

“SETTING THE TABLE”
“Who is Welcome at the Table?”

We have begun our sermon series “Setting the Table.” In our culture and society, food has in some ways, become an issue. We have gotten used to eating so fast (most school children must eat in 20 minutes or less), or we are so concerned because of whatever diet we may be on that food is seen as problem, rather than a gift or a blessing. From the beginning, the Bible has shown how God is interested in food and providing for the basic needs of God’s beloved children. Beginning in the garden of Eden, God gives food for human beings to delight in and to enjoy. The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy was that human beings would worship God, give thanks for the gifts of the earth in bread and wine and to feast as a family together. The focus for this week is bread. Sunday is a communion Sunday and instead of the Hawaiian bread we usually use, we will use unleavened bread made the way it would be made for Passover. It will be just flour and water, no salt or oil. This is the simple bread of affliction, the bread that reminds our Jewish brothers and sisters of God’s grace in saving them and in protecting them as well as reminding them each Passover of God’s goodness and mercy. We remember how Jesus invites us to remember and be grateful for the mercy and goodness of God. May we be reminded this week as gather at a table, with our families and friends, or even alone, that God gives us the fruit and the earth and feeds our hungering hearts with good. Things.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Host of Heaven, Bread of Life”**

Daily prayer: *In great compassion, you feed us, Lord God. For we are wilderness-bound and constrained in our search for you. Discover us anew, O God, with blessed and broken bread, and fish, made abundant for our need and gracious for our life, wrought wonderful in wilderness excess. Amen. (@Rev. William Flewelling)*

Study Guide

Monday, August 5, 2019 Luke 9: 10-14

The story of the feeding of the 5000 or the feeding of the multitude is found in all four gospels. This event is so central and critical to the ministry of Jesus that each of the authors placed it in their gospel to be remembered. The twelve had gone preaching and healing, and when they returned, Jesus tried to get away a bit with them. To no avail, the crowds wouldn't leave Jesus alone and in verse 11 it says, "He welcomed them, spoke to them about God's kingdom, and healed those who were sick." Jesus' hospitality, care and grace for all is evidenced in verse 11. However, the day comes to an end, and the disciples got nervous; too many people, it's late, and there is nothing to feed them. There are no restaurants, grocery stores, markets, anything in which to purchase food. Jesus is not concerned. "You feed them," Jesus says. It would be easy to give into fear of rioting and scarcity, but not so for Jesus. He always understands we have more than we need, and we have enough to share. What seems impossible to us, is always possible for God. *What triggers your fear of scarcity? How do you find ways to look at situations unafraid, the way Jesus does?*

Tuesday, August 6, 2019 Luke 9: 14-17

There were over 5000 men, according to Luke and who knows how many women and children. They are never part of the "official" count. They had five "loaves"; really just small hard rolls and two fish, probably the size of sardines. This is the basic lunch for the poor. Jesus had them seated in smaller groups (about 50) and when he broke and blessed the bread and fish and shared it, and there was enough for everyone with leftovers! This amazing story of Jesus is a reminder that with God all things are possible. As we heard in Genesis a couple of weeks ago, "Is anything too wonderful for God?" Jesus understands our need for bread for our body and bread for our soul. We sing "Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more," and we know that trusting in Jesus as the Bread of Life helps us see the world, as Christ sees it: abundant, grace-filled and loving. That doesn't mean bad things do not happen, but it means, more often than not, there are far more people willing to do what is right and good, than those who do evil. *How do you experience the abundant grace of God in your life? How do you share it with others?*

Wednesday August 7, 2019 Psalm 104: 1-6

This poem or song of praise to God is filled with incredible imagery. This song names God as creator and as wonderful and amazing, more so than we can imagine. Being in awe and wonder of God is part of acknowledging how our lives are different because of God. God begins setting the table by creating all the beauty of the world and the universe. In Psalm 23, we read, "God sets a table before me" and God does that from the very beginning of universe for all creation and then specifically for God's beloved children. *How do you "bless the Lord" with your whole life and being? How is your faithful praise and blessing made real in you by what you say and do?*

Thursday August 8, 2019 Psalm 104: 10-13

Here the psalmist becomes more specific as to how God feeds and care for creation itself: "water for every wild animal, trees for birds to make their home and the earth is filled full by the fruit of what you've done." The ancient believers were closer to the earth and the understanding of how critical plants, animals and water were to the abundance of what God has created and provided. In the twenty-first century we are pretty distant from the earth and the source of our food. Unless we garden, or care for animals which become food for us, we don't really connect between the rain and the seasons and the bounty of the earth. We go to the store and pick up what we need. This psalm reminds us of the wonderful grace of God that provides not only for our needs but the needs of the earth and inhabitants of it. *Today, walk outside, go to a market, or find a garden, pay attention to the birds singing, then say a prayer of thanks and praise for the God who has created it all.*

Friday August 9, 2019 Psalm 104: 14-15

Here the psalmist specifically lists the blessings of God for creation: grass for cattle, plants for people to get food, oil to anoint the face, wine to gladden the heart and bread to strengthen the heart. Maybe that is why in both Judaism and Christianity wine and bread are blessed for a meal and a sacrament. On Friday, at sunset this is our Jewish brothers and sister prayer: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine." Or, "Let us bless the source of life which ripens fruit on the vine as we hallow the Sabbath day in remembrance of creation." *Today, find someone to share a meal with. Invite someone over to dinner or to go out to dinner, bless the food you share and the food which God provides as you gather around the table. God is setting a table for us and blessing us.*