

# Come To The Table

Revelation @ the Table | Luke 24:28-35

09/03/2023

When I first came over to the United Methodists from the Covenant denomination in 2018, there were classes we had to take if we were new pastors. Training is good, the training was good.

But it was WAY more fun getting to know the other pastors. One evening after the training, we were invited to go out for a meal together. And I am not one to turn down food!

I sat next to Rick, a fellow pastor I didn't know well. I shared with him how much I like meat as I devoured my steak with great relish and made happy "nom, nom, nom" noises. He got to see a little more of the real me and I got to know him better too.

And throughout that meal, all around that table, we as pastors relaxed and let our guard down. We shared stories, and enjoyed getting to know one another a little bit more. I still think back on that night with a smile. It was a good time.

Each time I remember that evening at that restaurant, I'm reminded of that universal, powerful, and yet simple truth...meaningful connecting, getting to know others at deeper levels happens over a meal and shared time together.

Recently, in the beginning of August, there was another training offered to pastors who have just transitioned into a new appointment. Again, after the training, a meal invitation was offered and again...not one to turn down food, I participated.

And again, I was sitting next to a pastor colleague, a man I didn't know too well named Jin from Korea.

We were visiting and examining the menus together. I told Jin, I really WANTED a steak but didn't want to make the conference PAY for a steak. You might be picking up on a theme about me...I like steak.

And bless his soul, he said, "I think you should order the steak." And he sealed the deal by adding, "You deserve it." Jin and I are now life-long friends!

And as we ate our meals, Jin got to know the real me a little bit more. And I got to know Jin at a deeper level too. Learned for one, about his heart around discipleship.

His desire to help people follow the Lord Jesus, in the lifestyle of Jesus and sharing the same priorities and mission as Jesus. Helping people know that Jesus calls us friend.

But I don't need to tell you how a meal helps break down barriers, builds relationships, and helps us to enjoy each other. We know this down to our toes. It's in our bones.

Because we have experienced this our whole lives, especially in church, through numerous potlucks and picnics and fellowship times.

Nothing beats visiting over food or a cookie and some coffee. I'd like to say, "It's not so much about the cookie or coffee." But I had a cranberry white chocolate cookie last Sunday that was a bit of a game changer.

We know it's not so much about the ginger snap cookie or brownie or cup of coffee or glass of lemonade. It's more about what sitting down at a table with those things in hand SIGNALS to others.

It says, **"I want to get to know you better. And I am open to you learning more about me."** It's intentional and opens up an opportunity to go deeper and enrich fellowship.

Historically, all throughout Methodism, it is common to have dinners together and potlucks. A time to share a meal or a snack together.

Most importantly, it is a time of sharing our lives of being in community with one another, we get to know one another more fully, the real YOU and the real ME. Little scary.

Already, I have enjoyed a simple meal together during our mini-VBS (you saw me at the Kid's table...exactly where I belong), hot dogs and chips and pickles and chocolate chip cookies.

Obviously, I enjoy our time of fellowship after the service. And I anticipate that our Party in the Park will have things to eat too! It may be our last time eating at the park, maybe over a picnic table this year.

Speaking of “table”; for the month of September, we will be focusing on what it means to **Come to the Table**. A new sermon series where Jesus shared meals and at the same time taught important spiritual lessons.

Lessons about knowing Jesus, about hospitality and care, about trusting God when you feel surrounded by difficulty, and even how meals sometimes lend to tears and laughter, enriching life. Wonderful theme!

And a needed theme. In this world, where it seems like apathy is on the rise. And the times are marked by disinterest, disconnection, isolation, and shallow busyness. We can choose differently.

As followers of Jesus, God calls us to make consistent and intentional space to fellowship, be in community, to build relationships with other believers.

God encourages us to be deliberate, mindful even about connecting with others especially around food and faith.

**Reminding us that we most FULLY see God and most CLEARLY see others when we share a meal together, especially Communion.**

That’s basically what we have here, in this passage from Luke. Jesus, risen but unrecognized, walks with and listens to two of his disciples as they walk home to Emmaus. As they walked and talked they didn’t realize it was Jesus. To them he was just a stranger tagging along.

And it wasn’t until, at the table and over a meal, that their eyes were opened. Eyes opened to who had truly been walking, listening, and sharing a meal with them that evening!

Luke gives us a powerful illustration of revelation of Jesus. It is one of my favorite stories in the whole Bible. Some of this story wasn’t read this morning, getting us to the full story.

The walk to Emmaus takes place on the same day as Jesus’ resurrection. Two friends are traveling on a dark road alone, mourning the loss of their savior, their grief blinding them to who this man was. They just see a Stranger come up alongside them.

A stranger with a unique sense of humor. He knows these two disciples very well. They know him really well too. And he is just waiting for the big reveal, to surprise them with who he is.

A bit of a nosey stranger too as he asks, **“What are you discussing as you walk along?”**

So, they begin to share. They share with hearts heavy with grief, in the loss of their good friend Jesus. **“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”** That he was handed over by the chief priests to the rulers under a sentence of crucifixion.

They share also their how their faith has been severely shaken, their disappointment...**“We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”** But their hope, had been nailed to a cross in the capital.

And what’s more, they share with a sense of confusion...**“Three days later, we’ve even heard that some of the disciples found the tomb empty and angels said Jesus was alive.”**

Grief, doubts, and confusion. A weird story of an empty tomb. It’s all too much for these disciples to process.

Ever have one of those kinds of days or weeks or seasons in life? When it’s all just too much to process? Maybe you know the crushing weight of grief and the loss of a loved one? Maybe you’ve experienced times when doubts piled up and just simply outweigh faith and trust in God.

Maybe you have experienced grief and doubts to the point where it made it hard to think straight? How can they be gone? I was just talking to them, just with them...

Or like in this case, things ARE truly confusing. What, the tomb is empty? That just doesn’t make any sense!

Dear friends, if you are in a situation right now where you feel like you are walking down a dark road of difficulty...grief, loss, doubts, confusion and maybe you even feel alone. This morning is for you.

Remember that Christ is your companion. Jesus is walking right alongside of you. You are not alone. You have never been alone. You will never be alone.

You may not recognize Jesus is with you. You may not be able to connect the dots in a way that proves Jesus is there. But Jesus is there.

Jesus will be working through others and maybe over a meal in fellowship or during the Communion meal it will become clearer. You are not alone.

And also remember, as part of this church family, you are surrounded by fellow companions of the faith, friends and the Forever Family of God. You are not alone.

And, on top of that promise is another truth. When Jesus broke the bread and their eyes were opened, it is a promise that we will encounter Jesus not only on the road of life but also at the Communion table.

As we follow him, he will progressively open our eyes of understanding. And our hearts will burn with joy at knowing Jesus more fully and in seeing the Lord more clearly.

Soon we will re-enact what Jesus and those disciples experienced together. When Jesus as the Stranger finally sat down at the table with them, “**...he took bread, gave thanks and broke it and began to serve them.**” And then they recognized Jesus.

When Jesus broke the bread, their eyes were opened. Our eyes will be opened.

They recognized Jesus, saw him in a new way. We will see Jesus in a new way.

Their hearts burned with renewed joy and renewed faith. Our hearts will know joy in the Lord too.

And after they shared the bread, the followers run back to Jerusalem to tell them about Jesus! In effect, they were extending the table...to include the other disciples, to include everyone after who believe but have never seen Jesus, extending the table to us, today.

We will share Jesus with others too.

And we ARE sharing Jesus. Small example among many I could share...we had two Meets and Greets this past week. Opportunity to meet with the new pastor and for me to get to know more about you, one Wednesday and one Thursday.

And they were wonderful times. So simple...a little lemon bar and visiting. At one house we had ice cream sundaes with all the fixings!

And Jesus was there in our midst. As you shared about your lives, where you were born, went to school, kids and careers that you had. Jesus was there.

When you talked about the homeless in Buffalo and the evils of sex trafficking, about making a real difference in meeting needs in our town. Jesus was there.

Our love for Jesus will continue to well up and overflow to one another and in to this beautiful town.

That's the power of sharing a meal or a small snack together. The Lord comes.

And it happens during a snack shared in fellowship. The Lord is there.

It can happen over this sacred meal. Thank you, Jesus for being here at the Table loving us. Help us share your love, amen!

**As we spend a few moments reflecting...**

Consider how the Lord has met you over meals with family and friends, and past communions. How it felt like Jesus was there.

Consider how the Lord has walked with you in life, being a faithful companion in grief, doubt, confusion, and loneliness. Look back and see how Jesus had been there for you too.