

## Hospitality

*"Hospitality at its best when one allows the invited guest to find peace and assurance on the way to the eternal home."  
(Romano Guardini)*

God is the perfect host. Every day he invites us to sit at his table and eat with him. We do this by quietly sitting down at his richly laid table, preparing ourselves for a blessed time together. (Psalm 23:5). Meetings with God are seldom run anything like a business meeting. Rather, they begin by a sharing of what is on our hearts. Friendship with him is nourishment for us and is our daily source of living bread. (John 6:48). "How are you?". "What's on your mind right now?", he asks us, and we can respond in the same manner. It is the encounter that is important, not just the exchange of information. We want to fully appreciate one another. In this way we learn more about each other and we are changed. Jesus often revealed himself to the disciples while they were eating. (Matthew 26:26; Luke 24:30-31). Our prayer begins as we sit down, relax and speak from heart to heart in God's presence. Such hospitality must again become the norm for life together in our time. It has much to do with our hearts, which is why the Bible emphasizes it so much. It involves giving someone assurance and security and a sharing of our lives. Homes and hearts become places of transformation. Also in intercession we give people a place at the table in our hearts. They can have a place there, even if they think differently than we do. We have no fear, we value them and keep our hearts open to them. Hospitality also involves the heavenly/spiritual world. We read in Hebrews 13:2 that this is how we may entertain angels without knowing it. God wants to open up new possibilities for us to experience this. The encounter with the heavenly world helps us to bring heaven down to earth. So homes and hearts are places of transformation and growth in relationships. For a long time, our focus has primarily been on spiritual warfare and thus bringing change into the natural world. But isn't the kingdom of God most clearly visible when we live in an entirely new way? We cannot really move forward when we just oppose what is happening in the world. It is our personal involvement that brings change in our country. Coming from heavenly places and emboldened by the ways of heaven, we become leaders and implementers of transformation and bring the beauty of the kingdom of God to earth at this time

Alexander Schlüter

## Widening our world-view

According to Immanuel Kant, the Enlightenment was "man's emergence from his self-inflicted immaturity". From then on man should use his own intellect without relying on guidance from another source. While the Reformation in the 16th century brought about a Christian renewal in Europe and beyond, world-view in the West actually closed up to any such influences in the centuries after the Enlightenment. In humanism, man becomes the measure of all things and human reason alone rules. As a result, ideological structures are erected which, depending on the extent of human knowledge and ability to understand them, are diametrically opposed. Man loses the sense of the absolute and with it suffers the consequences.

A socialist saying in the GDR (German Democratic Republic - East Germany) was: "Without God and sunshine, we'll bring in the harvest", the answer was: "Without sunshine and God, the GDR will go bankrupt", which in fact was the case in 1989. Today, most people in the Western world are further than ever from a world-view beyond what is immediately visible. No wonder "the latest generation" is convinced that they have to save the planet. Who is telling them that the truth is radically different from what they have been told? That there is a heaven above this earth where their Creator has a future for them and hope for this world?

During this Advent season, let us ask Jesus to come to us in a special way: into our world-view, into our understanding, to allay the hatred and despair within young people, and the fear of war and destruction. (Acts 4:12).

Let us lay before the Lord the promises that we have received in our prayers for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit over Europe. Let us pray that at Christmas the churches will proclaim the birth of the heavenly King. (Isaiah 9:1-6). K.H.

## Living with God's creation

When God created man, he gave him a special relationship with creation and a responsibility for it. This special relationship and responsibility needs to be rediscovered. The scientific revolution in the 16th/17th century brought great advances in the fields of physics, biology, chemistry and astronomy. At the same time, they led to a radical change in our awareness and appreciation of creation, because from then on, the methods of gaining knowledge and understanding have been totally based on physical observation, experimentation and rationality. The newly discovered possibilities of experimentation and prediction diverted our focus from invisible, spiritual things, and formed a world-view that almost made our awareness of a spiritual world disappear. Since then, the unique connection between nature and the spiritual world has no longer been recognised. But it is still there! This has major consequences for our dealings with creation. We can explain the photosynthesis of trees (converting light into energy to enable growth), know that winds are in fact "moving air" and that stars are "spheres of gas". However, the scientific explanation of matter is not all there is to experience within God's creation. Technological progress has largely overtaken the necessary respect for nature and over-exploitation is common practice. The question of what our relationship to creation should be demands an answer. Creation points to an invisible reality and truth - to God Himself as the Creator. Could it be that God wants to reveal himself once again in creation and that there is a vacuum in the political and social discussions and arguments about climate protection that only we as believers can fill? Creation has a hope laid down by God and waits in expectation for the "sons of God" to be revealed, because it wants to experience God's salvation and be liberated from bondage.

(Romans 8:18ff). Here is a secret and a prayer assignment that we are called to discover and put into practice. **Prayer:**

- **Father, open our eyes so that we can recognise your invisible presence and your power once again in creation. (Romans 1:20)**
- **Reveal to us how to live and know our special relationship with creation and take responsibility for it. (Genesis 1:26)**
- **Teach us how to react in times of crisis with storms, heavy rain and other severe natural events in prayer with authority. (Mark 4:41)** Alexander Schlüter

### The search for the beauty

The longing for beauty is a deep desire that God has placed in human beings. God loves beauty and we have been given the same nature. Beauty is not only related to outward appearance, but also to the entire nature of creation, to music, art, painting and to us as human beings. Beauty is not just something revealed externally, but also becomes visible when we are in harmony within ourselves, when we look upon ourselves and upon others with love. Beauty induces love in people, and only love can recognise beauty. While we are very concerned with what is good and true, it is also important that we rediscover the beauty of God, which will once again captivate the imagination of our western world. The Bible says that God (as Lover) is beautiful. He is "radiant ... among ten thousand". (Song of Songs 5:10). His nature is beautiful, his thoughts, his grace and mercy are able to touch and heal that which is deep inside all of us. And he also calls mankind (as Beloved) beautiful. (Song of Songs 1:15).

The kingdom of God is "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". (Romans 14:17). We often call for revival and transformation in our society. But the kingdom of God does not always come visibly. Rather, it is within us. (Luke 17:21). We change things by what is inside us as we reflect beauty - by what comes from our hearts, by what we focus our eyes upon and what we know to be true. Our cities want to be seen like this. They long to see the kingdom of God in their midst. In our prayers we need new eyes that enable us to see the beauty and glory of God in the land. New thinking that awakens a future and a hope for our cities. Hearts that bring heaven down to earth such that the message can reach deeply into the souls of people. We want to pray for this. Alexander Schlüter

### Jesus, the Prince of Peace

One of the names with which the prophet Isaiah announced the coming of Jesus to this earth is "Prince of Peace". He spoke this promise when the land was in a state of darkness and need. Then, at the announcement of Jesus' birth, the angels proclaimed: "on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests". They brought this message at a time of oppression, injustice, and political and religious conflict. Jesus was born at this time as the long-awaited Messiah, to do His work of salvation and redemption - differently than expected by many, but powerfully and effectively, even up to the time in which we now live. And later,

after the resurrection, when the disciples were gathered behind closed doors in fear of their own religious authorities, Jesus himself stood among them saying: "Peace be with you!" Into the confusion and distress of life caused by sin, Jesus, the true revelation of the grace and love of our Saviour God, comes and offers to our hearts this gift of peace - a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being, wholeness and safety in Him. Let us make room for him, the "Prince of Peace", in our hearts and proclaim him as the bringer of "peace on earth" to the people around us at this time with all the turmoil and difficult circumstances in our world. And now especially during this Christmas season, as our society and this world finds itself in such a conflict-ridden state of affairs. **Prayer:**

- **For the proclamation of the gospel of His peace in all areas of society. (Ephesians 2:17; 6:14ff)**
- **For reconciliation and peace within the body of Jesus. (1 Peter 3:8-11; Philippians 2:1,2)**
- **That people at this time recognise and accept Jesus as Redeemer, Lord, and "Prince of Peace".**
- **(John 3:16; Isaiah 9:1+5)** Tanja Frank

### Israel and the Middle East

On November 13th, Israel's President, Isaac Herzog, tasked Likud Leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, with forming a new government for Israel. After the new elections on November 1st, the Netanyahu camp, together with the national religious parties, has held an absolute majority of 64 of the 120 Knesset seats. The coalition negotiations come at a time of increasing tension for Israel, both internally and externally. The terrorist attacks, especially in Judea and Samaria, continue. The Iranian regime has been hit domestically by the public protests. However, the Revolutionary Guards remain in power and Tehran is expanding its influence, particularly in Syria and Iraq. Lebanon has been without a government since early November, spurring Iran-led Hezbollah to fill the power vacuum. This means that the agreement with Israel on the maritime border and the rights to natural gas deposits in the Mediterranean Sea is again in question. Russia and Iran are pursuing the same power interests in the war in Syria, against Ukraine and in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In addition, Turkey is again bombing Kurdish areas in northern Syria and Iraq, and NATO remains silent. In view of the dangerous developments in the Middle East, Netanyahu is primarily seen as the guarantor of Israel's strength. **Prayer:**

- **Thanks for the highway of peace that the Lord is building in the Middle East where Israel's enemies are gathering. (Isaiah 19:23-25)**
- **Pray for protection at the borders and for peace for Israel, and that Germany puts aside its own interests in Iran and uncompromisingly supports Israel in the face of the growing threat. (Zechariah 2:8-13)**
- **Let us pray blessings on the coalition negotiations to form a godly, stable government that serves the people of Israel and God's purposes in His chosen nation. (Proverbs 14:34)** Karin Heepen

*Wishing you a blessed Christmas celebration!*

Alexander Schlüter and team

*English translation by Phil and Margaret Daniell*