

## Creating an invitational culture - 4

In Part 1 I mentioned that we are all in this together - all have a part to play in inviting someone to church. 1st point was: We have got to be interesting; church has got to be interesting and exciting; the more you allow God to work in you the more interesting you become.

in part 2: if we going to be an invitational church : **we have got to invite people !!!**  
part 3 - we've got to be those that receive people as Jesus received us; be inclusive, involve people, know the value of an invitation.

It is easy to put walls up in our lives and feel like life is busy enough right now so not enough time for people. Our lives have to be invitational, be good at welcoming. God wants us to live with open lives where we invite other people into our world.

**Luke 19: 1-10** many of us know the story of Zacchaeus . This is an event in the life of Jesus. How many times have we waited to be invited to a party a wedding? Imagine here Jesus invites Himself to Zacc's house? In some cultures it is ok to invite yourself into someone's party. Imagine if we did this here where we go to someone and say today I am coming to yours for dinner!

Everybody hated tax collectors, why? They were collecting tax for an oppressive regime (Romans) ; often Jewish people were working for Romans ; they cheated people where they took whatever they wanted as a profit.

So Zac was not liked a lot; they became very rich by corrupt means so they were not liked. Zac was the unloved guy of the day, he was hated... not liked, and yet this is whom Jesus chooses to do life with and to love.

Jesus often goes to the unloved and meets with them and often it is about the people you don't love, not just the people you love.

How often do we look for people who are shunned from society? Jesus went after the people who were shunned to bring change in their lives. Mathew was a tax collector yet, was received by Jesus.

Jesus crosses the lake to go to the other side to meet the man possessed with many demons (**Luke 8:26-**) naked and chained an outcast of society and delivers him, sets him free. Aren't you glad that Jesus did not come only for the rich or the well off or the celebrities in this world but he came for everybody... both the poor the downtrodden the outcast the destitute and the rich too.

Jesus died for all of us no matter how bad our past was or whether we were born into wealth or in the gutter, Jesus died for everybody and took the sins of everybody on himself - the beauty of the gospel of Jesus;

There's great news for you today if you are feeling you are not pure or holy or righteous - Jesus loves you just the way you are and he is longing for you. Jesus loves you. He died for you. He wants to set you free.

The name Zacchaeus means pure. However he is living anything but a pure life! Jesus is walking down the road and Zacchaeus hears about this and wanting to see Jesus climbs a tree. Jesus comes to the tree, stops, and calls to him by name - Jesus knows you by name!

**Isaiah 43:1b** *O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*

Amazing! Jesus knows you, you, you by name! So Jesus looks up and calls Zac down and says He must stay in his house today. Wasn't that a crazy thing Jesus did? Telling Zac I am coming to stay in your home today.

In a western society this will be difficult to grasp as our society isn't used to someone inviting themselves forcefully into their home. We have set borders and set values that are culturally acceptable as to how far we could go in a relationship, how quickly, yet Jesus comes to Zac and says "Zac I know you have not invited me in but I am inviting myself into your world"

I think sometimes we should be those who don't wait for an invitation but invite ourselves in!!!

Sometimes we have to do this when we discover a need and the only way we know how to help in time of need is to invite ourselves in. People are too polite today especially in the west that even when they are in need they say they are not... to be polite! We ought to go and make a difference.

Have you been in an awkward moment where you see someone and feel drawn to them... and you think shall I or shall I not speak to this person? You somehow pluck up courage to talk and then you realise how God fits in to this conversation and opens each others world. It is often the Holy Spirit that draws you to someone you have never met before just so that you can be the vessel he can use to bring a change in that persons life.

God often prompts us to go talk to somebody so that He can give that person a way out of his situation of desperation.

How many of us here have done this and spoken to someone and then they have gone away and you may not know the impact of that one word or prayer you prayed for that person but you know that a seed was sown. Many of us will only know how many we have impacted for the kingdom when we go to heaven.

So if we are going to be an invitational church then sometimes we have got to invite ourselves into someone's world and not always wait to be invited. Can we actually do that! Invite ourselves into someone's world because in that moment God can do something.

Jesus tells Zac, *"I am going to come to your house for dinner"*. Have you ever considered the reply that Zac gave?

Often we are concerned about the reply aren't we, and we don't like to be impolite or be shunned when an invitation is given. Too often we are afraid of negative responses. How would you respond if I came to one of you and said I am coming to your place for dinner and I am

bringing my whole family! Would be worried about being rejected and how would I take no for an answer and how embarrassing would that be? Look at Zac, he takes Jesus to his house with great excitement and joy. The chief tax collector now takes Jesus to his house cheerfully.

There are people who are just waiting for you to invite yourselves into their world. They are waiting!

For each one of you there is someone in your work place, school, club, on FB who is waiting for you to invite yourself into their world and when you do invite yourself they will be filled with joy and excitement about what's going to happen and transpire in that whole relationship. Zac shows interest by climbing that tree but Jesus shows intention. Zac is seeking something, he climbs the tree searching for something and Jesus comes along does something about it.

*Seek and you will find. (Matt 7:7)*

There are many who are secretly seeking God in their lives realising that God void in them and that inner voice calling them to turn to someone who can bring about a change in their lives. They are seeking God but doing it secretly and they need people like us to pluck up courage to embrace them and invite ourselves into their world to help them on their journey of faith.

**Q. Who in our world is seeking God right now?** The Holy Spirit can show us who in our world is seeking to find Jesus and lead us to that person. We can pray and ask God to show us. At our Wednesday prayer meeting we often pray for people in our world who are seeking for truth and we pray that God would open their spiritual eyes to see the Truth.

People were not happy that Jesus was going to this sinners house but look at the response from Zac that blows everybody's mind: He stand in front of Jesus stunned and he stammers these words, *"Sir, I will give away half of my income to the poor and if I have cheated anyone I will pay them back 4 times more"*

Wow! he was mega rich and he was willing to part with half of his wealth and give 4 times more of what he has cheated people from... and that would include almost everybody! Jesus says, Salvation has come to this home today. It starts off with Zac having a little interest in what's happening.

It all starts with us being interesting and taking interest in inviting someone into our world so that they can encounter Jesus.

I Wonder how many of us would this week take an interest in someone we know and if it takes some degree of awkwardness be able to extend an invitation by inviting ourselves into their world so that they can encounter Jesus.

I wonder if Jesus was worried about what the crowd thought of him going into a sinner's house? I doubt it.

How many times are we worried or embarrassed to go into an environment where we think our reputation will be questioned or that something of that environment will rub off on us and that somehow we will loose our salvation?

Jesus invited Himself into the sinner's house to bring salvation. Let's not be afraid to go into places that some people might question in order to enable God to do something new through our being obedient to His voice.

Jesus loved going to parties and situations where there were sinners. It did not taint him nor did he lose his holiness!

Have you been to a party where it all starts well and then after some wine etc it starts deteriorating and it looks a whole lot different to what you thought it should look like? Our God is bigger on the inside of us. We don't have to be afraid or feel intimidated.

Sometimes we have got to walk away from environments that are wrong but there are some times when we got to hang around because of what God can do in that environment that seems sinful because God can turn any situation around for his glory. You may be there just for that one person who is on God's heart.

Would we be a little brave to invite someone this coming month to invite ourselves into their world to show them how good God is?