

**Reflection**  
**Joshua Nolen**  
**Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16**

- 1 Let mutual love continue.
- 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.
- 3 Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.
- 4 Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.
- 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you."
- 6 So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"
- 7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.
- 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
- 15 Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.
- 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

When reading this passage of Hebrews in preparation for my reflection, the beginning of the lesson seemed to speak to me the most:

Let mutual love continue.  
Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers  
Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

And when reflecting on these verses, I thought of my freshman year at Houghton College, when I was a member of the Philosophy Club.

Each week our club president would send out an email detailing the meetings topic. One week, he began the email talking about how he had spent a semester in London, and had talked with a lot of people at Speakers Corner – he wrote that he had debated, quote, "muslims, jews, and queers."

While I am not gay, I took offense to his use of the word "queer," and I decided to tell him my feelings; so I informed him that some people find the term "queer" offensive and I hoped that in the future he wouldn't use any other derogatory terms.

I don't remember what the topic was supposed to be for that meeting, but it quickly turned into "Can you be offended for someone else?" or more accurately "If you are not a member of a particular group, in this case homosexuals, are you allowed to be offended when someone uses the term 'queer'?"

Yes, I say. And I feel that the author of Hebrews, and Jesus, would agree with me.

In this passage, the author is arguing that not only *can* we be offended in the place of another, but that *we should be*:

Let mutual love continue.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers

Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

What else could that be, but a call to compassion, empathy, understanding?

We live in a tribal society, where we are taught to look out for ourselves and, at most, those closest to us, our families, our friends, those people that think, act, or look, the way we do.

But we are called to something greater. We are called to follow a path of love. To reach out to the poor and downtrodden, to eat with the hungry and drink with the thirsty.

Most of us here, in this room and church, are a lot alike; not all of us, but most of us are white, middle class, heterosexual, suburbanites.

And if we were only going to stand by and stand up for the people that look and think like we do, we'd be leaving out most of the world.

While we might not be personally connected to homosexuals in California, we should still stand up for them.

While we might not be personally connected to Muslims in New York City, we should still stand up for them.

While we might not be personally connected to immigrants in Arizona, we should still stand up for them.

And the list goes on.

And that doesn't have to mean going to California, or New York, or Arizona to stand up for the oppressed; compassion, empathy, understanding, hospitality can begin right here at home, through our words and our deeds, by what we do and choose not to do.

For we are blessed, and LOVE teaches us that, "To whoever much has been given, much will be required."