

## COME TO THE TABLE

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Series: You are Invited  
May 26, 2019  
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Invitation, Table, Meals  
John 21:14-17

We have been doing this collection of talks focusing on the various invitations Jesus made. Our focus has been on how despite being Lord over all Jesus does not Lord it over us instead He invites us into a great story and then sends us out into the world.

Here is something to note. Jesus did a lot around the table around meals. Eating together is such an important thing. If you want to learn to love people, invite them to your table. If you want to say in love with people as you get used to them, keep eating together.

One of the pictures Jesus often used when talking about the Kingdom of God is the picture of a King hosting a party. I kinda like that motif. God is going to host a big party. And this often drew on the picture a prophet of Israel had drawn in some of his prophecies when looking at the time God would come and save the world. So every time the listeners of Jesus, who were familiar with the writings would hear about a party, their hearts would burn as they heard echoes of those prophecies.

But as we noted last week, Jesus often made the invitations to himself. One of the ways things I want us to realize today is as Jesus talked about parties and people's hearts were burning, He was saying that He is the true host. At one of the most significant parties he hosted He said that the bread was his body and the wine his blood. Jesus is the true Host and you are invited to the table.

Let' pray.

Matthew 22:1-14

***Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding party for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the party to tell them to come, but they refused to come.***

***"Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding party.'***

***"But they paid no attention and went off—one to his farm, another to his shop. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was***

***enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.***

***“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding party is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.***

***“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.***

***“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’***

***“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”***

Jesus is teaching and talks about a wedding feast or a big feast that His father will host.

I like this story. Jesus says something important though, that there are those who were invited and they pretended to be too busy for the host, who is God. Then the Host went out and invited the unthinkable. Often this picture is used to show how God invited in the gentiles when Israel rejected Jesus. That much is true.

But let us be careful, you see those who were disinvited were not disinvited because they were of a certain Nation but because they did not honour the King's invitation. What can be helpful sometimes as you read scripture is put yourself in the shoes of those on the wrong side.

How are you rejecting God's invitation to the party? How are you being too busy for God? We always want to see ourselves as the ragamuffins that were called from the street and in a lot of ways we are, but are not also often similar to the guys who received the invitation first and did not come?

Can't the church easily miss the heart of Jesus as we make ourselves busy with things of the church? Are we sometimes too busy with doing church things and being good that we miss what God is inviting us to out in the world? As we said last week, the meat Kingdom of God is on the streets.

Then there is an invitation that goes out to all other people. The ragamuffins. The ones on the streets. The ones who would never have made it to the guest list. As he is saying all this there is a crowd of people. The rejected. The homeless. The good

for nothing. The failures, those the world has spat out and they too have come to accept themselves like that.

They are surrounding him and they are hearing that a King would invite people like them to such an important event. So trust me, they are listening to him with eyes open in wonder and hope. For some of them, it sounds like a fantasy, wishful thinking. They think no one could ever consider them, certainly not a King, certainly not God. They had no idea, how true and life transforming this is.

At God's table, you are invited. One of the fun things people do to kinda size you up is ask you which 3 people in History or just the world that you would invite to dinner. It says a lot about someone right?

Guess who Jesus would invite to dinner? You! I wonder what that says about him.

Then there is a character who is in here and has the wrong attire. I am not sure what that means. But remember that no one at the party was invited on their own merit. It was purely the generosity of the King.

This is the picture of Grace. Where God gives us what we do not deserve. So what could be the problem with this guy?

I think of a party when you are a legitimate invitee, you make plans and dress up to go. But if you are not too sure, you go as if you are just passing by. I mean, you are not too sure they would invite you to the party, so you are dressed for your normal day just in case they kick you out.

If you are gatecrashing at a wedding party, you don't spend any time dressing in the wedding colours. You do your thing so that in case they do not spot you, it is well. But in case they spot you and you get kicked out there is no love lost.

This could be what this guy did. He showed up at the party not wanting to lose either way. He did not trust that he was worthy to be at the party so he made no effort to get dressed for it.

Could it be an issue of trust? Is it that sometimes we fail to enjoy the Grace of God because we simply do not trust God. We do not think that God could have forgiven us or could forgive us. So we come armed with our usual defences.

I think we often bring before God all the rags we were clothed in. We keep telling how unworthy and sinful we are. We are not too sure we belong at the table. Come in freedom, come with your head high. You belong at the table.

One of my friends and I were talking last week and he made an observation that we have a lot of songs that say how unworthy we are. But Jesus did not die for unworthy worms. He died for people who are so full of value. A thousand shilling bill has the same value even when it is scrambled and stepped on and muddied.

You have the same value you have before God when He first thought of you before you were knitted in your mother's womb and even when we are riddled with sin and failures. You are of such great price that for the joy set before Jesus, which is having you at the table, he gladly gave up his life.

Last weekend I was part of one of the date-for-8 groups. They had a huge party. I had heard of the rumours about how well they do their parties. I have tasted and I have seen.

Una makes great fish it is alleged, unfortunately, this day she did not make fish. But she was generous with everything else. Great wine, great food. How much better could it get?

Then one of the patrons needed something like a plate. And she pointed him to the Kitchen. I mean she is our host but we can help around. I was doing a lot of helping just trying to make sure no food goes to waste. We all have to play out part.

That got us talking about hosting. Little did they know that I was planning to talk on hosting. If they did they would have used their right to remain silent for everything they say shall and may be used in as a sermon illustration.

Hosting is a bit different now. Guests become part of the thing. Sometimes they bring a little bit of food too. Sometimes they help with the dishes after the party. If they are kids they might have to help pick up the toys and kinda clear the mess they so gladly made.

However, one thing remains, the host really does everything. The host picks the menu, the host picks the venue. The host picks the guest list. They have to get the venue ready before y'all arrive. Even if they have to hire someone else to do it, they have to make it ready.

Every time Jesus tells the story of God throwing a party and inviting us, let us not miss the point that God is the host. What it means is that you have been invited to feast at God's cost. He has taken care of what needs to be done before the party starts.

He has made the guest list and picked the menu. And no host picks something He would not put in front of His guests if He can afford it. So you can be sure that on the Menus is everything nice. Sugar, spice and everything nice.

All you need to do is to come to the party fully ready for the partying. Fully trusting that your name is on the guest list not because of a typo. It is not a mistake that you are at the party.

Of course, God knows your past, of course, God knows your struggles. Of course, God knows your doubt. You are invited anyway. So stop wearing those rags in the ballroom.

Because all you gotta do is be there. Tell your neighbour, you belong at God's table. God has done everything that needs to be done to host you and he will do the cleaning up after the hosting if the party ever ends or any clean up is needed. He is the true host.

But Jesus did not just tell stories about hosting. He hosted quite a lot. Here is a story of one I want us to look at.

John 21:14-17

***After these things, Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way, He showed Himself: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."***

***They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them,***

***"Children, have you any food?"***

***They answered Him, "No."***

***And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.***

***Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it) and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.***

***Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."***

***Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.***

***Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.***

***This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.***

***So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”***

***He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”***

***He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”***

***He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”***

***He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”***

***He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”***

***He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was hurt because He asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?”***

***And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”***

***Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.***

At this time the disciples had for some reason gone back to fishing. I think it is mostly because they still had trouble believing that Jesus was risen and also because they had not received the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised which really is the empowering they needed. Is it not weird that Peter put his clothes on to jump into the water? Most people do the opposite.

So Jesus invites his disciples for breakfast. Jesus already had the fish done when they bring out some of their fish. He has everything taken care of already. Why? He is the true host. It is the true host who takes care of everything. He did not really need the fish they had hauled in. All they had to do is sit down and eat.

Yet they had made a very big catch. Without the voice and direction of Jesus, our efforts are futile. At best they yield very little.

Sometimes as disciples we think that He needs us. That the Jesus’ show cannot go on without us. We sometimes think that the Kingdom of God is dependent on our talents and skill and abilities. No, it does not. Not even our abilities to listen to and obey Jesus.

The Kingdom of God is not dependent on us, so I am more than excited that nonetheless, God invites us to work with Him and even brings about a lot of great works through our hands. The real invitation is not to do but to come and dine with Jesus.

Jesus serving breakfast underlines Jesus heart for his own. Jesus is not just interested in your labour and ability. Because he is the true host who wants to share with his own.

I have often told our teams to watch out for people who want to poach them just for their skill. If someone will not want more for you than from you something is wrong there. Jesus himself care more for you than for what you do “For him”.

Have you realized that the people you eat with often are people you share a lot of life with? Because a meal around the table is where most life happens. Most of the people who serve here and I trust fully are people I have had tons of meals and drinks with. At meal times, people share a lot of love and affection for each other. It is how you show that you care for people.

Jesus is interested in sharing something with you, not just your labour. I am beginning to learn that even where God invites us to serve it is not so much about what we get to do out there but so much about what He gets to do in us. Even in the process of doing, he is often primarily inviting us to be with him. Somehow, the hope is that in what we do we can learn to dine with him. And even sometimes lay down what we do and just sit and eat with him.

I have had to ask myself how much y identity is tied to what I do. Would I be willing to lay this down and be obscure to simply be with Jesus at his table? The answer we all want to give is yes we are willing. I am realizing that it is not easy. I will need Jesus to walk me through that when that time comes. Because human beings easily get tied up with what they are doing.

Do not be distracted with the things “we do for” God. Be attentive to what God is inviting you too. But it gets better. At the table at breakfast is the context in which Peter is restored.

So some of you might not know why this conversation happened. Before Jesus died Peter had sworn to never leave him. To even go with him to death. He said they were BFFs you know. But when Jesus was arrested he denied him 3 times. One of the times right when the cock crowd just as Jesus predicted, Peter was sitting by an open. Yet he was considered very influential in the group of disciples.

So Jesus makes some breakfast again over an open fire asks Peter 3 times if He loves him. For him, there is no denying what comes to his mind. The third time Peter is a bit hurt but stops struggling and Jesus restores and commissions Peter 3 times.

In front of all the others. He is completely forgiven and restored. No one could ever use that story against him, it no longer has power over him because of this moment.

At the table, sharing a meal. This is the context for Peters' forgiveness, restoration and healing. So come to the table and eat what God is offering. This is where you find healing. Not before you come to the table but at the table.

Which means we the church should be careful to not keep people from the table. It is at the table that we all get forgiveness and restoration.

Throughout this series, we have seen that Jesus invites us to himself and then commission us to go out. And maybe some of us have been worried about how they can go out. How they can join God in what He is doing.

Here is a simple way. Host people, take them to java or majid and even better make them a meal at your table. Meals are a great context for healing, reconciliation, discipleship and even people seeing Jesus for the first time.

Throw parties. It does not have to be fancy. But throw the best parties you can.

Lastly, we moved communion to the very end and moved the table to the centre. We want to make it known that Jesus is the host and it is his inviting us to the table that makes the difference. That is why we often invite everyone up for communion. Whether you believe or not, if you are struggling with condemnation and guilt.

Wherever you come from, Jesus is the Host and he is welcoming you to the table. Let coming to the table this Sunday be a representation of your choice to sit at the table and believe that you belong there. It is at the table that you will receive healing.

If you ask God, whom he would like to have dinner with, you are on the list. It is not a typo, not a mistake.

*Let's Pray*