



*The Minor Letters*

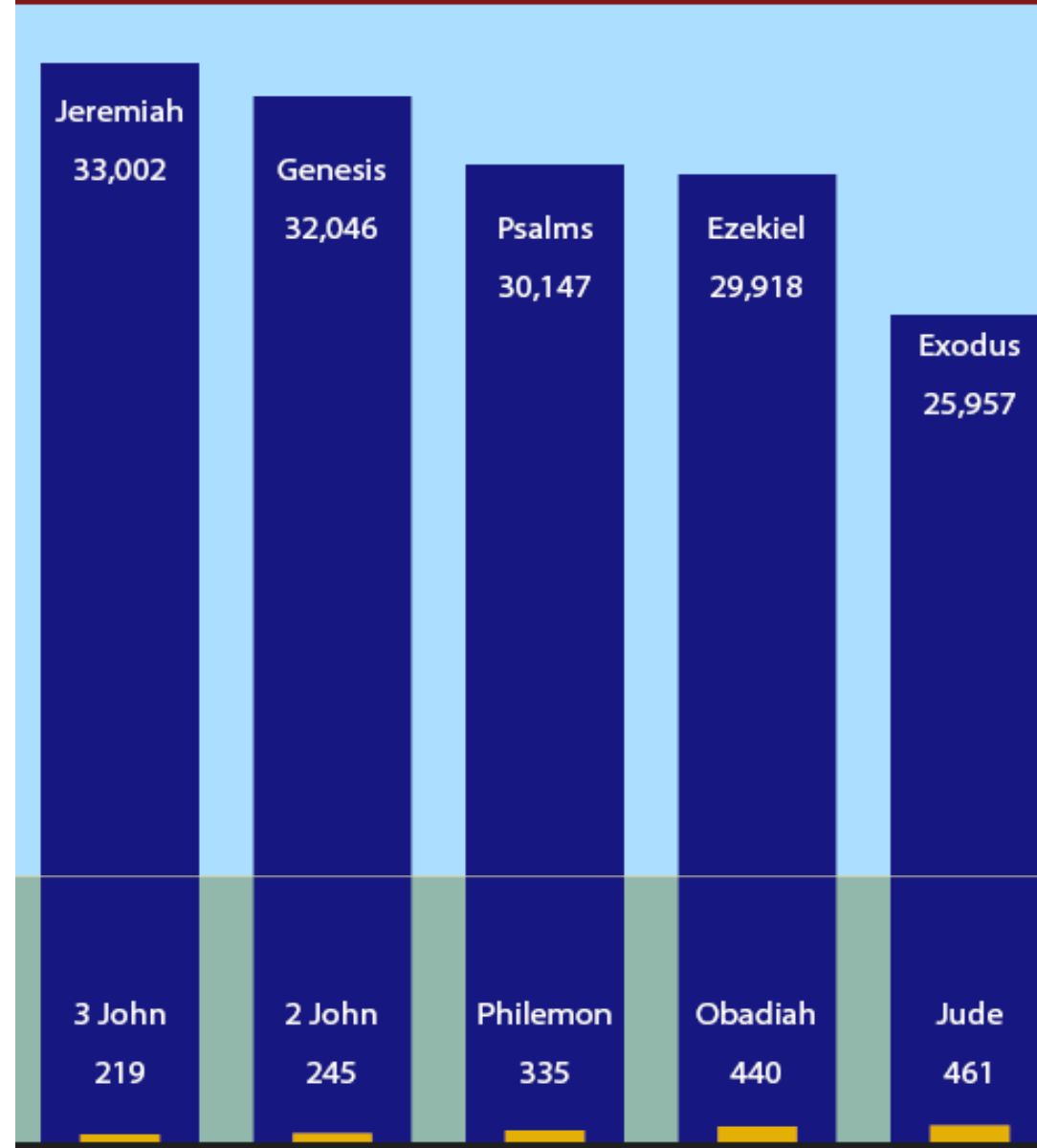
## **3 John**

# Do you know the biggest book in the Bible?

- How about the SHORTEST?
- But in this tiniest of books there is a message we easily miss

*It's ALL OVER the Bible and we still miss it!*

## longest and shortest books of the Bible *by word count in the original languages*



## ***The third, and final letter written by John the disciple, verses 1-10***

*The Pastor*

*To my good friend Gaius: How truly I love you! We're the best of friends, and I pray for good fortune in everything you do, and for your good health—that your everyday affairs prosper, as well as your soul!*

*I was most happy when some friends arrived and brought the news that you persist in following the way of Truth. Nothing could make me happier than getting reports that my children continue diligently in the way of Truth!*

*Dear friend, when you extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers, you make the faith visible. They've made a full report back to the church here, a message about your love. It's good work you're doing, helping these travellers on their way, hospitality worthy of God himself! They set out under the banner of the Name, and get no help from unbelievers. So they deserve any support we can give them. In providing meals and a bed, we become their companions in spreading the Truth.*

*Earlier I wrote something along this line to the church, but Diotrefes, who loves being in charge, denigrates my counsel. If I come, you can be sure I'll hold him to account for spreading vicious rumours about us. As if that weren't bad enough, he not only refuses hospitality to traveling Christians but tries to stop others from welcoming them. Worse yet, instead of inviting them in he throws them out.*

# What's it about?

John writes to encourage Gaius for his hospitality and warn Diotrephes for not doing so

2 characters

- Gaius – congratulated for showing hospitality welcoming travelling missionaries
- Diotrephes – dictatorial church leader, refuses to show hospitality and throws people out of the church when they do!

**Today's idea: "hospitality"**



# Pause and think

*“Hospitality is one of the few themes that is referred to consistently in both Old and New Testaments ... Its radical nature should not be underestimated”*

Ann Morisy – Anglican Theologian



# It's not THAT important though is it?

- Surely God is more concerned about evangelism, important gifts, healing ?
- There are surprisingly few themes that run the entire length and breadth of the Bible – this does
- Almost hidden from sight .. sharing food, sharing conversation, sharing time is fundamental to the people of God throughout scripture
- A spiritual discipline?
- Hospitality is God's enabler for welcome, conversation, fellowship, even healing





Let's put aside preconceptions  
and see what scripture actually says ...

# Implicit hospitality

Luke 7 – At the house of Simon the Pharisee

- When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life ...

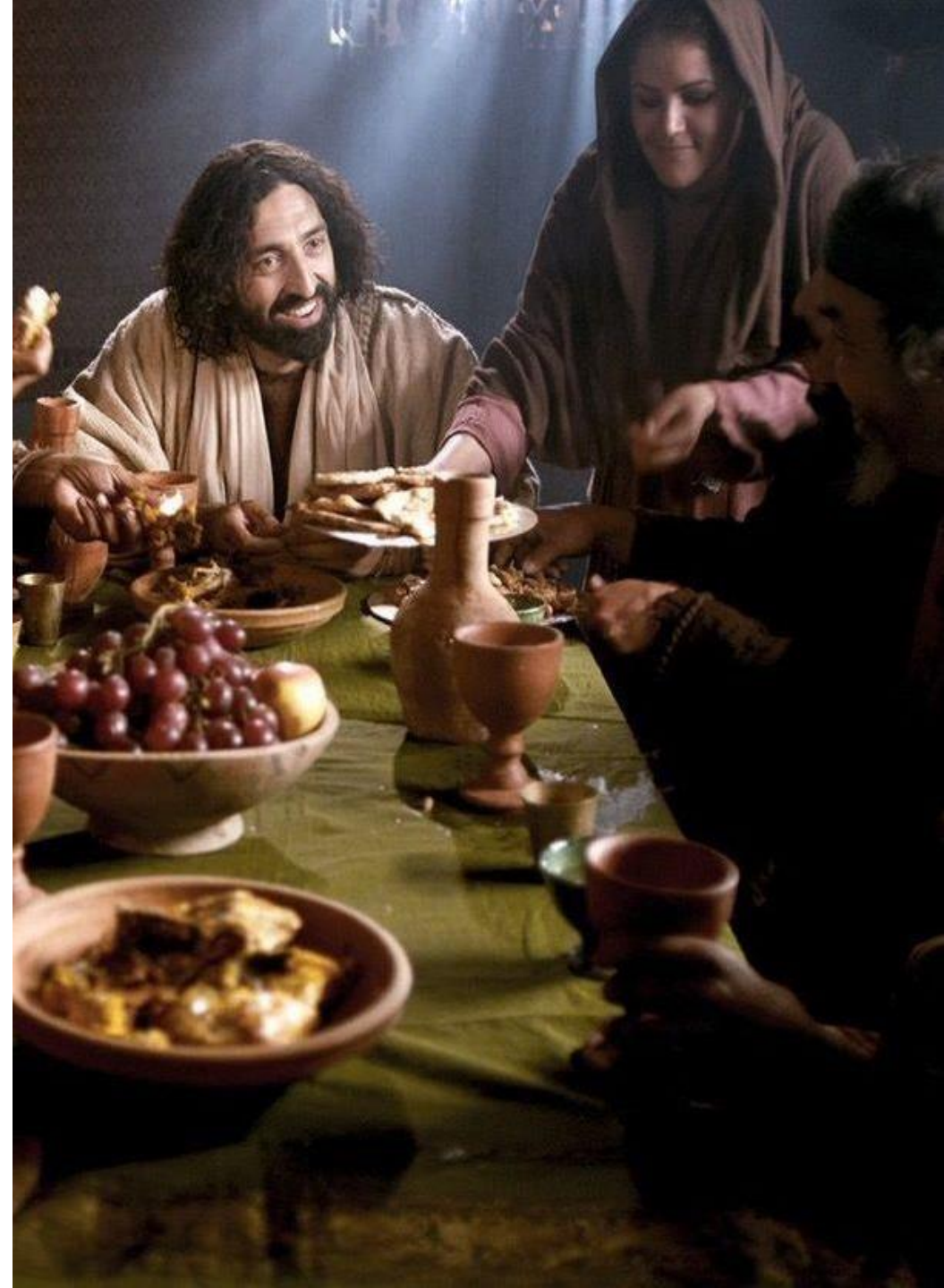
Luke 10 At Mary and Martha's

- Jesus came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary ... << argument >>

Matthew 9 – at Matthew's house

- While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this they asked 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?'

*We read past the hospitality to "get to the point"*





# Implicit hospitality

- Jesus went to all of these places not to cause an argument but to share hospitality, enjoy company, make space for conversation
- And when the conversation turned – 1 Peter 3.16
- We can easily become “success oriented” – we read on – and we forget the importance of making time for conversation as part of mission



# Explicit Hospitality

- Luke 14, 12-14 – ... **invite those who can't pay you back**
- Titus 1, 8 – requirements for leaders - **being hospitable is the first one**
- Matthew 25, 31-46 - famous text on **hospitality to the least**
- Hebrews 13, 1-3 – **Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers**
- On one occasion Jesus even invites himself to dinner! (Luke 19)

The root of all of these lies in OT law

- Leviticus 19, 33-34 – **treat the stranger as one of your own**





## What could be so important that it's in every book of the Bible?

We went through the Bible reflecting on God's idea of hospitality

- Welcoming and showing hospitality is disruptive
- Loneliness is pervasive "I come to Sainsbury's to talk to people"
- Who is the stranger in Lymm? ..
- And sometimes we will be the stranger

## As a society we are too focused on “problem solving”

- Welfare- is focused on problem-solving and is success oriented
  - .. .we lose the idea of just spending time
- Sometimes there is a need to not “solve the problem” but simply be with people
- Sometimes there will be no short term solution – or no solution







What is Hospitality  
- individually and as God's church?

# What IS hospitality

- Root of the word “hospes” means “making room”
- Making room is what Jesus did all the time, all the time eg with children

**Hospitality is the welcome we offer to one another, and to strangers**

- On our own, and as a church ...



# Individual hospitality

- Not everyone can offer a meal, but most of us could
- “Open home”
- At work – are you hospitable?
- If the conversation turns ... 1 Peter 3.16
- Traps we fall into:
  - It won't make any difference
  - I'M THE ONE who should be invited!
  - It's hard to ask!



# Our church's ministry of hospitality

- Hundreds of people are welcomed in to our building Mon-Fri – a ministry of hospitality
- Building users survey has been VERY revealing
- Welcoming entrance, a welcome team, a coffee-area, a drop-in culture ... “space for conversation”
- Offering people glimpses of the Kingdom of God!





# THE church's ministry of hospitality



- A church ministry of radical hospitality speaks volumes
- WE should also occasionally share a meal!

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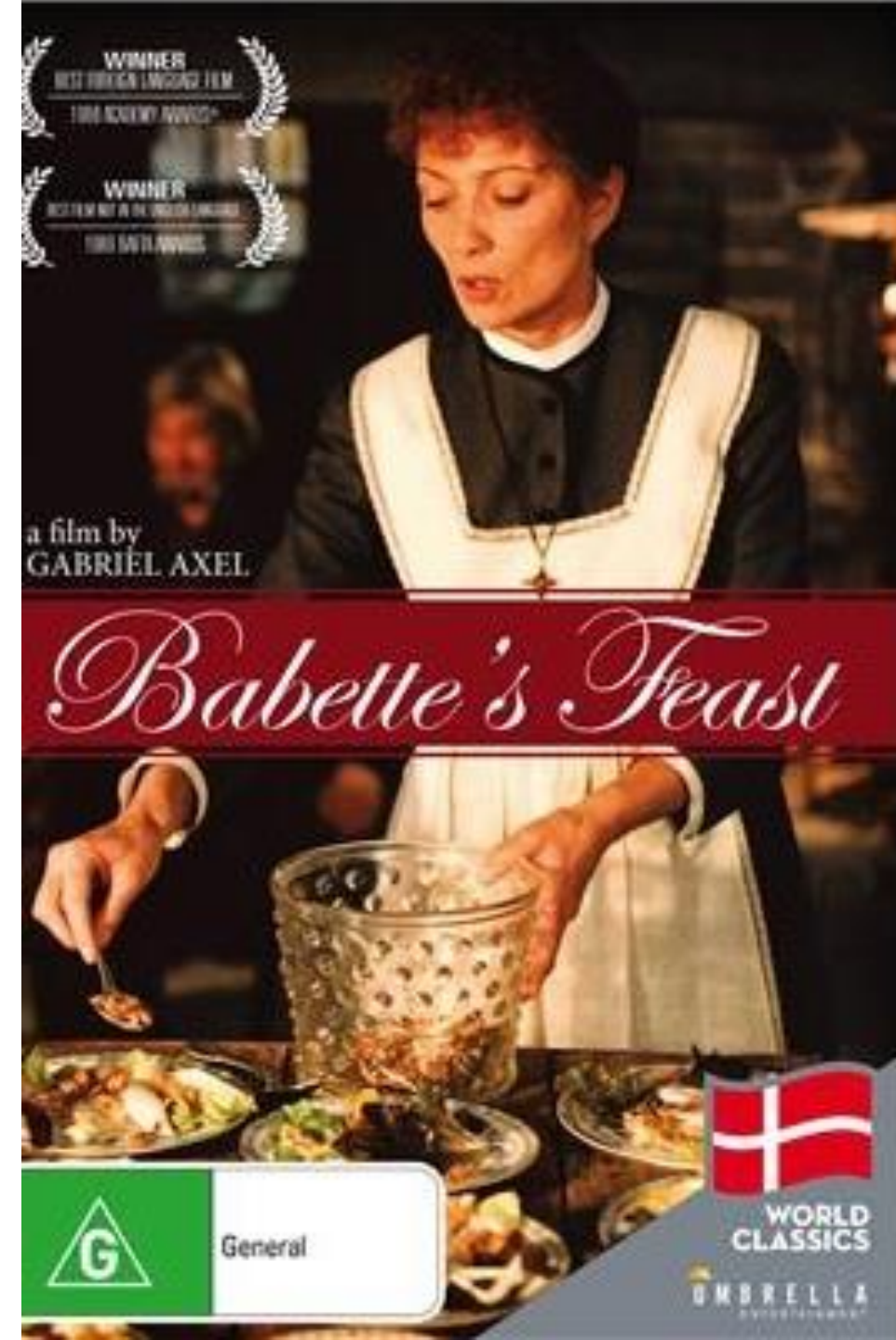




# Babette's hospitality is outrageous!

- Babette wanted to “do something” for the villagers – hospitality in the limit
- Her hospitality was off the scale – ours is simpler
- But there is still a cost for us in “making room”

*The story is a metaphor of God's outrageous love for us ... off the scale hospitality, his desire to “make room” for us – and sometimes we don't get it*





# Making room

- John commends Gaius for hospitality and warns Diotrephes for lack of hospitality
- And we have seen “making room”, is a thread running through scripture

***“Hospitality is one of the few themes that is referred to consistently in both Old and New Testaments ... its radical nature should not be underestimated”***

Ann Morisy – Anglican Theologian



# Making room

- Am I hospitable? Do I invite people for a coffee? Can I share a meal with someone I haven't spoken to much? Do I accept invitations?
- *How good am I at "making room"?*
- ... don't go to Sainsbury's

*Your hospitality may be the exact good news somebody needs hear*





*"Making Room"*  
**3 John**