When we move from the Old Testament to the New, we see the importance of hospitality heightened by the God who came to live among humanity. Christ was equally comfortable as a host or as guest in multiple contexts. His life was such a contrast to his ascetic cousin John that his detractors, the Pharisees, accused him of being “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”He was equally comfortable as a guest of a reviled tax collector, the elite Pharisees or with down to earth friends like Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

But Jesus was not just a guest; we are given several examples of how Christ, who owned nowhere to lay his head, hosted both large crowds and his intimate friends. He noticed when people were hungry and fed them. When he fed the 5,000 we see him using what he had on hand, directing his disciples to help, and organizing the crowd into manageable groups of 50. In contrast, the Last Supper was an evening when Christ sent two of his disciples ahead to prepare a traditional celebration feast for his closest friends, then use the occasion to introduce a new tradition, one we still celebrate every month.

Even when He wasn’t eating, Jesus was talking about hospitality. In consecutive chapters in Luke the Lord tells the parables of a great banquet, the prodigal son whose story ends with a great party, and the contrast between the rich man and Lazarus.

It should come as no surprise then that the early church was built around meals and hospitality.