

*Eating with Jesus*

**A JOURNEY OF  
RESTORED TABLES**

WRITTEN BY DR. STEVE JONES

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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Review the context and big picture every week – The goal of a book study is not just to learn each individual lesson, but to build understanding of the Bible, how it fits together, and how to study it.

Try not to use this guide as a script. The purpose of this material isn't to give you exactly what to say. Rather it is to give you the content you need to structure and develop your own lessons. Teach as much as you feel is important for your class. Feel free to go off topic if your own study leads you to approach the passage in a slightly different direction.

Don't feel like you have to cover everything. There is a lot of material in each lesson. Some classes like to cover a lot of ground. Other classes like to camp on one point and drill deep. Start by teaching the main point, then teach the main bullet points. Use the extra detail and discussion questions as you see fit. The goal is to generate discussion, specifically regarding life-application. So don't worry if you don't get all the way through a lesson.

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# APR 7 | A TABLE OF HEALING

## THE CALL OF LEVI - LUKE 5:27:32

A lot of life happens around the table. Every culture embraces the act of gathering for a meal as a way not just to eat but to engage in meaningful exchange. Whether it's a birthday or funeral, whether we are sharing bad news or good, whether it's joy or sorrow, we gather around the table.

The same is true of Jesus. Jesus never seems to turn down an invitation to eat. He eats with sinners He has just forgiven. He eats with new disciples who invite all their old friends to a party. He eats with crowds who are following him to hear him preach. He eats with His friends on the evening before His arrest to prepare them for what is coming. He even eats with His enemies, who are trying to trap and attack Him. His approach to each meal is different, but His goal is the same: to reveal to people who He is, why He came, and to invite them to enter His Kingdom.

The Gospel of Luke records eight meals Jesus ate with people before His crucifixion. In this study, we will look closely at each meal, ask ourselves what Jesus was trying to teach, and see if we need to learn that lesson as well. Along the way, we will hopefully learn how to follow in Jesus's footsteps and use meals as significant opportunities to engage with others in meaningful ways.

The first meal we are going to study has everything: a new disciple, a big party, Jesus celebrating with sinful people, and disgruntled hyper-religious people wagging their fingers. Through the meal, Jesus shows us who He is, what He came to do, and how He goes about His job. He invites everyone to change how they think about things and to start following Him. Hopefully, as we study this, we will be reminded of these truths and be challenged to embrace our role as His followers.

## THE CALL OF JESUS V27-29

The story starts with Jesus inviting Levi to come be one of His disciples. Levi is another name for Matthew, the disciple who wrote the Gospel that bears his name. Verse 27 says that Jesus "saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and He said to Him, 'Follow me.'" Tax gatherers were in an odd situation in Judaea. Though the Romans were in charge, they didn't collect taxes themselves. They sold the rights to collect taxes to local

businessmen. Those men, called “publicans,” were tax farmers who were responsible for giving the Roman authorities a certain amount of money. Anything over this was the “fee” for their services. Because of this arrangement, the Jews hated publicans because they were Jews who made money for the Romans by defrauding their own people. Even the Romans, who relied on them, did not like to associate with them. They viewed them as necessary but disgusting people.

Verse 28 describes Levi’s response to Jesus: “So, leaving everything behind, he got up and began to follow Him.” This is significant and decisive. When the other disciples followed Jesus, they left vocations they could easily return to. In fact, after Jesus’s resurrection, the disciples go back to fishing while waiting for Jesus to appear. But when Levi left his vocation, he made an irrevocable decision. He didn’t just take a leave of absence from work. He abandoned his post. For Levi, there was no going back.

### **THE CELEBRATION OF LEVI V29**

Though Levi might have left his lucrative job behind, he didn’t look back. He celebrated the beginning of his new life following Jesus by throwing a massive reception for Jesus. He wanted everyone he knew to meet the man worth giving up his old life. Verse 29 says, “Then Levi hosted a grand banquet for Him at His house. Now there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining at the table with them.”

He throws a party. Jesus is the guest of honor. Levi might have left his job, but he didn’t abandon the people he knew there. He wanted them to meet the Lord he had decided to leave everything for, so he invited everyone he knew, including many people that the Pharisees would condemn as “unsavory.”

### **THE COMPLAINT OF THE PHARISEES V30**

The first response that Luke gives regarding the party is not the words of Jesus, or Levi, or even the other partygoers. He mentions the Pharisees. Verse 30 says, “the Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to His disciples, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’”

It doesn’t say whether the Pharisees were guests at the party, but given their response, it seems unlikely. They wonder why Jesus is eating with these people. They obviously would not “stoop” to that level. This was more than just snobbery. The Pharisees took the law of God seriously. They saw their homes as extensions of the temple. They recognized that eating with someone was more than a biological necessity; it had a social dimension expressing intimacy, kinship, and solidarity. They just took it too far. They were

so determined not to be corrupted that they prohibited themselves from having a positive effect on anybody. Instead of teaching and loving, they condemned and excluded. Perhaps that was why they were upset that evening. They were used to being the ones who did the excluding. But now the new rabbi in town, who is performing miracles and has everybody talking, has been invited to a banquet, and they haven't. Perhaps they are even standing in the street looking in at the festivities.

Wherever they were, Luke makes their attitude clear. He says they were "complaining." This is a significant phrase with a long Biblical history. The Greek word means to mutter, murmur, grumble, and grumble. It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word used to describe what the children of Israel did while wandering in the wilderness during the Exodus. They were dissatisfied with what God had provided and looked down their noses at it.

Here we are at the start of Jesus's ministry. He teaches with authority. He performs many miracles. He is showing Himself to be the promised Messiah sent to deliver and redeem God's people. But instead of celebrating like everyone else, the Pharisees are grumbling in the wilderness because the Messiah isn't acting and associating with the people they think He should be.

### **THE CORRECTION OF JESUS V31-32**

It is interesting. The Pharisees' complaint in verse 30 is directed at the disciples, but it is Jesus who answers. Parties like this in the ancient world were not mix-and-mingle affairs. They were designed for people to come and hear the host and the guest of honor speak on a subject. The fact that Jesus speaks means that everyone at the party would have stopped and directed their attention at Him.

In verses 31-32, Jesus responds to the Pharisees' complaint, "31 It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

This counterclaim of Jesus contains at least three truths about Jesus and His mission. First, Jesus says He is a doctor of the soul. A doctor's job is to heal people. To heal people, you have to go to where the sick people are. Jesus shows us who God is and sets an example for us to follow. God isn't like the Pharisees, who stand aloof, looking down on sinners as they head towards destruction. He is a God who rolls up his sleeves, gets involved, and gets His hands dirty.

Second, it's hard to heal people who don't think they are sick. That is what He means by

saying that He did not “come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” He isn’t saying that Pharisees are already righteous. He is being a little sarcastic. They think they have it all figured out. They think they are right and everyone who disagrees with them is wrong. Jesus says they think they are righteous, so they won’t come to Him for the real righteousness that will save them.

Third, the healing that Jesus brings occurs through repentance. The Greek word that is translated as repentance means “to change your mind.” Jesus isn’t condoning sin by being present at Levi’s house. He is not offering acceptance of sin but rescue from it. He is “meeting them where they are,” but as a lifeguard and rescuer. He is offering escape for people who are living in dangerous situations. Those who think they are righteous can’t repent, but those stuck in sin still can.

## **APPLICATION**

One question commentators and scholars wrestle with is how Jesus knew Levi. Had Levi heard Jesus teach before? Did they know each other previously? Had they agreed that Levi would start following once Jesus began His ministry? Countless possible backstories have been reconstructed. Luke doesn’t seem to think the backstory is necessary. Maybe there isn’t one. Maybe it’s enough that Jesus called, and Levi followed.

The bigger question is: who are we in the story? Are we like the Pharisees, thinking we have the answer, thinking we know what is wrong with everyone else, and thinking that everything would be fine if everyone would just do what we say? Or are we like Levi, willing to turn our backs on our old way of thinking and start seeing life in a new way, willing to lay down our lives to pick up the life God has for us instead, willing to celebrate the new life by inviting people in rather than excluding those who don’t measure up?

The truth is that many of us start as Levi’s but end up as Pharisees. We recognize our need. We decide to follow Jesus. But instead of doing what Levi did, we slowly, unintentionally become Pharisees. We stand on the outside, wagging our fingers, waiting for people to change, and become like us through our lectures and condemnation. We have forgotten that Jesus calls His followers to be like Levi: present among the lost, celebrating the new life in Christ, and inviting others to hear, know, repent, and be healed.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does Levi give up to follow Jesus? Have you ever had to give something up like that? Why do you think Levi throws a party?
2. Where do you think the Pharisees were in relation to the party? What is the Pharisee's complaint? How do we act similarly?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is a doctor for the soul? Where else do we go for spiritual healing?
4. Why does Jesus say He didn't come to call the righteous to repentance? Don't the Pharisees need Jesus too?
5. What is the difference between being among those who need Jesus without endorsing their behavior? How can we still stand for righteousness and truth without being like the Pharisees?



## APR 14 | A TABLE OF REALIZATION

### A WOMAN ANOINTS JESUS' FEET - LUKE 7:36-50

Thomas Paine was an American writer during the American Revolution. Some of his writings, like the pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, helped sway the American people towards the idea of declaring independence from England. In one of these pamphlets, he answers the objection that the cost of fighting for independence would be too great. He responds with the powerful and poignant phrase, "What we obtain too cheaply we esteem too lightly."

It's true. What is more, it is a biblical truth. In 2 Samuel 24, David goes to purchase land upon which to build an altar to the Lord. When Araunah, the man who owns it, offers to give the land for free, David responds in 2 Samuel 24:24, "No, I insist on buying it from you for a price, for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

I remember learning this lesson the hard way. I was doing some New Year's cleaning and came across a nice leather briefcase-style messenger bag that had been given to me as a gift when I graduated college. It was valuable and significant but not useful to me anymore. So, I contemplated what to do with it. I didn't just want to donate it to a thrift store. I also knew I shouldn't keep it. I wanted it to be put to use. So, I gave it to a friend and coworker whom I thought needed it and could make good use of it. He eagerly and gratefully accepted it. But over the next few months, I saw the bag quickly fall apart by being used in abusive and inconsiderate ways, which led to it wearing out sooner than it should have. I remember seeing the tattered remains of this present and wondering why I was upset. I should be glad the bag got some use. I realized what bugged me was that the person who received it didn't value it. To him, it was a free bag; it carried no significance of cost or occasion. As a result, he barely treated it better than a gym bag or grocery sack.

We sometimes treat God's salvation the way my friend treated my bag. We got it for free, so we don't really value it. The meal we are looking today at involves two people who have differing views of the salvation Jesus came to bring. One knows she is a sinner who has been forgiven much. One is a self-assured Pharisee who thinks he is doing Jesus a favor by inviting Him to a meal. Hopefully, as we study their encounter, we will realize the ways we see ourselves like the Pharisee and learn to respond like the woman when we fully appreciate who we are and what Jesus offers us.

### **AN UNINVITED GUEST V36-38**

This story starts at a meal. Verse 36 says, “Then one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him. He entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table.”

Considering how Jesus responded to the Pharisees at the house of Levi, it is a little bit shocking to see Him accepting an invitation to dine at a Pharisee’s house. But the truth is that Jesus hasn’t rejected the Pharisees. The Pharisees reject Him because He doesn’t fit into their neat little boxes. But whenever a Pharisee invites Him, Jesus always shows up. That is what happens here. He never misses an opportunity to engage with anyone wanting to hear about the Kingdom of God.

While they are eating, Jesus is approached by an uninvited guest. Verses 37-38 says, “37 And a woman in the town who was a sinner found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the

Pharisee’s house. She brought an alabaster jar of perfume 38 and stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the perfume.”

This scene raises a lot of questions. What specifically was her sin that she was known for it? If this woman was a sinner, how did she get in? How was she able to get to the feet of Jesus? The text doesn’t say what her sin was, so speculation is just that. As to how she got into the house, the answer is that events like this were often semi-public affairs. The host, the guest of honor, and other guests would be reclining on three couches arranged in a C-shape. The people would lie on their left sides with their heads towards the center and reach for food in the middle of the C-shaped couches. Often, people would be invited to stand around the room’s periphery to watch and listen to the people as they ate and drank. That seems to be what is happening here. People are crowding in to hear the new rabbi converse with a Pharisee.

The arrangement of the dining couches also helps us understand how the woman was able to get to the feet of Jesus. Jesus isn’t sitting at a table. He is lying on a couch with His head towards the middle of the room and His feet towards the walls, where the audience is.

### **AN UNEXPECTED QUESTION V39-43**

When the Pharisee sees the woman, he responds with criticism, but not of the woman. His criticism is of Jesus. Verse 39 says, “When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, ‘This man, if he were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman

this is who is touching him—she’s a sinner!”

The Pharisee judges Jesus based on His unwillingness to send the woman away. The Pharisee reasons that if Jesus were really a prophet, He would know what kind of woman is touching Him and push her away. It shows that the Pharisee was trying to learn who Jesus was. It also shows that he rejected Jesus for not doing things his way.

Perhaps the most overlooked part of verse 39 is “he said to himself.” The Pharisee didn’t say any of this out loud. The Pharisee doubts Jesus’s identity as a prophet because he thought Jesus couldn’t see into this woman’s soul. But Jesus quickly shows that He can by what comes next.

Verse 40 says, “Jesus replied to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ He said, ‘Say it, teacher.’” Simon hadn’t said anything out loud, yet Jesus answered him.

He then proceeds to ask Simon a question in the form of a parable. Verses 41-42 say, 41 “A creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them both. So, which of them will love him more?” A denarius was worth one day’s wage. So, one person owed the money lender almost two years’ wages, and the other owed almost two months. Neither was able to repay. Both have their debts forgiven. One loved the master for it; the other didn’t.

### **AN UNCOMFORTABLE CONCLUSION V44-50**

Jesus then applies the parable to the current situation. In verses 44-46, He highlights the difference in how the woman treated Him compared to Simon: “44 Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she, with her tears, has washed my feet and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing my feet since I came in. 46 You didn’t anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfume.”

All of this leads to an uncomfortable conclusion. Verse 47 says, “Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.” Jesus isn’t saying that she has earned forgiveness by her extravagant act. Instead, He is saying that her loving devotion proves that she has already experienced the forgiveness of God in a way that has transformed her life.

He also isn’t saying that Simon’s sins are less than this woman’s. He is saying that Simon thinks he is less of a sinner than this woman. He thinks he has succeeded in being righteous on his own and doesn’t need all that much forgiveness. He perhaps thinks that some

congratulations are in order. Consequently, he loves himself more than he loves others, including this woman and Jesus.

The story ends with a final uncomfortable realization for Simon and his guests. After Jesus tells this woman that her sins are forgiven, the dinner guests realize what this means. Verse 49 says, “Those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this man who even forgives sins?’” The woman is the only person at the dinner that night who fully realizes that she is in the presence of the one who has the power to forgive all her sins. She responds with gratitude, love, and worship. Everyone else at the table that night missed it.

### **APPLICATION – DO YOU REALIZE WHO JESUS IS?**

Obviously, we are encouraged to respond more like the woman than like Simon or his guests. But it is important to remember that the woman’s feelings weren’t manufactured. She wasn’t artificially pretending to be grateful to earn salvation. She was responding in gratitude to who she knew Jesus to be.

So, the first question we must ask ourselves is, “Do We Really Know Who Jesus Is?” Here are some things that Jesus reveals about Himself in this story. These are things that the woman knows, but Simon does not.

**Jesus Knows** – Jesus isn’t naïve to who we are or what we have done. Jesus knows the woman’s sinful acts. Jesus knows Simon’s sinful thoughts. Jesus knows. He also knows neither of them can do anything to escape their sin. The cost of the debt, whether big or small, doesn’t matter; if you can’t pay it, you are still stuck.

**Jesus Forgives** – John 3:17 says, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” God’s knowledge of our sin doesn’t produce condemnation. Instead, God makes a way for us to be free from it. We don’t know how the woman knows Jesus forgives. Perhaps she heard Him forgive the sins of the paralytic man lowered through the room in Luke 5:17-26. However, when she learned about it, she was so eager for it that she ran to Him.

**Jesus Loves** – Jesus forgives us our sins because He loves us. John 3:16 says, “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” 1 John 4:10 says, “Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” God’s love comes first. The woman has experienced God’s love through the forgiveness Jesus offers. She responds with similar love.

When you realize that God knows your sin completely, loves you perfectly, and has sent Jesus not to condemn you but to free you from the death that sin causes, the only response is one of humble, grateful, sacrificial worship. Until we fully realize this, we will always respond like Simon: arrogant, selfish, and self-focused. Jesus is waiting. He loves Simon and us as much as He loves that woman. He is waiting for us to realize who He really is and how much He has already done for us. When we do, we will respond like the woman.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is Simon's response when he sees the woman? How does her actions change his view of Jesus? How would you characterize his attitude towards the woman and towards Jesus?
2. What are some words you would use to describe Simon's response to Jesus? How do we sometimes respond like Simon?
3. What are some ways that Jesus reveals that He is more than Simon thinks?
4. What are some words you would use to describe the woman's response to Jesus? What would it look like for us to respond similarly?
5. What do the people at the party realize about Jesus at the end? What does His claim to forgive sins really mean?

# APR 21 | A TABLE OF PROVISION

## FEEDING THE 5000 - LUKE 9:1-20

Former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once famously said, “Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren’t.” The same is true of being an adult. The only people saying, “I am an adult; stop treating me like a kid,” are kids. Every parent, at some point, has to help their child realize that even as they grow up, they are still dependent on others, even if simply in gratitude for what they have been given.

I had a friend who learned this lesson powerfully one time. When he turned eighteen, he told his father that he was a man now and felt he deserved a better car than the one he had been driving since he got his driver’s license a few years earlier. The father asked him what kind of car he had in mind. The son told him what car his sights were set on, so they headed down to the dealer to look. The son found the model and color he had been looking for. He test-drove it and loved it. He and his father sat down with the car dealer to discuss the price. They negotiated a fair price. Then the dealer asked, “How will you be paying for this?” That is when the father asked, “Yes, son, how will you be paying for this?” At that moment, the son realized that he was still dependent on the father and had failed to recognize the source of what he had.

The same is true of us and God. No matter how successful we become, we will never rise above our dependency on God or our need to be humble and grateful. An old pastor’s sermon illustration makes the point. A group of scientists arranged a meeting with God. They informed him that they no longer needed Him because they had discovered all his secrets and could now do everything He did. They even told God that they were able to make man themselves. God, slightly amused, asked them to show Him their fantastic ability. One scientist stepped forward, bent down, and grabbed a handful of dust. At this point, God interjected, “Whoa, Whoa, Whoa, you get your own dirt.”

Paul makes this point in 1 Corinthians 4:7, “For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you didn’t receive? If, in fact, you did receive it, why do you boast as if you hadn’t received it?” This also seems to be one of the points Jesus is trying to teach the disciples through one of his most famous miracles: “The feeding of the 5000.” The miracle shows not just THAT Jesus provides but HOW and WHY Jesus provides. It’s a reminder that no matter how successful we become, the source of our strength will always be our connection to God.

## **JESUS GIVES POWER V1-11**

Sometimes, we jump right to the miracle when we tell this story. There were a lot of people following Jesus. They were in a desolate place. Jesus provided them with food miraculously. That is definitely a key message of this miracle. God miraculously provided food for the people of Israel while they wandered in the wilderness; now Jesus does the same thing again. In fact, John's gospel shows that the people heard the message clearly and drew a conclusion that Jesus didn't intend. John 6:14-15 says, "14 When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, 'This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world.' 15 Therefore, when Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself."

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) highlight an additional facet to this miracle. Jesus is doing more than just feeding the 5000. He is showing the disciples what it means to lead in the Kingdom.

The story starts back at the beginning of the chapter. Jesus gives the disciples a mission. He gives them the power to carry out that mission. He then sends them out. Luke 9:1-2 says, "1 Summoning the Twelve, he gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. 2 Then he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."

After listing some of the instructions Jesus gave the disciples and some speculation on Herod's part as to who Jesus is, the passage concludes with the disciples returning to Jesus, bringing a report of their success. Luke 9:10-11 says, "10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus all that they had done. He took them along and withdrew privately to a town called Bethsaida.

11 When the crowds found out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing."

Not only do the disciples bring back a good report, but they also bring a crowd. Their mission was an incredible success. People were healed. People accepted their teaching. People were following them back to see Jesus themselves.

## **JESUS GIVES PERSPECTIVE V12-13**

There is no indication from the report they gave to Jesus that they returned from their mission over-confident or arrogant. But we do know that the disciples struggled from time to time with trying to figure out who was most important among them. Jesus has to continually remind them that importance in the Kingdom doesn't look like success in the

world. That is what Jesus does here. On the heels of this report about their mission, Jesus performs this miracle. One of the purposes is to teach the disciples an important lesson. He is trying to show them that they will continue to do similar great things with similar power if they stay connected to the source of their power.

As the day draws to an end, The disciples in verse 12 say to Jesus, “Send the crowd away, so that they can go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find food and lodging, because we are in a deserted place here.” Instead of agreeing, in verse 13, Jesus responds with a command, “You give them something to eat!” The disciples reveal their inadequacy in the face of overwhelming need, ““We have no more than five loaves and two fish... unless we go and buy food for all these people.” In John’s version of the miracle, Philip responds to Jesus, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn’t be enough for each of them to have a little.” A denarius was a day’s wage. Two hundred denarii was equivalent to more than ten months’ salary. The disciples tell Jesus that they don’t have enough.

Jesus is offering them some perspective. They have just come back from a wildly successful mission trip. They did what Jesus had been doing. They had taught with authority. They had healed with power. But lest they forget that it was His power and authority, He puts them in a situation where they acknowledged they were at the end of their ability and no longer had what it takes.

### **JESUS GIVES PROVISION V14-17**

After getting them to acknowledge their need, Jesus gives them another command. In verse 14, Jesus says, “Have them sit down to eat in groups of about fifty each.” The disciples obey.

Jesus then performs the miracle. Verse 16 says, “Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them. He kept giving them to the disciples to set before the crowd.” There have been countless attempts to explain away this miracle. Some people have suggested that one child’s generosity prompted others to be equally generous with their own meager provisions. Others say that everyone just ate a little or declined to eat at all. Still others claim that wealthy ladies in the group provided the food. Finally, some think Jesus hypnotized the crowd into thinking they were filled. All of these explanations go against what the text says. You can refuse to believe it. But you can’t deny that the gospels claim that Jesus used five loaves and two fish to miraculously provide food to 5,000 people.

How did it happen? Luke doesn’t say. Jesus blesses the bread, breaks it, and hands it to the disciples to distribute. As he breaks it, the food continues to multiply. Two things are



important to notice. First, Jesus enables the disciples to fulfill His command. Jesus gave the disciples the impossible mission of giving the crowd food. They couldn't do it on their own. But as they obeyed Jesus, Jesus gave them what they needed to fulfill His commands. It was the disciples who gave the crowd something to eat. Second, Jesus provided more than enough. Verse 17 says, "Everyone ate and was filled. They picked up twelve baskets of leftover pieces." There was more left over than they had started with.

## **APPLICATION**

As we look at this meal, there are a couple of points that are worth applying to our lives.

**Jesus Provides Miraculously** – In hopeless situations, Jesus is not bound by the "available resources." Scripture is full of situations where people cry out to God as they look at an apparently hopeless situation, only to see God do something that seemed impossible. In fact, that is one of the most important lessons of scripture. When you don't know how it will work out, trust that God does. Despair is thinking we have all the answers and see all the possibilities. Hope believes that God sees more than us and is able to do more than we can conceive. Philippians 4:19 says, "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

**Jesus Provides Abundantly** – When God gives, He gives enough. He doesn't give enough to remove our need for Him. He always gives daily bread. But He gives enough for each day. The people in this crowd had enough to eat for the day. They will be hungry tomorrow. The good news is that God's provision today is reason to trust that He will also provide tomorrow. As Ephesians 3:20 says, "Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think."

**Jesus Provides Relationally** – God gives in the context of relationships. He calls us into relationship with Him. He calls us to be the conduit of His blessing to others as well. The disciples are only able to fulfill Jesus's command when they obey Him and rely on Him to be the source of their power. The same is true for us. We will know God's power when we stay plugged into the source. We will continue to be able to do great things for God as long as we stay plugged into God. That is the picture that Jesus is trying to paint for the disciples. They will be the conduits of God's miraculous, abundant provision as long as they are connected to Him. As Jesus told His disciples in John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."

**Jesus Gives Purposefully** – It is interesting that after the miracle, the first question Jesus asks the disciples is "Who do the crowds say that I am? (v18)" He then follows it up with,

“who do you say that I am? (v20)” This provision of Jesus is intended for more than a meal. It is insight into His identity. He is asking if they have figured it out yet. The same is true for us. Do we receive divine provision and grow in our ability to trust the next time we experience need because we remember who Jesus is and how faithful His promises are? Or do we complain, grumble, doubt, and worry because we failed to learn this important lesson?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the broader context of this miracle? Why has the crowd gathered? What role do the disciples play in this miracle?
2. How does this miracle show that Jesus gives miraculously?
3. How does this miracle show that Jesus gives abundantly?
4. How does this miracle show that Jesus gives relationally?
5. How does this miracle show that Jesus gives purposefully?

## APR 28 | A TABLE OF PRIORITIES

### MARY AND MARTHA - LUKE 10:38-42

I remember overhearing my wife and a friend chatting after church one Sunday. They were having a good time enjoying each other's company and reconnecting after a busy week. As they began to feel the pull of hungry, tired children and husbands who needed lunch and their after- church naps, my wife said in parting, "I really enjoyed talking. We should get together sometime soon." What that friend said in response always stuck with me. She said, "If you are coming to see me, you can come tomorrow. If you are coming to see my house, you better give me a week."

They both laughed because they realized they felt the need to have everything in order before having someone over but rarely cared if someone else's house was in perfect order when they went to visit. My wife and I often remind ourselves of that conversation to encourage ourselves not to be afraid to invite people into our lives and not to put pressure on ourselves to impress and be perfect. Hospitality is about connecting with people, not showing off for people.

Sadly, many people are so focused either on impressing or avoiding embarrassment that they become consumed with making sure every event goes perfectly. We have all been to a birthday party or holiday meal that had some host who was so determined to have everything just right that they ended up ruining everybody's time because nothing was ever good enough, and if it was, then nobody was appreciative enough of all the hard work they put into the even to make it special.

This tension is nothing new. Today, we will look at a story of two sisters who took different approaches to serving Jesus. As we look at their story, hopefully, we will gain insight into our priorities and hear Jesus's encouragement to shift our focus toward what matters most.

### MARTHA'S RESPONSIBILITY V38

Jesus is traveling and teaching as He heads toward Jerusalem. Verse 38 says, "While they were traveling, he entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home." Luke's Gospel is written for a gentile audience outside Judea, so he doesn't show concern for the details of local geography. From the other gospels, we know the village is Bethany, a few miles outside Jerusalem.

We aren't told much about Martha other than that this was her house and she welcomed Jesus and His disciples. From this, it can be deduced that she is either unmarried or widowed and that she is the older of the two sisters because both the ownership of the house and the obligations of hospitality are hers.

It's easy to read that verse through our modern lens, like Martha threw open the door, hugged Jesus, and then told Him to make Himself at home. The truth is that modern Americans are a lot more casual than people in Ancient Judea or even many other places in the modern world. Hospitality was and is a huge deal in many cultures. It carries many responsibilities and obligations.

### **MARY'S REST V39**

After learning about Martha, we learn about her sister. Verse 39 says, "She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what he said." While Martha is focused on her hosting duties, her sister is seated at the feet of the visiting rabbi. This suggests that she is younger because she has no official duties. But this is also more than just a young girl lounging around listening to a guest tell stories. "Sitting at someone's feet" is a Jewish way of saying you are someone's disciple. Mary is not just avoiding work; she is engaged in learning all she can from Jesus.

### **MARTHA'S REQUEST V40**

The problem emerges in verse 40: "Martha was distracted by her many tasks." The Greek word translated as "distracted" is used only here in the whole New Testament. It means being pulled away or diverted. It is what you do when you pull on a horse's reins. Her work is pulling her like it has a bit in her mouth.

She was working hard, perhaps trying to do something special for her special guest. When she sees that her work is not being assisted by her sister or appreciated by her guest, she makes a request.

The rest of Verse 40 says, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand."

Her statement has three parts. First, she accuses Jesus of not knowing or caring about everything she is doing. Second, she draws attention to the fact that she is alone to do all that needs to be done. Finally, she asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her.

I find it interesting that Martha doesn't ask Mary directly to help. She tells Jesus. Why? Probably not because she needs or wants the help. Martha seems like the kind of person who gives a lot of orders but quickly ends up doing everything herself because no one is doing it right. No, she asks Jesus because she wants Jesus to notice. She is doing all of this. She is doing all of this for Him. She wants Him to see her, be impressed, and commend her.

## **JESUS'S REMINDER V41-42**

This is where the story gets interesting. Instead of telling Mary that story time is over, and she needs to help her sister, Jesus rebukes Martha. Verses 41-42 say, "41 The Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her.'"

Martha is mad that Mary isn't doing anything. Martha wants credit, thanks, encouragement, and help. She blames Mary for being idle. She blames Jesus for letting Mary be idle. Jesus rebukes Martha and praises Mary. Jesus said Mary had chosen the better portion. We pretend to believe, but in reality, we spend our lives acting out Martha. Not only that, but we also think to ourselves that Jesus must be wrong. Nothing would get done if everyone sat around doing nothing like Mary. We fail to realize that Jesus wasn't talking about how we spend the entirety of our time but instead emphasizing the two possible starting points for our work.

Mary and Martha represent two roads you can take regarding your work. And Jesus is very clear in other places about where these roads end up.

### **The Road of Martha**

Martha's road is focused on work, but not just any work, work done for the master. She wants to please Jesus. She wants to bless Jesus. She wants to impress Jesus. And she is mad that while she is working hard in a hot and hectic kitchen, her sister is sitting do-eyed at the feet of Jesus. Doesn't she know I could use an extra pair of hands? Didn't she see how many people besides Jesus came into the house? Doesn't she realize how hard I am working? But Martha doesn't call out to Mary. Her biggest frustration is that Jesus seems pleased with Mary. Doesn't Jesus realize how hard she is working? So, Martha asks Jesus to rebuke Mary for her. She does it to draw attention to herself, to show all that she is and has been doing for Jesus. Sure, she wants help. But more than that, she wants attention and some credit. She wants to be acknowledged, celebrated, and patted on the back. But Jesus doesn't. Jesus responds by saying it is Mary, not Martha, who is doing the only truly necessary thing.

One wonders how Martha responded. Did she huff and bluster and go back into the kitchen? Did she make passive-aggressive comments throughout dinner? Did she stop working and sit in the corner to show the consequences when everyone just sits around? Or did she hear that Jesus wasn't questioning WHAT she was doing...He was questioning WHY? and HOW?

I don't know. What I do know is that Jesus revealed what happened to people like Martha, who never managed to get off this road. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' 23 Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!'" (Matt. 7:21-23).

Some of the people who get turned away from the gates of heaven will have long resumes and successful careers full of "kingdom work." They stand at the gate of heaven, like Martha on the threshold of her kitchen, and shove their accomplishments at Jesus, hoping to impress Him with what they have done. They are entirely focused on themselves and what they were able to do. They want Jesus to see the little kingdoms they built. They did it all by themselves. They did it for Him. Isn't He glad? Isn't He impressed? And Jesus replies in astonished bewilderment, "Who are you?" This is Martha's Road. If Martha doesn't get off this road, this is where it ends. She needs to start down the path of her sister Mary.

### **The Road of Mary**

It's easy to look at Mary sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus and think that Jesus is off base when He tells us to emulate her and not her sister. Surely, we need to get to work. Surely our churches need more worker bee Martha's, not more pew-potato Mary's. But such an attitude reveals a double mistake on our part. First, it reveals what a low value we place on teaching and learning. We see her sitting still and don't think she is DOING anything. Second, it reveals that we think Jesus is disclosing Mary's finish line rather than her starting gate. This is Mary's path, and it

starts at the feet of Jesus. She will go on to DO things as well. But her ability, energy, attitude, and drive will all have their roots in her connection to the master.

Jesus talked about where this path goes, too. In John 15, Jesus says this: "5 I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me...9 "As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands you will remain in my love...11 "I have

told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete” (John 15:5, 9-11).

The path of Mary is a path of fruit, love, and joy...and it starts by plugging into the vine. It's simple. Stay connected to and be nourished by the vine, and you will bear fruit and experience love and joy. Disconnect from the vine, and you will dry up, wither, and die.

This is what Jesus is trying to tell Martha, not that her work is unimportant. But rather that her work is growing from the wrong soil. She isn't plugged into the vine, and her branch is starting to wither and die. Her work is too much for her. She is exhausted by the load and demoralized by the lack of acknowledgment. Her cry out to Jesus reveals as much. Jesus tells her what she needs isn't more hands in the kitchen. She needs to start her work by sitting at the master's feet. When she does, she will be able to say, like Paul in Colossians 1:29, “I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me.”

## **CONCLUSION**

Too often, we work tirelessly to no avail, wondering why we never succeed, why no one ever notices, or why we never feel joy. We try seminars and solutions. We consult counselors, mentors, and blogs. We switch jobs. We try harder. In reality, the problem is that we are on the Martha road. We are trying to run on our own gas. And all it is producing in us is exhaustion, bitterness, and depression.

We need to find the path of Mary, the one that starts by sitting at the feet of Jesus. Learning from Him. Learning who He is, what He is up to, who we are in His eyes, and what He desires us to do. Who knows where the path leads from there? But I do know that a path does lead from there. Eph 2:10 says: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.” Hebrews 12:1 tells us to “Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us.” There is a race for each of us to run. There is a path for each of us to walk in, and it is full of joy, peace, fulfillment, and fruit. It's the path of Mary, and it starts by sitting at the feet of Jesus.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What are the three parts of Martha's complaint to Jesus? Have you ever felt like that?
2. Why does Jesus rebuke Martha? What is she doing wrong?
3. Why does Jesus commend Mary? What is she doing right?
4. How does this story challenge our priorities and motivation for when we serve?
5. How can we learn to do the work of Martha in the spirit of Mary?



## MAY 5 | A TABLE OF CAUTION

### LUNCH AT A PHARISEE'S HOUSE - LUKE 11:37-54

I always wondered what the signs would be that would make me “feel old.” One was the moment when there were things that I had experienced that no longer existed. I remember the day I realized that most kids today had never heard a dial tone on a phone. They also don't know what it's like to wait for a TV show or movie to come on. Streaming services make it easy to watch the show you want when you want to. The idea of waiting for a show to start, and if you missed it, it was just gone forever, seems bizarre and incomprehensible. Commercials used to be one of those things that was slowly being consigned to the past as well. But they are finding their way back into our lives as all streaming services realize there is money to be made with a captive audience.

I remember a time when I was a little nostalgic for commercials. It was when I moved overseas with my dad, who was in the military. The only English-speaking programming available was the Armed Forces Network. They would rebroadcast old American television programs. However, they couldn't show American commercials because they were a non-profit organization. Instead, to fill the programming so that the run time of the shows was semi-normal, they would air military-made “public service announcements” designed to acclimate newcomers to life on an overseas military installation. This was during the Cold War, so many of the PSAs were about being careful about what you said concerning your parent's job because you never knew who was listening. There were also many “know the warning signs” commercials that helped people recognize the signs that a friend or loved one was having a hard time adjusting to being away from home and was starting to cope with it in unhealthy ways.

Jesus did something similar. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. One of his constant antagonists is the Pharisees, but that doesn't mean he isn't concerned for them as well. He always seems willing to engage them in conversation and never turns down an opportunity to share a meal with them. The reason he did this was because He was worried about the effects that being a Pharisee had on their soul.

Today, we will look at a series of cautions that Jesus delivered during a lunch at a Pharisee's house. The term Jesus uses over and over is “woe.” Though the word sounds harsh, it is important to realize that it is not a term of condemnation or curse as much as it is a term of pity or sorrow. Another good translation would be, “Alas, for you.” These are the opposite

of the beatitudes. Instead of “Blessed are you...,” Jesus tells the Pharisees, “How pitiful are you ...” Hopefully, as we study them, we will be better equipped to recognize the early warning signs of Pharisaism in our own lives.

### **HOW IT STARTED V37-38**

The context is a lunch that Jesus was invited to. Verses 37-38 say, “37 As he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him. So he went in and reclined at the table. 38 When the Pharisee saw this, he was amazed that he did not first perform the ritual washing before dinner.”

This was not a matter of hygiene but ceremony. Overscrupulous Jews would wash not to get rid of dirt but the symbolic defilement they had received from their contact with the sinful world outside.

When the Pharisee sees that Jesus doesn’t do the full ceremonial hand washing, he is “amazed.” We aren’t told whether the Pharisee said anything audibly, if he uttered a gasp of horror, or if Jesus simply knew the thoughts of his heart. However the Pharisee expressed his surprise, it triggered in Jesus a need to respond to the people at the lunch and deliver to them the warning signs of Pharisaical Legalism.

### **WARNING SIGN #1 – FOCUSING ON APPEARANCE INSTEAD OF THE HEART V39-41**

The first warning sign is living two-faced lives. Verse 39 says, “But the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and evil.” On the outside, they appear to be concerned with the law and with obedience to God, but when no one is looking, they live a life full of robbery and self-indulgence. They intentionally live a double life. They pursued righteousness not so that they might be truly changed individuals but so that they might be praised for their meticulousness.

The solution to such a sickness is to focus on the heart first. Jesus tells them in verse 41, “But give from what is within to the poor,[n] and then everything is clean for you.” Jesus is saying that if you start by cleaning the inside, you won’t have to worry about the outside being dirty.

They forgot that outward righteousness is supposed to be connected with and flow from who we are on the inside. The two are supposed to be the same. Jesus didn’t come to change the façade we present; He came to change the whole of our being, starting with who we are on the inside.

## **WARNING SIGN #2: FOCUSING ON RULES INSTEAD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS V42**

Though He called the Pharisees fools in verse 40, this is the first official statement of woe against the Pharisees. In verse 42, He says, “But woe to you Pharisees! You give a tenth of mint, rue, and every kind of herb, and you bypass justice and love for God.” In order to show how serious they were about obeying God’s law, the Pharisees would tithe on their herbs and spices. They would go through their cabinets and give a tenth of all that was there. They wanted this to show that they took the law very seriously and were prepared to do the most arduous requirements of the law.

In their favor, they realized that God had a claim over everything and were prepared to give Him a portion of everything they possessed. But in the end, they had forgotten the more basic (and more important) things of justice, mercy, and faithfulness. They had turned service to God into a transaction driven by adherence to the rules instead of something that is motivated by love of God.

Jesus tells them, “These things you should have done without neglecting the others” (Luke 11:42). He isn’t telling them to stop obeying God but to obey Him with the right motivation. They should be paying their tithes, but this should be done with a heart full of love for God and respect for others. God expects us to tithe, but more importantly, He expects us to be people who care about justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

## **WARNING SIGN #3: FOCUSING ON EXALTING THEMSELVES INSTEAD OF HELPING OTHERS V43-44**

Next, Jesus focuses on pride. Verse 43 says, “Woe to you Pharisees! You love the front seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.” The chief seats in the synagogues were for dignitaries, patrons, high-ranking officials, and other very important people. The greetings in the marketplace refer to the elaborate public show that important people engaged in demonstrating to others that people should defer to them, honor them, and make way for them.

Though verse 44 also begins with the word “Woe,” this verse isn’t really a new woe; rather, Jesus is showing the results of all the other woes. This is what happens when you focus on externals, on following rules, and on seeking your prominence. Verse 44 says, “For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.” Touching a grave made a person ceremonially unclean for a period of time. Until they were cleansed, they couldn’t enter the temple. This was the case even if the person didn’t know they were touching a grave. Jesus is telling the Pharisees that the people who come in contact with them are not cleaner but dirtier by being in contact with them. They think they are helping people follow God better, but actually, they are making it harder.

#### **WARNING SIGN #4: FOCUSING ON COMPLICATING INSTEAD OF EQUIPPING V45-46**

In verse 45, a new group speaks up, one of the experts in the law answered him, ‘Teacher, when you say these things you insult us too.’” Often in the gospel, Pharisees and Lawyers appear together. But they were slightly different.

Being a Pharisee was like a cross between a denomination and a political party. Anybody could be involved. They weren’t necessarily professionals any more than people today arguing on the internet about religion or politics. The lawyers, however, were a professional class. They were the people who were experts in interpreting the law. It was their job. Pharisees went to them for help in navigating the complexities of Jewish law. The lawyers speak up, hoping Jesus isn’t talking to them too. But Jesus has no intention of letting them off the hook. Starting in verse 46, the woes are directed at the lawyers. But the truth is they are the same group, or more accurately, a group within a group. These are the professional Pharisees.

In verse 46, Jesus says, “Woe also to you experts in the law! You load people with burdens that are hard to carry, and yet you yourselves don’t touch these burdens with one of your fingers.” Jesus refers to the practice of lawyers who make the law difficult to understand. They made it a burden to people by expanding it to include all the possibilities one should carefully observe.

One commentator<sup>1</sup> mentioned the following example: “On the sabbath, they taught, a man may not carry a burden ‘in his right hand or in his left hand, in his bosom or on his shoulder.’ But he may carry it ‘on the back of his hand, or with his foot or with his mouth or with his elbow, or in his ear or in his hair or in his wallet (carried) mouth downwards, or between his wallet and his shirt, or in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe or in his sandal’ (Shabbath 10:3).”

<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, Luke: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988; 223-224)

Now imagine there were just as many explanations, applications, and exceptions for every law, regulation, or command. The task of figuring out what the law did and didn’t allow became a burden to people. But the lawyers were able to find all the loopholes, which enabled them to do basically whatever they wanted whenever they wanted.

#### **WARNING SIGN #5 EXALTING TRADITION RATHER THAN LEARNING FROM IT V47–51**

This next woe is a little hard to understand. In verses 47-48, Jesus says, “47 “Woe to you! You build tombs for the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 Therefore, you are witnesses that you approve the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build

their monuments.” He is saying that they are exalting the prophets of old by building tombs in their honor, but they are actually showing themselves to be the same kind of people as their fathers who killed the prophets. They think they are the kinds of people who would listen to the prophets in the past, but the truth is they are glorifying the past. They mourn the way their ancestors killed the prophets, but they fail to hear the word of the Lord when it is preached to them. Something greater than a prophet is in front of them, and they are repeating their ancestor’s mistakes.

### **WARNING SIGN #6: FOCUSING ON EXCLUDING INSTEAD OF SEEKING V 52**

The final woe is found in verse 52, which says, “Woe to you experts in the law! You have taken away the key to knowledge. You didn’t go in yourselves, and you hindered those who were trying to go in.” Jesus is saying that they were supposed to be showing people how to seek God. Instead, they were focused on excluding people who didn’t do things their way. The key to knowledge He is referring to is scripture. They have it, but they don’t use it correctly. They don’t use it to seek God (you didn’t go in yourselves), nor do they use it to help others seek God (you hindered those who were trying to go). Instead, they use the word of God to exalt themselves because of their understanding of its complexities. They also refuse to allow anyone to seek God in a way that doesn’t fit with their understanding. They didn’t realize that no one can be perfect or earn God’s favor by being righteous. Our righteous behavior is not to earn God’s favor but rather in response to the favor already extended to us.

### **THE RESULT V53-54**

Those listening to Jesus heard his warning about the dangers of being a Pharisee and responded exactly like Pharisees. Verse 53-54 says, “53 When he left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to oppose him fiercely and to cross-examine him about many things; 54 they were lying in wait for him to trap him in something he said.” Instead of hearing and heeding the words, instead of sincerely asking themselves if anything Jesus had to say was valid, they chose to respond exactly like Pharisees. They become angry and arrogant and attempt to look for a way to trap Him in something He said so they can discredit or kill Him. That is why Jesus pronounces these woes. He isn’t condemning them. He is warning them. He is trying to convict them. They simply refuse to listen. The question is, will we?

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does Woe mean? What is the difference between conviction and condemnation?
2. What does it mean to focus on appearance rather than the hearty? How did they do it? How do we sometimes do it?
3. What does it mean to focus on rules instead of righteousness? How did they do it? How do we sometimes do it?
4. What does it mean to focus on exalting oneself instead of helping others? How did they do it? How do we sometimes do it?
5. What does it mean to focus on excluding rather than seeking? How did they do it? How do we sometimes do it?

## MAY 12 | A TABLE OF CHALLENGE

### HEALING/TEACHING ON THE SABBATH - LUKE 14:1-24

Everyone looks for jobs over vacation breaks during college to make a little extra money. The hope is always to find a job that pays well without too much work. The most sought-after jobs for some of my friends were housesitting jobs because that also came with free room and board and sometimes access to a nice car. The funniest versions of those jobs always involved taking care of a pet as well. Watching another person's pet is an experience because you get a window into their relationship with their animal.

My grandfather grew up on a farm. So, he loved animals and treated them kindly, but he also viewed their role in the family from a practical perspective. His whole life, he wondered why people bought store-bought cat food for their pets. I remember overhearing him getting frustrated with a friend who owned a cat but also had a mouse problem in their basement. He told the friend to stop feeding the cat, and he would start to hunt. Some people love their animals, want them to be taken care of, and even see them as a part of the family, but still see them as animals. Occasionally, you meet someone who doesn't just treat their pet like a human but actually treats it better than some humans. One friend got a job watching a person's chihuahua while that person was out of town. While learning the routine for care, he was told that he had to eat with the dog, on the same level as the dog, and even the same food as the dog. When he went over to the house, he joked that he thought the owner treated the dog better than her own children.

We laugh, but that attitude is not uncommon. Animals, especially dogs, are easy to love. Humans, however, are a lot harder to love. So, instead of loving each other, most of us end up comparing ourselves to each other, fighting with each other, and judging each other. This is compounded by the problem that we usually give ourselves a lot of slack while being really hard on others. Somebody once said most people expect themselves to be saved by grace and everyone else to be saved by works.

Today, we are looking at a meal Jesus shared with people during which He heals a person He shouldn't have. His response challenges how everyone at the meals views themselves, others, and even God. Hopefully, as we study this meal, we will be similarly challenged and willing to change.

## THE PROBLEM V1-7

Verse 1-2 describe the scene: “1 One Sabbath, when he went in to eat[a] at the house of one of the leading Pharisees, they were watching him closely. 2 There in front of him was a man whose body was swollen with fluid.” Jesus is invited to Sabbath lunch with a bunch of Pharisees who are there more to scrutinize Him than engage with Him. Also, there is a man with dropsy, a medical condition that causes the body to retain fluid and swell. Though it can be a sign of underlying heart or kidney issues, the person suffering from it isn’t in danger of immediate death. It is usually, at worst, embarrassing or uncomfortable.

Jesus sees the man and seizes the opportunity to teach a lesson. Verses 3-4 say, “3 In response, Jesus asked the law experts and the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” 4 But they kept silent. He took the man, healed him, and sent him away.” He knows that the Pharisees wouldn’t heal the man even if they could. The man’s condition wasn’t life-threatening. In the Pharisees’ eyes, the man would have to wait until tomorrow to be healed.

After Jesus heals the man, He rebukes the Pharisees in verse 5, “And to them, he said, ‘Which of you whose son or ox falls into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?’” Jesus is basically saying, “you wouldn’t treat your dog this way, much less you child...why would you treat him this way.”

## THE PARABLES V8-25

In response, Jesus tells them three parables. These parables are all worthy of studying closely and individually, but, for the sake of this lesson, we will look at them in quick succession to feel the force of all three together. Their goal is to show us how to change our perspective. Jesus isn’t just confronting the Pharisees. He is giving them a way out. He has shown them a problem; now, He gives them a pathway to fixing it.

**Parable #1: Change How You See Yourself (v8-11)** - The first parable is about choosing your seat at a party. Everyone knows what it’s like to go to dinner with a group and want to sit either in the important spot or at least with the important people. In verse 8, Jesus warns, “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, don’t sit in the place of honor, because a more distinguished person than you may have been invited by your host.” Pharisees were proud of who they were and would frequently assume that they were the guest of honor.

Jesus is challenging them to change how they see themselves and others. This is an important lesson to learn because, in God’s Kingdom, Jesus comes first in everything. He is the main character in the story that is being told. You and I are always supporting cast members.



Jesus delivers the punchline in verse 11, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Your choices are to humble yourself or be humbled.”

**Parable #2: Change How You See Others( v12-14)** - This next parable addresses whom Pharisees invite to parties. Verse 12-14 say, “12 He also said to the one who had invited him, ‘When you give a lunch or a dinner, don’t invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. 13 On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’”

Pharisees assumed that if one were rich and healthy, God had blessed him, but if one were sick or poor, it was because God had punished him. The Pharisees looked down on the man with dropsy because they saw his sickness as a sign of God’s judgment. They were perhaps even wondering how he snuck into their party. Jesus is encouraging the Pharisees to change their priorities and learn to value the things that are important to God. The things that matter to God are different than what matters to the world. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, “27 Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. 28 God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, 29 so that no one[g] may boast in his presence.”

**Parable #3: Change What You Value Most – Rejecting God’s Invitation (v15-24)** -

The final parable is triggered by the statement of a dinner guest trying to get the conversation back on track. In verse 15, he says, “Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” Jesus responds by telling a parable about a lord who gave a banquet, and everyone refused to come.

It is important to realize that ancient party invitations were a two-stage process. A man would send out invitations to a banquet, and then later, when everything was ready, he would send out an announcement that it was time to come to the party. Look at verses 16-17 and notice the two- stage invitation: “16 A man was giving a large banquet and invited many. 17 At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who were invited, ‘Come, because everything is now ready.’” These verses imply that they accepted the initial invitation. But when the announcement came that it was time for the party, they all found things they’d rather be doing. All the things listed are good things – land, possessions, a family – but none should be used as an excuse for ignoring God’s call.

The point is that the Pharisees valued God, but they valued something else more. And if they were forced to choose, they would rather have something else. Jesus is challenging them and us to change what we value most.

This parable also challenges the notions that the Pharisees think they know who are invited to God's banquet and who should be excluded. Jesus is telling them that the issue is not who will be invited but who will respond to the invitation.

### **THE POINT**

Jesus spoke hard words to the Pharisees. No one likes to be challenged. How you respond to that challenge is important. Most people's initial reaction is to be defensive or angry. It is important to remember that Jesus challenges us because he is trying to wake us up to our bad choices. He desires all of us to be with Him at His kingdom banquet, celebrating with all who have been invited alongside us. But we will only ever be able to answer the call if we can change how we view ourselves by being humble, change how we view others by seeing everyone as God does, and by changing what we value so that God isn't only on the list of our top priorities he is the top of the list.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Have you ever seen someone choosing to follow the rules rather than show love to someone?
2. What are some ways that we "take the place of honor?" How can we choose to "take the lowest seat at the table?"
3. Who are people that we look down on as unimportant or unworthy of our attention? Who are the people that we try to impress?
4. Who do we think is going to be excluded from the Kingdom? Who do we think doesn't deserve to come?
5. How do we refuse Christ's invitation? How do we not prioritize following Jesus? What do we choose instead of Him?

# MAY 19 | A TABLE OF RESTORATION

## ZACCHAEUS - LUKE 19:1-10

Have you ever got yourself really lost? When I was 12, I got lost on top of Mt. Fuji. I was living in Japan with my family because my dad was in the military and assigned to a base outside Tokyo. I went with a group from my church to climb Mt. Fuji. You can only climb Mt. Fuji in the summer because it's covered with snow the rest of the year. You also can only climb Mt.

Fuji at night because otherwise it is too hot. It won't come as a surprise to you that a twelve-year-old climbing Mt. Fuji at night quickly became separated from his group. I climbed the whole mountain with the help of a Japanese youth around my age. He didn't speak my language. I didn't speak his. But throughout the night, we helped each other make it to the top.

When I finally got to the top, I was relieved to see a member of my climbing party. We ate something in a small warming hut and then waited to watch the sunrise. After sunrise, I returned to the hut, where I promptly fell asleep. I woke up later; I had no idea how long, maybe minutes, maybe hours. But I was surrounded by no one. I was convinced I was left, so I panicked and began to run down the mountain. I came to a crossroads and chose the wrong turn, leading me to an ever-dwindling path that eventually turned into painted arrows on rocks every fifty feet or so. I soon realized I was all alone, had no idea how to get back, and had no idea what to do next.

Don't worry, I eventually came across somebody who was just as surprised to see me as I was them. They took me back to the main trail and entrusted me to the care of a Japanese family who took me down the mountain.

Have you ever felt stuck in life? You don't know how you got to where you are or how to get out. You feel lost, alone, and like no one is looking for you. Well, I have good news for you. If you feel like that's you, Jesus came precisely to look for you.

Today, we are going to look at a meal Jesus invites himself to at the house of a man named Zacchaeus. In this encounter, Jesus gives us a living, breathing demonstration of what

he came to do. At the end, Jesus summarizes the point we are supposed to get. Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.” As we look at it, hopefully, we will grow in our understanding of what it means that Jesus seeks us. And learn to reorient our lives around and rest in the salvation he came to bring.

The story starts with a description of...

### **WHO JESUS SEEKS V1-4**

Luke 19:1-4 says, “1 He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. 4 So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he was about to pass that way.”

Though he is chiefly famous for his stature, if you look closely at how he is described, you will see the portrait of a lost person.

**Empty:** He has power. He is not just a tax collector; he is the chief tax collector of a very important town. Jericho was a crossroads town where several trade routes converged to head up to Jerusalem. Taxation was big business, and Zacchaeus was in charge of it all. And because of that, he is also wealthy. But it’s not enough. He can buy anything he wants, and perhaps he has tried, but he found himself hungering for more. He needs to see Jesus.

**Excluded:** He can’t see Jesus because of the crowd. But instead of welcoming this important member of their community, the crowd blocks Zacchaeus’s view. They don’t make room for him; they crowd him out.

**Eager:** He is more than eager; He is desperate to get to Jesus. His hunger to get to Jesus overcomes his feelings of exclusion, and he opens himself up potentially to more scorn by climbing a tree. Imagine the laughter. Imagine the scorn from the crowd. He doesn’t care. He needs to see Jesus. He will do whatever he can just to get a peek.

Fortunately, the story doesn’t stop there. Zacchaeus gets more than a peek at Jesus as he passes by. The next verse shows us...

### **HOW JESUS SEEKS V5**

Verse 5 says, “5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house.’”

Jesus is demonstrating how He lives out His mission, how He seeks and saves the lost.

**Jesus Sees** – One of the biggest fears of someone who is lost is that no one is looking for them, that no one can see them. When we are lost in life, we often feel like Zacchaeus: overlooked and unnoticed. We feel alone. The fact that Jesus stops, turns, and sees Zacchaeus is a tangible reminder that we are never alone.

No matter how alone, anonymous, or overlooked you might feel, Jesus came to show us that God sees you and promises never to leave you,

Psalm 139:1-6 says:

1 LORD, you have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I stand up; You understand my thoughts from far away. 3 You observe my travels and my rest; You are aware of all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue, You know all about it, LORD. 5 You have encircled me; You have placed your hand on me. 6 This wondrous knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it.

**Jesus Speaks** – Jesus came to remind us that God is there, and He is not silent. The writer of Hebrews said it this way, “1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. 2 In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). God speaks in the Scriptures. God speaks most clearly through His Son, Jesus.

There is something powerful in Jesus stopping, turning, and unexpectedly addressing Zacchaeus by name. He doesn't say, “Hey, you.” He calls Zacchaeus by name. He sees Zacchaeus and calls him specifically. This is so important.

In John 10, Jesus calls Himself the good shepherd. In John 10:2-3, He shows what the good shepherd does, “2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” He calls His sheep individually by name. This means that God knows each one of us and desires each one of us.

Sometimes, it's easy to think that salvation is a mass-production operation. I have a lot of kids, so going places with them gets expensive. Friends of ours told us a great money-saving trick. Often, it is cheaper to buy ten tickets at the group rate than seven individual tickets. The byproduct is they have three free tickets to give away to whomever. Sometimes, we treat our salvation like that. Like God purchased a block of salvation tickets, and he had a few extra lying around, and that's how we snuck into the family of God. We might be in, but we weren't wanted. We snuck in when no one was looking because we found an

extra ticket. That's not it at all; each of us is individually seen, known, and desired by God.

A lot of armchair theologians like to argue about whether we chose God or God chose us. The Bible clearly teaches both. But they answer different questions. This is where the fact that God chooses us fits in. It is not supposed to tell us we have no choice in the matter. It's supposed to encourage and remind each of us that none of us is an accident. We are here on purpose. He calls us each by name.

**Jesus Stays** – Jesus invites Himself over to Zacchaeus's house. This is more than Jesus scoring a free meal at the rich guy's house. The Greek makes it clear that Jesus is going to stay a while with Zacchaeus. This is a picture of the primary blessing God came to give us. Jesus, first and foremost, offers us the peace of His presence in our lives. All other blessings come from this. Sadly, this is often the last thing we want from Him. A good window into our frame of mind can be gauged by our reaction to slightly different versions of one of Jesus's sayings about how God knows how to give good gifts. Matthew 7:11 says, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him." In Luke 11:13, the same saying is phrased this way, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Notice the change. Matthew says God will give good things. Luke says God will give the Holy Spirit.

Reading those side by side, I can hear the sigh of disappointment from some people. "Oh, this is one of those Jesus things. I was hoping this was the promise of good stuff like I could pick from a list or a catalog or something."

But it's no mistake. God does know how to give good gifts to His children. And the best gift He can give you is His Holy Spirit, the confident assurance of the presence of God in your life. Without it, every other blessing will leave you feeling just as empty as when you were lost. We all have a God-shaped hole in us; the only thing that will fill us up is Him.

In John 14:23, Jesus says, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." That is what Jesus is showing us. Jesus promises to be with us.

In Matthew 28:20, Jesus tells His disciples, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." In Hebrews 13:5, the writer reminds us that God said, "I will never leave you or abandon you."

This is God's primary promise throughout scripture: I will be with you.

## **SIGNS JESUS SAVES V6-9**

Zacchaeus responds with eagerness. He shows us not what we must do to earn salvation, but the change Jesus wants to bring into our lives. Verses 6-8 say, “6 So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully. 7 All who saw it began to complain, ‘He’s gone to stay with a sinful man.’ 8 But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Look, I’ll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I’ll pay back four times as much.’”

In response to the crowd’s grumbling, Zacchaeus responds with a promise to give to the poor and restore what he has stolen. When Jesus says in verse 9, “Today salvation has come to this house,” He isn’t saying Zacchaeus earned or bought his salvation. He is saying that Zacchaeus is demonstrating the characteristics of a saved person. He is saying that Zacchaeus is bearing the fruit that shows salvation has taken root in his heart.

First, Zacchaeus shows his **Repentance**. He knows he has done wrong. He wants to change his behavior. Like I said, he doesn’t do this to merit salvation. He does it in response to salvation. He wants to change how he lives, and the first step is to turn away from his former life. Oddly, so many people never do this. They claim that there is nothing that can be done to earn salvation, and they use it as a reason to stay in their sin. No! Repent, leave it behind. Turn from it. Sin really is a prison; Jesus has set you free, and the door is open. Why are you still inside?

Second, Zacchaeus seeks **Reconciliation**. Jewish law required that if a person defrauded another person, he must pay back twice what he had taken. Zacchaeus goes above and beyond what is required. Why? Because he wants to be restored not just to God but to his fellow man. This is what God wants for us as well. He wants us to find him and to find each other. That is why he calls us into a community called the church. You were meant to be reconciled to the Father and welcomed into a family of the redeemed.

Third, Zacchaeus demonstrated that his life has a new **Reorientation of Priorities**. He was a rich man. But he basically bankrupted himself between giving half of his possessions to the poor and paying back four times what he owed. Why did he do that? It is because his priorities have changed. He did what the rich young ruler couldn’t do a few chapters earlier. He gave everything he had to follow Jesus. Why? Because he knew that what he was leaving behind was nothing compared to what he was embracing.

## **CONCLUSION**

This is the change Jesus came to bring. This is what it means that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He has come to search for people who feel empty and excluded. He wants

you to know he sees you, calls you by name, and longs to make His home with you. He wants to transform your life. He was to lead you to repentance, to reconcile you to God and others, and to reorient your life.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How does Zacchaeus show that he is lost? How does he show he feels empty and excluded? How does he show he is eager to escape it all?
2. How do we manifest the same feelings of emptiness and exclusion? How else do we escape those feelings?
3. How does Jesus seek Zacchaeus? What does it mean that Jesus sees Him? Speaks to him? Stays with him?
4. How does this work for us? How does Jesus get our attention? How do we know He is seeking us?
5. What is the difference between trying to earn our salvation and bearing fruit in response to receiving salvation? What fruit does Zacchaeus bear? How can we act similarly?



# MAY 26 | A TABLE OF REMEMBRANCE

## THE MEAL JESUS GAVE US - LUKE 22:7-38

It is known by several names: Communion, the Lord's Supper, and the Eucharist. The word Eucharist is more common in Catholic or Episcopal traditions. It can sound foreign, but it simply means "To give thanks" and refers to what Jesus did when He took the bread. He gave thanks and then broke it. Sadly, the meal that is supposed to unite us as followers of Jesus is often a source of division among believers who sometimes get caught up in arguing about what the meal means and what it is for.

I am not trying to say that it is not important to try to understand what is happening during the Lord's Supper, but it is of second importance. The most important thing to do is to eat it in obedience to Jesus' commands. Then, we can discuss, meditate, and consider why Jesus told us to do it. But doing the second before you do the first is like refusing to eat a meal until you completely understand the science of nutrition. Nutrition is important, but people can eat and be satisfied without it. The same is the case with the Lord's supper. It should be a means of uniting believers from various backgrounds, with various theological positions, around one table to celebrate our common Lord.

Hopefully, as we study the meal Jesus gave us, we will come to a deeper appreciation of who He is and a renewed desire to share it with other believers.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER REINTERPRETS V7-13

The Last Supper, at which Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, was a Passover feast called a Seder Meal. Luke 22:7-8 says, "7 Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.'"

The Feast of the Unleavened Bread and the Passover are both festivals that recount the events of Exodus 12, in which God delivered the people of Israel out of Slavery in Egypt. His climactic act was to send the angel of death to kill the firstborn of everyone in Egypt. The angel would "Passover" any house with a lamb's blood sprinkled on its doorposts. The lamb was eaten by those inside the house, along with unleavened bread. Every year, Jews gathered, hopefully in Jerusalem, to eat this meal and remember this significant event.

Jesus took some bread that was part of the meal and some wine and gave them new significance. Verses 19-20 say, “19 And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ 20 In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’”

The bread, which already had meaning as part of the Seder meal, is given new meaning as a symbol of His body. The wine is reinterpreted not just as His blood but as the blood of the New Covenant promised by Jeremiah 31:31-34. These two symbols also serve as prophecies to the disciples, revealing to them what is about to happen in the next few days. His body is about to be broken. His blood is about to be spilled. By placing them in the context of the Passover, He is telling His disciples that what is about to happen is not an accident or a mistake. It is the plan of God. It is the beginning of a new Exodus.

The first Passover marked the beginning of the Exodus of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Jesus reinterprets this meal to refer to a new exodus out of slavery to sin.

### **THE LORD’S SUPPER REMEMBERS V19**

Some Christian denominations, most famously those in the Roman Catholic tradition, overemphasize the phrase “This is my body...This is my blood.” They believe that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Jesus. They claim that Jesus didn’t say, “This represents my body or blood,” but instead, “This IS my body and blood.” Therefore, we should take Jesus at this word and believe that during the Lord’s Supper, the bread and wine mystically become the body and blood of Jesus. But surely, we can see that Jesus is being symbolic. Jesus was standing before the disciples. His body had not been broken. His blood was still inside Him. He was speaking metaphorically.

The gospels all tell similar stories about the Last Supper. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the whole story using almost the exact same words. Luke draws attention to one detail, though, that the others do not mention. He records in Luke 22:19 that Jesus says, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

The primary purpose of the Lord’s Supper is, like the Passover Seder meal, to remind us of a significant event. In the Lord’s Supper, the primary thing we are doing is remembering what Jesus did. I think Jesus knew that, over time, some of His followers would have difficulty remembering that He had been a man. It’s interesting. There was an early church heresy called Arianism that claimed that Jesus was a good man but not God. Such an error would be easy for people who remember Jesus was a man. Another heresy, Apollinarianism, found the ditch on the other side of the road. It believes Jesus is God but has difficulty

dealing with Him as a man. I think many modern-day Christians may perhaps have similar issues. It's easy to over-spiritualize things to the point where you forget that Jesus was God, yes, but God become man.

In the Lord's Supper, we don't just sit quietly and think about spiritual realities; we hold in our hands physical objects and remember that Jesus, a man once held similar objects and shared them with His disciples. As we taste the bread and feel the liquid wine, we remember that Jesus was a real man, ate real food, spoke real words, shed real blood, died a real death, and was really seen alive three days later.

The Lord's Supper also draws our attention to Jesus and not just to His sacrifice. It may seem like splitting hairs, but sometimes we can focus on the benefits of salvation and not on the one who guaranteed those benefits for us. It's the spiritual equivalent of wanting dad's money but not to be with dad. Christianity is an invitation into a relationship with a real, living, and personal God revealed most completely in Jesus. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we remember Jesus.

The word "remember" also recalls notions of the earlier point of Jesus leading us on our new Exodus out of sin. In Deuteronomy 16:3, when recounting the how and when of celebrating the Passover, it says, "so that you may remember for the rest of your life the day you left the land of Egypt." The Passover was a remembrance of the Exodus out of slavery. The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of our Exodus out of slavery to sin.

The reason remembering is so important is that most people don't wake up one day and intentionally decide to follow someone or something other than Jesus. Most people just drift away. The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 2:1, "For this reason, we must pay attention all the more to what we have heard, so that we will not drift away."

### **THE LORD'S SUPPER PROCLAIMS -- 1 CORINTHIANS 11:26**

The Lord's Supper reinterprets the Passover. The Lord's Supper remembers Jesus and what He did. There is a third dimension as well. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul is giving instructions to the church at Corinth, which had evidently turned the Lord's Supper into the religious version of a frat party. There were popular people and excluded groups. Some people were getting drunk and overeating. Others sat in the corner and went hungry. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul repeats the story of the Lord's Supper that he received. Then, at the end, he concludes with a phrase that adds an additional layer to our understanding of what we do when we partake. 1 Corinthians 11:26 says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

In the Lord's supper, we don't just remember; we proclaim. Paul says that every time we do it, we proclaim three truths: (1) Jesus died, (2) He didn't stay dead, (3) He is coming again. By directing our attention back to the past and forward to the future, the Lord's Supper encompasses all of the Christian experience. In taking the Lord's supper, we enter into the story of Jesus, a story that is still ongoing. We don't just remember the death of Jesus like we would at the memorial of a friend. We remember that He didn't stay dead, that He rose to new life, that He is alive today and seated at the right hand of the Father, that He is active in the world today by the power of the holy spirit, and that He will one day come again to make all things new.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. When you think of the Lord's Supper, what ideas come into your mind?
2. How does the Passover meal add a new dimension to our understanding of the Lord's supper? What was the purpose of the Passover Seder Meal? How does Jesus reinterpret it?
3. What is the importance of thinking of the Lord's Supper as a remembrance? How is this similar to the Seder Meal? How is it more than just remembering the past?
4. Have you had an experience of people losing their way, not because they chose a new path but because they forgot to "pay close attention" and just wandered off?
5. What is the significance of the Lord's Supper being a proclamation? What three truths do we proclaim in the Lord's Supper







— ABOUT THE AUTHOR —

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