

Week 1:

Point: Jesus sat down at tables and built up relational collateral, which produced influence with people.

Scripture: Luke 22:14-20

Know: People who were nothing like Jesus, liked Jesus, and He liked them back. Make room at your table for people who are different from you.

Do: For the next two weeks, set one extra place setting at dinner – and leave it empty.

[Luke 22:14-20 NLT] 14 When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. 15 Jesus said, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. 16 For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." 17 Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. 18 For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come." 19 He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me." 20 After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people--an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.

Today we begin a series called the Table. We sit at tables everywhere. Work, school, home, family gatherings, and even happy hour at the Millworks. Tables are everywhere. Today I want you to think of tables as places we choose to gather.

WE:

Teaching Note: Tables are places you choose to gather.

Think of it this way.

1. We have work tables. These tables include board rooms, lunch rooms, offices/cubicles, exam rooms, drafting tables, table saws and tool benches, tables for prepping food, or just tables where we type on computers and sort folders.
2. We have tables that we choose because of a hobby. We run, bike, swim with others who do the same. We play basketball and softball or ice hockey. We sit on the sidelines of our kids sporting events – and on special occasions gather around the table at Chick-fil-a or Dairy Queen after a game. Hobby tables can be for crafting, Bible study, poker, tasting a friend's home brewed beer.
3. Then we have our tables at home. The table where our family sits for dinner. At this table we connect (if we're lucky) on a daily basis or a couple times per week over an evening meal. This is also the table where we sit for special occasions like birthdays, Christmas, Fourth of July, and others. At this table is where we play board games with our friends and kids.

We choose to be a part of these places. We might not know all of the people, but we choose these people. We want to be a part of the activity or relationship. Your life is filled with people who are different than you. So here is my challenge for this series...

Teaching Note: Your challenge is: Make room at your table for people who are different from you.

God:

If you are in the room this morning and church is new to you, I want to pause here and give you framework for how we are going to think. When I say the word, "follow", what I mean is – when we ask the questions, "What am I supposed to do about this?" We respond by looking at what Jesus did about it – and then we follow His example by doing the same. What I mean by follow, I mean – when we ask the question, "What is required of me in this situation?" We look at what was written about Jesus and follow His teaching by obeying.

Following is a good thing – when the One you follow is right in the ways He lived.

So, if we are going to follow, we have to know what Jesus came here to do...

Here are three ways the New Testament gospels complete the sentence, what did Jesus come to do? Eye witnesses to Jesus' life on earth, write,

- "The Son of Man came...not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45);
- "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10);
- "The Son of Man came eating and drinking..." (Luke 7:34).

Eating and Drinking...

READ: Luke 7:34

The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!"

While Jesus was on earth, he spent a lot of his time eating and drinking wine with people.

Here are the examples:

Luke 5 (tax collectors and sinners), Luke 7 (Simon the Pharisee / Religious leader), Luke 9 (feeding of the 5000), Luke 10 (Mary and Martha), Luke 11 (condemns Pharisees and teachers of the law at a meal), Luke 14 (parable of the great banquet), Luke 15 (party for the prodigal son), Luke 19 (dinner with Zacchaeus), Luke 22 (The Last Supper),

His mission strategy included sitting at tables with people that were different from him. He apparently spent enough time at the tables with people who were different from Him that others accused him of being their friend!

"GASP!! (some would say!) Jesus, don't you know that people like us are not friends with people like that?"

Around the table, Jesus identified with people who were nothing like him. Around the table, Jesus created space for people who were far from God, who were left off the guest list, who had different political aspirations, who were hostile towards Him, and who lived their life different than the majority.

We see this truth come out in so many interactions:

Teaching Note: People who were nothing like Jesus, liked Jesus. And he liked them back.

When you create space at your table for people who are different from you, you begin to build a tremendous amount of relational collateral (security / deposit) with them. In a world that is hostile

towards Him, in a world that was hostile towards what His followers believed, Jesus sat down at tables and built up relational collateral, which produced influence with people.

YOU:

My challenge for you in this series: Make room at your table for people who are different from you.

If you are sitting in your seat rehearsing all the reasons why you are NOT going to do this – I'm going to change your mind this morning...

communion table first began when Jesus sat down for a feast with the people that had been following him for three years. They had been witnesses to miracles, they had heard his teaching, they had been welcomed as a friend, Jesus had washed their feet in an act of service towards them.

When Jesus broke bread and drank wine with the disciples, He was identifying with them as a friend. But that wasn't all...

What we call the Last Supper was a tradition of looking back and celebrating the first Passover meal. Many centuries before, the nation of Israel was enslaved by another group of people who had all the power that left Israel hopelessly stuck. But God delivered them by casting judgment on the people who held them captive. He gave Israel a very specific instruction to kill a lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts of their homes. Weird, right?

We don't have to do this anymore! At this time in history, the shed blood served as a sign to God of trust and identification. The people who obeyed God were showing that they trusted God. The identification with the animal came later when the wrath of God is deflected by the sacrifice.

But at the Last Supper the tables were turned. Let's read...

READ: Luke 22:14-20

And when the hour came, Jesus reclined at the table, and the disciples with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

When Jesus broke bread and drank wine with the disciples, He was identifying with the people at the table, but Jesus was also identifying himself as the Passover lamb – the one who was going to die to take away the sins of the world once and for all.

The disciples who were sitting around the table sharing a meal with Jesus. They didn't know it yet, but Jesus was going to die. There was another thing that had to be done: the disciples needed to identify themselves, like all of the ones they had seen at the table with Jesus for the last three years, as the ones off the guest list, the ones who were untouchable, the ones who were politically different, the overly righteous, and the ones who had a reputation around town – the ones in need of the gift.

Because we know the rest of the story, here is what I can confidently conclude: When you sit at the table with Jesus, you occupy a seat at the table that was mercifully given to you, not because you deserved it according to your righteousness, but because we all are like the friends Jesus chose to sit down with.

We are the tax collector that the locals hated.
We are the prostitute with no respectable legacy to offer to Jesus.
We are Zacchaeus who cheated the locals out of their money.
We are the prodigal son, who blew our youth in wild living.
We are the Pharisee who sits at the table thinking we deserve it but who casts judgment on others.

None of these people earned a seat at the table because they deserved it by fitting some kind of cultural mold. They were strugglers.

We are just like the struggler that was given a seat at the table with Jesus.

And he identifies with us. Jesus is the high priest who is able to empathize with us – as one who has been tempted in every way (Heb. 4:15).

When Jesus sat down with the 12 strugglers at the Last Supper (120 – Acts 1:15) – there was a reversal that took place. For three years Jesus had sat at the table and identified Himself with those who were seated. But now, Jesus, who was identifying himself with the most important thing these strugglers needed. He broke bread and shared the wine, and essentially asked them, “Will you take it and identify with me in this meal?”

This question came after 3 years of serving them. It took time!

When you participate at the communion table, you are declaring, “I identify with Jesus in this meal by recognizing that I am the one Jesus invited to have a seat at the table.”

You could say that the communion table is a feast of fellow strugglers.

Before we eat together – take a moment and allow God to minister to your heart. If there is sin, confess it. As you confess your sins to God, thank Him that He has welcomed you to the communion table when you did not deserve to sit down with him.

If you are new to church and you want to declare your faith in Him for the first time – do it now by using the best words you can to pray it. Admit your sin has separated you from God and that you are in need of the forgiveness from that sin that is offered in Jesus.

Action Step: For the next two weeks, set one extra place setting at dinner – and leave it empty. As you (and your family) eat dinner, let the empty plate serve as a visual to help you feel uncomfortable, and let it remind you that this empty place setting represents a person who is a fellow struggler.

Jesus welcomed you and I to the table as strugglers, we need to welcome others – and we need to recapture the kind of hospitality the world needs us to excel at.

Lives are at stake.

Next Week: We begin to discuss the men and woman who were at the table with Jesus during those three years of ministry. We are going to look at the tax collectors and the woman who washed Jesus’ feet. And I’m going to talk about little more about why it matters that we serve people who are different from us.