

Come To The Table

You've heard two really good sermons the past two Sundays, but I'm afraid the trend may end today. I don't have a sermon as much as I have a thought to help us prepare to receive communion. There are multiple ways we refer to the act of receiving communion. We call it the Lord's Supper, we "celebrate" communion, we call it the Eucharist. I often refer to communion as the Lord's table. We're invited to come to the Lord's table, to nourish our souls upon the holy gifts of Christ, his body given for us as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, his blood poured out for us, to cleanse us from sin and to seal us in a new covenant of grace. Coming to the Lord's table is a means by which we gather in obedience to the instruction of Christ, to "do this in remembrance of me." The apostle Paul said when we do this we "proclaim the Lord's death". That means we not only remember but we proclaim and testify to all that his death means and provides for us. We also proclaim the promise of his return, for he said in receiving communion we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." He is coming again for his church and communion fills us with hope. It helps us remain focused on the redemption that is ours now, by his grace, and upon the ultimate redemption that is yet to come, when he gathers us home to live in his eternal presence. This is not just a ritual, this is obedience, this is spiritual practice, this is life sustaining spiritual nourishment for our souls.

As I prayed about this service, I just felt we were to respond to his invitation to come to the table and be fed, to be nourished by his presence, his gifts, his saving mercy and grace, his healing, his forgiveness, his peace. I felt we were to lay some things down, leave some things at the table with Jesus and in their place, take with us his all sufficient grace, his provision and peace.

I want you to picture in your mind the Lord's table. Maybe it's a communion table like this one. Maybe it's a banqueting table with fine silver and china place settings, maybe it's a picnic spread on a blanket. Maybe the words of the psalmist David will help you picture the table. **"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with**

oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23

We have been invited to come to the Lord’s table. Can you see it? He has made provision for us: green pastures, still waters, cups filled to overflowing, oil for our heads, restoration for our souls, the safety and protection that comes from his watchful presence and his rod and staff. And notice where the table is – in the presence of our enemies! If the table represents his grace, his forgiveness, his provision, mercy, healing, his presence, his peace, his spiritual nourishment and sustenance, then what a perfect place for it - in the presence of our enemies!

Let’s define enemies broadly as the people, things, stresses, feelings, emotions, obstacles, challenges that distract us and try to defeat us, weary us and prevent us from being who God wants us to be, where God wants us to be and from receiving all God wants us to receive. Here is the picture. The table of the Lord, spread with every good gift of the Father, his saving grace, his enabling grace that will strengthen us and see us through every possible circumstance we might face, it’s here, prepared for us, “smack dab” in the presence of our enemies. He’s prepared this table in the presence of all of the distractions, all the weariness you have experienced, all the attacks of the enemy, the accusations, doubts, questions and hesitations...he’s prepared his table for you in the presence of all the cares and worries, the fears and frustrations. He’s prepared this table for you in the presence of hostile opinions and ideologies. He has prepared this table before you in the presence of demons and powers and principalities that rage and war against every righteous desire and impulse. He has prepared this table before you in the presence of physical fatigue and illness, in the presence of the covid fog that keeps blurring your vision. He’s prepared this table before you in the presence of emotional wounds that keep bleeding, in the presence of the diagnosis and the prognosis you never wanted to receive. He’s prepared a table before you and do you hear what I’m telling you? In the presence of your enemies you are invited to come to the table and find his life sustaining, life giving grace and peace. There is grace for you. Stop focusing on the enemies surrounding you and focus on the table, on the bread and the cup, the emblems of his suffering, his redemption, his forgiveness, his grace. Remember and proclaim! This is who he is and this is what he has done. Stop focusing on the enemies and focus on the relationship you have with God through Jesus Christ. You are heirs of God, adopted into the family. Forget the distractions, drop your

worries and cares and take a seat at the table. Feast on the riches of his grace, his mercy, his presence and peace. Don't worry about the enemies. What you need is Jesus and what he provided for you at the cross, through his redeeming sacrifice. Focus on Jesus.

If what you need is forgiveness, you'll find it here. **“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of his grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” Ephesians 1:7-8** The enemy wants to condemn, to heap guilt and shame on you, but Jesus offers forgiveness and will lavish his grace on you when you come to him in repentance and faith.

If what you need is peace, you'll find it here, in him. **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27** The world and its pressures will rob you of peace, but in the presence of that enemy, Jesus prepares a table of peace. I love his invitation, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28. Come to the table.

If what you need is life, you'll find it here. **“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” John 10:10** Don't fear the enemies plans. Right in front of the enemy, Jesus has prepared a life sustaining, life enabling table for you. Come to the table and find life to the full!

If what you need is healing, for your body, your soul, mind, spirit, you'll find it here, in Jesus. **“He was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5** There is wholeness and healing found in Jesus that can't be found anywhere else. He bore our sin and sickness so we can be made whole. Come to Jesus!

The enemy will keep on striving to inflict blows that will discourage you, defeat you, beat you down. The Psalmist understood, **“O God, why have you cast us away forever? Walk through the awful ruins of the city and see what the enemy has done to your sanctuary. There they shouted their battle cry and erected their idols to flaunt their victory. Everything lies in shambles like a forest chopped to the ground. They came with their axes and sledgehammers and smashed and chopped the carved paneling and set the sanctuary on fire and razed it to the ground – your sanctuary, Lord. ‘Let's wipe out every trace of God,’ they said, and went through the entire country burning down the assembly places where we worshiped you. There is nothing left to show that we are your people. The**

prophets are gone and who can say when it all will end? How long O God, will you allow our enemies to dishonor your name? Will you let them get away with this forever? Why do you delay?” Psalm 74. Can you relate? Does it feel like you’re under attack? Like the enemy is winning and God is watching from the sidelines? Think again, because he has spread a table for you in the presence of your enemies. He’s at the table. His presence, his grace, his provision is found at his table. There is recovery, there is hope, and he will restore, rebuild, renew. He invites you to come to him and to his table.

The apostle Paul knew about enemies coming against him. He said a messenger of Satan had been sent to torment him, but in the midst of the torment, in the presence of that enemy, Paul heard the Lord say, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9**

All sufficient grace! This is a table of grace, a table of power made perfect in weakness, prepared in the very presence of our enemies. Step around the enemies, walk past them to the table and as you do, shout “Grace! I’ve found his grace!” Jesus has all sufficient grace for you!

Are you hungry for Jesus, for his help, his mercy, his grace? I am. I need his healing grace. I need his grace to face the enemies. We used to sing “Jesus has a table spread where the saints of God are fed, he invites his chosen people, come and dine...” I invite you to the Lord’s table today. It’s a table of grace and presence and provision. Come and dine.

We are going to all take communion together in a moment, but I feel there are some, in response to this message, that need to physically come to his table, to move toward him. If you are in need of his grace, his healing, his help, I invite you to come and stand here at the front. We are going to pray together before we take communion.

(I see darkness lifting from someone’s heart and mind today. There is healing, cleansing. A broken heart being mended. Someone, as you surrender your life and circumstances to Jesus, he wants to bring healing and reconciliation in a relationship. God is providing. His grace is sufficient and he will do what no other can do!)

May the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace!