

#23w
April 22, 2018

Matthew 26:26-29

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take and eat. This is my body." ²⁷ He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from this, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many so that their sins may be forgiven. ²⁹ I tell you, I won't drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way with you in my Father's kingdom."

Luke: 14:15-24

When one of the dinner guests heard Jesus' remarks, he said to Jesus, "Happy are those who will feast in God's kingdom."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "A certain man hosted a large dinner and invited many people. ¹⁷ When it was time for the dinner to begin, he sent his servant to tell the invited guests, 'Come! The dinner is now ready.' ¹⁸ One by one, they all began to make excuses. The first one told him, 'I bought a farm and must go and see it. Please excuse me.' ¹⁹ Another said, 'I bought five teams of oxen, and I'm going to check on them. Please excuse me.' ²⁰ Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' ²¹ When he returned, the servant reported these excuses to his master. The master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go quickly to the city's streets, the busy ones and the side streets, and bring the poor, crippled, blind, and lame.' ²² The servant said, 'Master, your instructions have been followed and there is still room.' ²³ The master said to the servant, 'Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

Rev 19:19

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Favored are those who have been invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb." He said to me, "These are the true words of God."



I have good news for you. Today we will end our series on Life Giving Table. It was not that bad. Was it? I just read about one pastor, who just recently finished a two-year sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. I need to improve the length of my series :)

There is so much more to say about tables. Joseph revealed himself to his brothers at a table. Saul tried several times to kill David. After Saul died and David became king, David invited Saul's grandson to the table. The all-time favorite Psalm, Psalm 23, says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

Last Sunday I shared with you about the two disciples: Cleopas and other one. They took a journey. This journey led them to the Table. At the moment of the breaking bread their eyes were opened and they recognized the risen Jesus. At the table, only there, they were able to clearly see Jesus.

This Do in Remembrance of Me

When we talk about Communion, we usually remember what Jesus has done for you and me. It is an act of remembrance. Not only do we remember the cross, the forgiveness of sins, the death and resurrection. We renew our faith in Jesus, we confess our sins, we forgive those who are together with us at the communion table and we take faith out into the world.

Listen to today's reading from Matthew. The first part we know very well, but verse 29th: "I tell you, I won't drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way with you in my Father's kingdom." I will drink wine with you again. I had spent much time considering that before. The promise is there for all of us. We will be with Jesus sitting, seeing, watching Him with our eyes, and hearing Him as He breaks bread again. I love the thought that we are not only remembering what Jesus did for us, during communion we also proclaim what we believe will happen. We believe we will sit with Him at the table and will have the bread from His hands, which He just blessed. I want to remember not only the past but I also want to remember what I believe will happen.



At age of 7 I started musical school. I finished when I was 14. I was never good at playing piano. I made it through because I had the best teacher. She was so kind to me. She would not always will follow the program. Sometimes we would just go for a walk. Most important, for her, was to choose the music piece that would fit my soul. Most of those years I did not have a piano at home. So I had to find times during the week to come to school and practice. For finals, we had concerts. My teacher always knew that I wouldl not do as good at concerts as I was during practice. Stress, performance anxiety, knowing this is the time they evaluate you: These would all get to me. If I normally made two mistakes, I would most likely will have 6 during the concert. So we practiced a lot until I almost achieved perfection. This way I knew I would do pretty good during the concert.

When we observe communion, one way I see it is as our practice. We read liturgy, we turn inward and take outward our faith. God is present for real during the breaking of bread. For many of us it is so hard to grasp this reality. But what a feast and what a banquet we will have when Jesus will welcome us to His table...In one way I do see it as an exam. I do feel I need to practice more and more so I will get better before I

see my Master and will be the best prepared as I possibly can. It is always done together. So, hopefully, you will practice it with me.

I do care to preach that much about heaven, but I do see it necessary. I think I am not that good at preaching about heaven. It is too much of a mystery, There is too much hidden and so often you will not even notice as you start to create your own heaven by your own needs. Too often we want to make Jesus fit our needs. . In the end we all have to admit, that we truly do not know.

Let us try to hear and ask the Holy Spirit to guide as we listen to one parable of Jesus, that talks about the kingdom of God as a large dinner. "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son" Mt 22:2. It is like 10 young bridesmaids who went to meet the groom. "Those who were ready went with him into the wedding" (Mt 25:11). Isaiah 25:6 "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines". It will be a party.



I plan on it being a better party than my wedding party. I did not want a wedding party; I even did not want a wedding dress. If you have not noticed, I am a weird duck :) I think even Jesus will not approve of that, but I did not want that there would be any alcohol. Many of my relatives had a very hard time enjoying the wedding without a buzz. It was my wedding and I wanted all to be fully sober to receive, remember and participate until the very end. Yes, in the end I did wear a wedding dress, because my mom talked me into it and her friend made it for me.

Jesus himself says, we will eat and drink with Him at the table. It is pretty safe to say, we will enjoy food in heaven as well. I do also believe that we will not need to eat to

sustain life and to eat to live. I think we will be enjoying the celebration, the fellowship and the presence of Jesus.

Jesus starts to tell this parable in response to a comment about the kingdom of God. Jesus says: "A certain man hosted a large dinner and invited many people. ¹⁷ When it was time for the dinner to begin, he sent his servant to tell the invited guests, 'Come! The dinner is now ready.'



It sounds to me like it a big party. Who is that servant? Not many servants: just one. It is Jesus, Jesus is the one who comes and invites us to this dinner. This certain man does not say, "You must come." He does not say to his servants, "Take and bring them." No, it is an invitation. So this man invites his guests, because all is ready. "The dinner is ready now". We bring it up yet again -- it is a table., It is a dinner and we are invited. Who would not come? All you have to do is to come. Who would say no to that?

"One by one, they all began to make excuses". It is easy for us to identify with these busy people who are so caught up in the affairs of daily life that they have no time to go to a party. I think it is too simplistic to call busyness the great sin that kept them out of the banquet. Their problem is not that their calendars are occupied. Their big problem is that their minds are preoccupied to the point that they refuse to take themselves away from business as usual to experience the opportunity of a lifetime—to attend the feast of a king.

"Well, Lord, maybe someday; but for now I'm afraid I'll have to say no." We need to be wary of the golden handcuffs. It is not easy to stop running and do what the Lord, the King, is inviting you to do. The world's demands are so big: to be productive, to keep on doing. It looks crazy and unrealistic to suddenly leave all what you must finish, must continue or start and go to the prepared party. Beware of the

almost imperceptible shift that your life takes when you stop running it and it starts running you.

Look at the irony of the story: These people are so caught up in their private struggle for fulfillment in life, that when the answer to that struggle comes knocking on their door, they're unable to recognize it. Do we recognize what is truly important in our very short lives?

One fellow put a piece of dirt ahead of the salvation of his soul. I think he says, "Well I will build my own kingdom." Another puts cattle ahead of the invitation. I hear him saying: "I've got another power to push and pull my life, so I think I'll try that a bit longer. Please excuse me." Still another his honeymoon. In other words, "I've got a more immediately gratifying relationship than the Master offers." Sorry, I can't make it today."

So it goes even today. We have no time? We fail to realize that even time does not belong to us. My life does not belong to me. So why do I refuse to go to the Lord? In each case, the response is politely tendered. They use words: "please" and "excuse me." You get the sense that there's a part of them that is sorry they can't go. You get the feeling that under different circumstances, each of them that would like to take the Lord up on his offer. They can see something of the value of going, but it's not enough to fully move them. They are just not ready to go all in—not when they have other kingdoms, other power sources, other relationships to supply their hearts. I think today is the time to practice on choosing the most important thing now: practice being in His presence now. How will I like heaven to be in the presence of God all the time if I do not like to be in His presence now?

The seats at the table will not stay empty. The food will not be thrown away. The invitation will reach the very corners of the world. Some people will come: Maybe not those we thought should be going, Maybe not those whom we would think will answer the invitation. God's house will be filled. I very much believe the invitation is still available. I believe there is place at the table for you and me. When we hear God's invitation, when we feel in our heart and spirits: "I need to go to be with God" Let us do not make excuses. Let us do not think there is somethings more important than to find time to be with the Lord. It is dangerous to love God with a little corner of our hearts. With a little bit of our minds. God is inviting us to come to Him with all our hearts, minds and bodies. To leave behind actually means to receive abundance.

As we have experienced the power of the table when Jesus is with us, when we learned about table and it being an opportunity to feed our soul and make disciples, let us think about the banquet and the table that waits for us in God's kingdom. We will

celebrate and rejoice in the fellowship with each other and God. You and I are invited today to start practicing receiving and not turning down the most important invitation.

Now is the time.

Come to the presence of the Lord today. I wish the Bible would have words that say: oh, take your time, do your business, work on that house, that land, take care of your animals, your belongings, I will wait until you finish, and probably will do something else after that, take time with all these relationship you have... no worry, you both go on your own honeymoon...

The Bible says something different: Jesus words are not like these. Jesus says: "I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste my dinner." The Host is hurt and angry. Who in his right mind will refuse to get all what he/ she needs and will not come for this banquet. All is prepared, God is at the table, Jesus is breaking the bread and the you can have all that you have been longing for and all you need and, above all, this is available for you now. You are invited.

I want to be a part of heavenly banquet. I want to realize and make the right priorities and right choices. Praise God. For us here and now it means the invitation is still available for you and me.

The good news is that you do not have to wait until you die to feast at the heavenly banquet.