

Invitation to Dinner

- I. We go to church on Sunday as sinners. Every one. None of us is worthy to kneel before the King of Kings and Lord of Lord, but for a variety of reasons we assemble, sinners every one.
 - A. We are the only kind of folk Jesus knows how to deal with. He specializes in sinners.
- II. Jesus in the Revelation had a letter written to the church in Laodicia.
 - A. (Rev 3:17-20 NRSV) ¹⁷ *For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.' You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*
²⁰ *Listen! I am standing at the door (your door), knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.*
 - B. I don't know why you assemble, and I don't know how you feel, but the King of the universe is knocking at your heart and wants to join you for a refreshing meal.
 - C. That tells me that our assembly has tremendous potential.
- III. Jesus promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age, but I imagine most of the time most of us don't give him a second thought. We don't see him standing or sitting there beside us.
- IV. Luke tells us a story that sounds sort of like that.
 - A. There were these two men, Cleopas and a friend, who had been in Jerusalem for the Passover. They were disciples of Jesus, but were now very confused and bewildered.
 - B. These two men had been shocked as their Master had been arrested, tried, and executed in the span of less than a day.
 - C. Their hopes had been dashed. They thought that this might be the time for Jesus to establish his kingdom, but instead he had been killed and buried. All their dreams were buried with him.
 - D. Now they did not know what to do. They feared both Jewish leaders and Romans. They did not know if they too would be hunted down and destroyed. After the crucifixion, they had gone into hiding. The Sabbath had been a quiet day of reflection and introspection.
 - E. With their leader dead, they did know where to turn. They did not know if they had simply bought into a bogus myth or if some of what Jesus had said was really true.
 - F. Then on the first day of the week, funny things started to happen.
 1. Some of the women in the group had visited the burial site in the morning and found the tomb empty.
 2. There were tales of a vision of angels.
 3. But no one knew what had happened. What had happened to the body?
 4. What was the future for Jesus' disciples?
 - G. As evening drew near, the two men decided to return to their village, Emmaus, which was 7 miles west of Jerusalem.
 1. As they walked, a stranger joined them and engaged them in conversation.
 2. They didn't recognize him, or at least they didn't really see him.

3. He asked them about the events in Jerusalem and they tried to piece things together for him. But their explanation ended in uncertainty and confusion.
 4. Then the stranger became prophetic and explained to them how Jesus had fulfilled the expectations of the Messiah.
- H. As they arrived at Emmaus, the stranger acted as if he was going to travel on, but the two disciples persuaded him into accepting their hospitality for the night.
1. As they sat around the dinner table, the guest suddenly became host. He picked up the evening's bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them.
 2. Then their eyes were opened and they saw he was Jesus.
 3. He had been made known to them in the breaking of the Bread.
- V. One reason I go to church on Sunday is to find Jesus.
- A. I know he is with me always. I believe the scripture. I just don't act like it much of the time.
1. I travel to and from the church building, unaware of my silent passenger.
 2. I deal with merchants and customers seemingly ignorant of the Savior who stands by me, and facing me, and even in me.
 3. I scarf down meals with friends and family without ever thinking that all meals shared with brethren are shared in the presence Jesus, and, to that extend, are the Lord's Supper.
- B. But at His table, in his bread, I am with the bread of life, Jesus. Regardless of what went on this week, in this brief moment I see Jesus, and I feel his presence.
- C. In this ritual and symbolism our eyes are opened to the Jesus who has been there all along.
- VI. Hopefully, dinner with the King, will charge us up, as it did Cleopas and his friend, so that we will go in search of others so we too can exclaim, "He is risen."
- A. Hopefully this meal will produce a renewed joy and hope within us that will feed our souls for the week that follows.
- B. And hopefully, when we stop in the cafe for supper with a friend, and we break bread together, we will remember that Jesus is not just present at this meal, but in all our moments.
- VII. When we think of the Lord's Supper, we tend to think of the upper room and the gathered disciples.
- VIII. (Mat 26:26-29 NRSV) *While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."*
²⁷ *Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*
- A. I want you to notice the presence of Jesus in the supper, as emphasized in this text.
1. He says the bread "is my body."
 2. Jesus says, this cup "is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."
 3. He did not say, "this represents my body." He said "this is my body." We have to deal with that statement.

- B. Martin Luther and I get along real well on this verse. Luther wrote, “Why do we not put aside...curiosity and cling simply to the words of Christ, willing to remain in ignorance of what takes place here and content that the real body of Christ is present by virtue of the words?... For my part, if I cannot fathom how the bread is the body of Christ, yet I will take my reason captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), and clinging simply to his words, firmly believe not only that the body of Christ is in the bread, but that the bread is the body of Christ.”
 - C. In the cup and in this bread, we find the presence of Jesus Christ.
 - D. As Frederick Bruner has said, “As Jesus in his historical ministry healed in two ways - by talking and by touching - so also now in his risen ministry in the church he heals mainly by his Word in sermon and by his touch in Supper... The supper is tactile Word. After telling us he loves us from the pulpit he touches us in love at the table. The sacraments are God’s hugs. In the worship service the Lord not only wants to tell his people how much he loves them, he want to embrace them with his love. “This is my body.” In this, the risen Lord embraces his people and so assures them again and again of his love and forgiveness.”
 - E. The doctrine of the real presence means that Jesus’ words “this is my body” are literally and not just symbolically true. It is a doctrine that honors God’s physical/spiritual way of saving — from the Exodus through Jesus to now. Jesus did not want to leave his people with only words. Words followed by and accompanied by touching are human, wonderful, and divine. Jesus wanted to leave his church with both his Word and his touch, and so — to keep in touch — he instituted the Supper.
- IX. For John, there is no upper room meal, only an upper room unity dialogue.
- A. For John, it is chapter 6, in the middle of Jesus’ ministry, in the province of Galilee, where he focuses on the Lord’s Supper with two stories: the feeding of the 5000 and his “Bread of Life” dialogue.
 - B. At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus feeds the 5000.
 - 1. It is apparent that Jesus is the source of the food that he provides to everyone, so the stage is set for him as the source of life, and as the living bread. The passage clearly puts its emphasis on bread, with the fish of the miracle being secondary.
 - 2. In one vs. 11 he takes the bread and gives thanks, the word being *eucharisteo* from which we get Eucharist as a name for the Lord’s Supper.
 - C. But the more significant passages comes later in the chapter.
 - 1. (John 6:32-35 NRSV) ³² *Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” ³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

2. (John 6:48-57 NRSV) *I am the bread of life.* ⁴⁹ *Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* ⁵⁰ *This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.* ⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.* ⁵² *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"* ⁵³ *So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* ⁵⁴ *Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day;* ⁵⁵ *for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.* ⁵⁶ *Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.* ⁵⁷ *Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me."*
 3. Whatever the depth of the meaning of this passage, there are two things that are undeniable.
 - a) We can not read it without thinking of the Lord's Supper.
 - b) The Lord is present in the supper, as we somehow actually partake of Him.
 4. Vs. 35 talks of our coming to Jesus and believing, thereby being filled, never to hunger or thirst again.
 5. Vs. 51+ speaks of eating the flesh and drinking the blood to live forever.
 6. Vs. 56 speaks of abiding in Jesus, and Jesus abiding in us. There is a mutual intimate deep fellowship produced by faith and sustained through the supper.
 7. Through this meal Jesus unites himself directly with us, we live through him, and he will one day raise us. This meal is one way of maintaining personal communion with Jesus Christ.
 8. There is a sense in which as we take of his body and blood we are taking of his nature, we are becoming like him, we are incorporating him into our being and he is incorporating us into his.
 9. The emphasis is not on his death and resurrection, the emphasis is on life. The context in John is not the end of his life, but the middle of his ministry. It is on Jesus as God incarnate. And therefore as we ingest him we take on something of the incarnation of God.
 10. Everything that we might expect from true and perfect heavenly manna is fulfilled in the bread: the overcoming of death and life for eternity.
 11. Don't ask me how it happens. I don't know. The scripture says it, and I accept it, and I look for Jesus at His table and in His supper.
- X. (1 Cor 10:16-17, 21 NRSV) *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing (participation) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing (participation) in the body of Christ?* ¹⁷ *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread....* ²¹ *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*

- A. 1 Cor. 10 is addressing a group in the church that doesn't mind going to pagan temples on Friday and Saturday night, getting drunk, sleeping with pagan prostitutes, then coming to church Sunday morning and taking the Lord's Supper.
- B. He's saying you can't do that. Don't you realize that Jesus is present in this meal. If you ingest Jesus, if you make him a part of your life and yours a part of His, you can't go to the temple up the hill. You can't take Jesus there.
- C. Jesus demands exclusive allegiance. He will not share you with Satan. You are either united, one, with Christ, or united, one, with Satan.
- D. If you insist on playing with the pagans, you are playing on your own. You are not taking Jesus there; you can't play both sides.
- E. If you insist on playing with the pagans, then don't expect your participation at the table to make everything okay.
- F. Paul points to the table and asks the question, "which will it be." "Will you be one with Christ, meeting him at this table, participating in his essence, allowing him to abide in you. Or do you choose Satan's realm."