesus as a foreigner. The joy he experienced explained everything.

However, behind this story it can also be found that true hospitality is Divine hospitality through the actions of Jesus (Sidabutar and Hutapea, 2020). The encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus was initiated by Jesus. Jesus greeted Zacchaeus first. Verse 5: "*When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said: 'Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay in your house.'*" Jesus' choice to stop at Zacchaeus' home was a risky and controversial one. How could it not,

Jesus, who was known as a rabbi and his status as the Messiah, chose to associate with sinners. His presence will be seen as a form of support for Zacchaeus' sinful deeds. But it is precisely from this attitude that Jesus represents Divine hospitality to sinful man.

At this point, it can be concluded that the joy experienced by Zacchaeus would go straight to Zacchaeus, who was willing to accept Jesus as a stranger in his home, was an attitude of hospitality. There is nothing wrong with Zacchaeus putting aside the negative stigma attached to him. He rejected a sense of his unworthiness as a sinner to accept the figure of Jesus. Therefore, the lesson of this story is that whatever negative stigma is attached to a person, it is not an obstacle for him to be hospitable. The important note is that in hospitality, there is room for God to work; making efforts to reconcile in relation to Him and also fellow humans.

### **Breaking Through the Dividing Lines (10:25-37)**

In addition, Jesus taught about hospitality through the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus told this story in answer to a scribe's question: "And who is my fellow man?" This question stems from the law of love, "love your neighbor as yourself" (27). The motive of this question is actually the self-justification of his concept of understanding of who his fellow human beings are (29).

In the New Testament there are three words used to translate the word "Other," i.e.: *γειτων* (*geitôn*), *περιοικος* (*perioikos*) and *πλησιον* (*pleison*). The word *geitôn* means "countryman" and "neighbor" (14:12; 15:6, 9). The meaning of the word *perioikos* is "neighbor", "the one who is around the place" (1:58). The meaning of the word *plêsion* is "neighbor", "neighbor", "friend", "countryman". This word is found in Matthew 5:43; 19:19; 22:39, Mark 12:31, 33, and used by Luke in this parable (10:27, 29,

30) (Siswanto, et.al., 2022). It can be seen that the three Greek words have the same meaning, namely people who have very close kinship relationships, both family ties, friendship, neighbors and countrymen.

The story in this parable tells of a man who came down from Jericho who had a bad fate on his way. He was not only robbed, but also beaten until he suffered a very critical condition (30). The two Jewish religious leaders who saw the victim at different times simply passed by without providing help (31-32). They are temple officials who hold the Torah very firmly and defend its holiness from unclean deeds (Kraybill, 2005, p. 173). In contrast to a Samaritan who showed the opposite attitude, he provided help by cleaning the victim's wounds, taking him to the inn at all costs (33-35).

Through this account, Jesus managed to guide the questioner until he answered his own questions. And from the description of the story of this parable, it can be concluded that "my fellow man" has a broad meaning. The scribe was certainly surprised, for in the eyes of the Jews, the Samaritan had a bad stigma; they are considered infidels (Kraybill, 2005). Fellow Jews are those who are countrymen. Jesus overturned their understanding of exclusivity by showing the hospitality of a Samaritan who was able to heal a stranger who was seriously injured by the robbery (Suprabowo, 2020, p. 45). He contrasted the attitude of the two figures with a person who was considered an infidel. Despite having a fairly respectable profession, they fail to apply moral laws. Rather, Jesus justified the attitude of the despised person as one who had acted as a neighbor. The willingness

of the heart to provide help with all forms of sacrifice has overcome his ego. Therefore, the spirit of hospitality in the practice of helping must be able to penetrate the identity of tribe, culture, social status, religiosity, nation, even those who are considered enemies by their people and those who are hostile to their people (cf.

Simanjuntak, 2012, p. 44).

### **Jesus, the Stranger as Host (9:10-17)**

Jesus not only taught about hospitality, but He also set an example. This passage tells of Jesus feeding about five thousand people (14). Jesus, who had no permanent residence, His ministry was His home. It places itself and acts as a host (Christiani, 2022). As the host, Jesus felt responsible for the condition of his guests while with Him. This appears to be where Jesus urged the disciples to act to prepare for their physical needs (13). What Jesus did with his actions also reflected the concern that the crowd that followed Him would experience physical weakness due to the lack of food intake in their bodies.

Luke does not mention the background of the five thousand people who were with Jesus. However, it can be ascertained that these people are dominated by people who are in a condition of social status below the poverty line. Related to this passage, Wilhelmus and Sudaryanti (2015) reveal that there are four forms of concrete actions performed by Jesus: (1) feeding, (2) healing them of diseases, (3) giving time and attention to the poor, and (4) teaching them about the Kingdom of God. Therefore, this act of Jesus was not only hospitality in the form of material concern, but also spiritual as well as an indication of acceptance, as Pohl pointed out that "historically, the fellowship of the table was an important way of recognizing the value and dignity of people equally". This is inseparable from the status of the poor who are looked down upon in society. By eating together, Jesus showed an egalitarian hospitalist among all those present (Pohl, 1999)

### **Grounding Hospitality in the Midst of Plurality**

Therefore, the theological construction of hospitality, when viewed from the concept of psychology, is not only about accepting the existence of strangers. However, the theology of hospitality is a real act by fighting for theological ethical values as an expression of psychological values regardless of the foreigner's background. Theological ethical values are religious values so that religion places itself in fighting for the concept of hospitality for people with disabilities. Religion gives its position as an institution that fights for justice for the discriminatory, so that religious values become universal for religious people.

The existence of the church is in the midst of pluralism. The Church and its multidimensional ministry dynamics will meet in diversity. Just as the church must obey the word of God and make Jesus Christ an example, so hospitality or hospitality must be embodied in the life of a pluralistic nation by practicing the values of hospitality itself, both in religious, cultural and political life. Here are some attitudes that need to be done.

#### **Be Polite**

Manners are part of hospitality. People who behave in this way show an attitude of appreciation and respect, and generally in the tradition, this attitude is directed at those who are older or to someone who has a certain position. In Christianity, the attitude of being polite is not only to certain people, but to anyone.

Therefore, every Christian needs to maintain a polite attitude in action and speech. Do not spread hate speech over certain beliefs, respect the customs of others, and engage in polite politics without propaganda. Behaving politely can create a positive environment, effective communication, harmonious relationships and create a good reputation. One important thing to note is that hospitality is the identity of the church.

### **Having Solidarity Between Fellow Humans**

It is undeniable that in this increasingly advanced world, the sense of solidarity is eroded where individualism is more dominant. People are starting to be apathetic and more selfish. Through the hospitality of the good Samaritan and Jesus, both of whom were moved by compassion, we learn that solidarity as fellow human beings is above all else. This cannot be separated from human beings who are essentially social creatures; need each other. Hospitality breaks through socio-cultural barriers in society. Likewise, the church, the church as a religious community, is also a social reality that lives in the community. The community is the target of hospitality in order to realize the mission of the Kingdom of God, especially to those who really need help.

### **Have an Attitude of Acceptance**

One of the human attitudes is the habit of judging someone for their bad behavior. It is unbearable that a bad stigma is attached to the person who is a victim. They act like God by *judging* a person's negative personality. This attitude is certainly different from the one Jesus showed Zacchaeus. Jesus knew that Zacchaeus needed acceptance of the discriminatory attitude he was experiencing. Jesus said, "... *for this man was also the son of Abraham* (Luke 19:9). This means that Jesus re-enshrined Zacchaeus as a person who was also worthy of God's grace of salvation.

Similarly, the church must open itself to anyone who needs help regardless of their social and religious background. Moreover, feeling jealous of sinfulness and then acting discriminatory. The real sinners are those who need help. The church should be a place of cycle for those who feel they want to improve their lives. In fact, he had to come out of the *ghetto* to reach the lost with the joy of salvation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above stories are representations of hospitality. Hospitality is not only interpreted narrowly. Hospitality is the most important part of the practice of living a faith that can be widely practiced. Being friendly is not limited by space. As Jesus was a wanderer, the implications of living a life of faith make hospitality not have a fixed and absolute place, but rather in the reality of a pluralistic people. Hospitality is one of the identities of Christians that must continue to be maintained and nurtured, so that it can provide new hope in the midst of pluralism and upheaval of the times that continue to change in various aspects of life.

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