



The Table

Pastor Jerry Gillis – February 5, 2017

So this is the kind of weekend, Super Bowl weekend where a lot of people go over to someone's house and eat a lot or they have people over and eat a lot. For some of you that watch the game, you will enjoy that game, cheering for the right team and then there will be others of you who go and do this just because you like the commercials. Any of those kinds of things is fine, but what the Super Bowl time in the United States of America gets to do for us, is it actually creates all kinds of really good bad houseguest, or bad host stories. There's no way that this many people in the United States are going to someone's house or are having people over that out of that does not come a really bad dinner guest or really bad host stories. And I for one am a sucker for those stories. I like to listen to them.

Now, I say all of that understanding that my favorite bad houseguest story is actually not one that occurred during a Super Bowl. And it did not even occur in the United States. Two friends of mine who are in ministry, and we'll just call them Jim and Todd who are, because that's actually their names, but we'll pretend like we're faking. I really hope they're watching. They were in a different country, a country in eastern

Europe, and they were there with their host. And the host was taking care of them, and they were picking them up for the very first day of ministry, they were going to have a very busy day of ministry. It was during the summertime, it was very hot.

The first stop that the host put them in this very small vehicle, and the first place he stopped was this fish market. And what he did is he purchased a big fish and just put it in his trunk. And it stayed in his trunk the entire day. I'm not talking about he like had a cooler back there on ice, I'm just telling you he put it in his trunk. What? Like you don't toast these things, right? I mean, so they drive around and do ministry all day long and sure enough when they get home this thing has basically been in a sauna the whole entire day.

And they get home to the host's place, and he opens up that trunk and pulls that fish out. To which Todd and Jim say "Hey, what are you doing with that fish"? And he went "it's for dinner". And they were like that's what we thought. That's what we thought. Sure enough, they bring it in there, his wife cooks up the fish, I don't know how well she cooked it, I don't know any of those things. And then they served the fish at dinner. They're around a very small table, it's in a very small apartment, they're sitting around a very small table and they've got fish.

Jim looks at Todd, they're sitting across from one another at the table, and the English is very difficult sometimes for the host and their language barrier is also there so they just kind of look at each other and Jim, you know, is eating around the fish, not eating the fish and he just

looks at Todd and he says "now, I'm not eating the fish, I'm not going to eat that, there's no way I'm eating this fish". And Todd's like "you have to eat the fish, this is, they're our hosts, and we want to be polite, you're going to eat the fish". And Jim's like "I'm not eating the fish, there's not a chance I'm eating the fish, it's not going to happen. The fish isn't going in my body". And Todd's like, "Dude, you have to eat the fish". Jim said, "I'm not eating it, I don't care what you say. They can kick me out and I'll sleep on the street, but I'm not eating the fish. It's been in the trunk the entire time. And I'm not eating it. It's been in a sauna."

So sure enough what Jim does is Jim pulls one of those dinner guest ninja moves like, "tell me about that picture on the wall" and they all look and he cuts that fish off and he starts shoving it on Todd's plate. And Todd's looking at him like "don't put your fish on my plate". And he's like "well, you're the one who said you wanted to eat all the fish and be Mr. polite". So sure enough what happens is Todd starts, he's not only eating his own fish, he's eating Jim's fish. And by the time all is said and done, Jim's like "wow, what is that over there?" and they look over there and they look and he's sweeping fish onto Todd's plate, and Todd's like "come on, man". By the time they're done Todd has eaten his fish and all of Jim's fish, because he felt like they needed to be polite and he wasn't going to do this, and Jim's like "I'm not eating that, it's been baking in the back of their trunk for the entire time. I'm not eating it".

So, after dinner is over they actually, probably at the same place because the place was very, very small, the husband and wife actually open up a family album and want to share some of their family photos with Todd

and Jim. So they are sitting there, you know two feet from where they were eating and they are sitting there looking at family photos. While looking at the family photos, they're just kind of watching, listening, oh, that's very nice, yes, yes, you know, talking. And then all of a sudden Todd's stomach starts [making noises]. He's like phew, I'm fine, I'm fine. The woman, the wife, the host wife, the hostess kind of looks and goes oh, ho, ho. And he's like oh no, no problem, everything's fine. About five minutes later, [more noises]. And of course he starts sweating and looking like Kermit, you know, he's some different shade of green and he's looking at Jim going "I'm going to need a restroom. I'm going to need a restroom, right now. Could you tell me where your restroom is?"

And of course here's what they do. It was like five feet from the table where they were looking at the stuff. The door is facing the table, and when he closes the door there is a gap on the bottom of the door about this high. It is your worst nightmare. You have had bad fish in a very small apartment in a foreign country and you are about to go to war in the restroom. And they are five feet from you with a door that doesn't even go all the way to the floor. Needless to say, Todd is in there for so long by the time he comes out he's getting social security checks. He finally comes out, they're all still sitting there and he just sits down at what we affectionately call the Table of Shame. He just sits down and like, oh.

Now here's the thing. Todd and Jim did not set out to be bad house guests. It was just how it worked out. Nor did the people that were hosting them set out to poison him with trunk fish. They didn't intend

to do that. But it happened nonetheless. I just like the story and I wish that I could add all of the color commentary that they do when they actually tell the story, it's awesome. But, because we're on television and because I, you know, you haven't eaten yet I just don't want to do that to any of us, right? It's a great story.

Now, when you think of bad houseguest stories, the first thing that comes to mind for you is not usually Jesus, right? When I think of a bad houseguest, I think of Jesus. Of course you don't. But, I'm not here to tell you that Jesus ruined every party that He went to, only the ones that He went to that were hosted by religious leaders. Those are the ones that He absolutely detonated. He became a terrible houseguest.

Now for us to be able to see that, we're going to look in the gospel of Luke, because that's where we start to understand how this plays out. Luke's gospel, it has been said of Luke's gospel that Jesus is either eating a meal, He is going to a meal, or He is leaving a meal in Luke. You can almost trace His, what He's doing and what Luke is showing us through all of these various times where Jesus is at a table. I'm not going to show you all of those, but I want to point out a few of them, particularly on the front end of ones where He is eating with religious leaders or Pharisees that He gets invited in and He actually is a, quite a bad house guest, at least in the way that we would think about it. We typically would think Jesus would be the person if we at a dinner party that if things got awkward, He would smooth it over. Unfortunately, when we actually read the Bible what we find is that when he's in those places with religious leaders, He's the one creating the awkwardness. And He's

doing that for a purpose. And I want us to kind of track through and see some of that.

Now I'm going to name each of these tables that He's at in these different stories but they're just, they're just my names, they're just for remembrance and for organizational purposes. These aren't the real names, and none of them are going to be named the Table of Shame because that would just, that would hurt me, I'm not going to do that.

But here's the first one I want to point out. We're going to call it the Table of Release. The Table of Release. And you know the story, it's in Luke chapter 7 beginning in verse 36 and here's what it says. It says: "When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and he reclined at the table." Okay, it started well. "A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind Jesus at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. And then she wiped them with her hair, she kissed them and poured perfume on them. And when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who was touching him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner."

Now, you've probably heard this story, right? It's a startling story. And part of why you're startled is because you're might be thinking to yourself "how did she get in there?" Like, she didn't knock, and it didn't seem like she was invited. How did she get in there? Well, in the ancient

context you have to remember that their homes were kind of different than ours. When we have dinner parties, we bring people into a dining room table, and it's behind a locked door that you come into the house with. And then you come in and you're in a walled room and a dining room or whatever. It was not that way in the ancient kind of near east. It was different. Their homes were open. And in fact, when a dinner party was going on, you could sometimes stand on the outer perimeter of either the home or even inside what is called the home, and you could view what was going on at the dinner party even if you were not a guest. So it was not shocking that she could get in, she didn't bust down a door or she didn't sneak in, she just wasn't you know, some kind of burglary. It wasn't any of those things.

But she came in with a very expensive jar of perfume, of ointment. And she began to anoint Jesus' feet obviously because she had been moved and transformed in some way by some things that He had done, maybe on her behalf or things that He had taught. We don't get the full back story, but we have the Pharisee seeing this happen. Could you imagine how uncomfortable you are if you're hosting a dinner party, and one of your guests is sitting there and a woman comes in with an alabaster jar of perfume, and she begins crying over your feet, and she begins anointing you with that alabaster jar, and she's wiping your feet with her hair as she's crying on your feet. And you're thinking to yourself oh, this is awkward, this is really, really awkward.

Well, Jesus actually knows exactly what the Pharisee is thinking because he's thinking to himself if He knew this woman's reputation, that she's

lived a sinful life He would know that she's a sinner. And then Jesus goes on to tell a parable that I'm not going to read to you for times sake, but He tells a parable about how those who have been forgiven much love much. And He tries to, He's basically helping the Pharisees or the religious leaders get an opportunity to see that maybe you haven't understood what forgiveness really looks like. Maybe you haven't really experienced that because you're not loving much because I came in here and you didn't even give me anything to wash my feet off with, you didn't do that for me. And she's weeping on my feet and wiping my feet with her hair, and you did nothing for me. And so He gives them this perspective.

And then Jesus forgives her of her sins, shocking everyone in the room. He releases her from her sins, and it absolutely floors everyone, and they think to themselves "who is this guy and who does He think He is in doing this?" But Jesus was trying to help them understand these are the kinds of people who've lived these kinds of lives who are candidates to experience this kind of grace. It was a Table of Release.

Have you ever found yourself sitting in the seat of the Pharisee in that setting? Have you ever found yourself making judgments of people because of their past story and not letting them ever get by it? Not letting them ever get over it? Not ever allowing the hope that there is something past it? The Table of Release.

But Luke paints another picture. I'll switch chairs. We'll call it the Table of Religion. It's in Luke chapter number 11 and here's the story there. It

says: "When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table." Again, it starts well enough. "But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal. Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people?" See, he's just making small talk here, right? "Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But now as for what is inside you - be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it. Then one of the experts in the law who was apparently also invited to the dinner, answered Jesus by saying "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us that are also experts in the Law. Jesus replied, "Oh, and you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them."

This is comfortable. Can you imagine a more awkward dinner party than this? Jesus just comes in and detonates the place. And He tries to help these guys understand that your focus on hyper superficial things

is not going to get you anywhere, because you are missing the heart. He's trying to help them understand that.

I wonder how many times we get caught up at the Table of Religion in our own lives, and we focus so much on the superficial things, and we fail to really think about meeting people at the heart level. You know how it goes. It's church people. Church people come to church. And a lot of the church people look the same. And then, the church people look at the people that don't look like them, and they think to themselves, "Oh, man, that hair's a little wild, a little long. Those clothes are a little loud. Those piercings are a little funky. Those tats are a little misplaced." We focus on the superficial without thinking about the heart.

Now, I know this would never happen at The Chapel ever, ever. Except that it has, where I've actually had the conversation in years past where somebody's saying, boy, some people sitting in front of me today, I was just really praying they came to know Jesus. Oh cool, did you get a chance to talk to them, and they talked to you about that? Oh no, no, I didn't speak to them. Oh, okay, but you're praying for them to come to know Jesus? But you don't know them. They're like, yeah, yeah, I could just tell. Oh, okay. How could you tell? If you'd have seen their tats. If you'd have seen their hair. If you'd have seen their piercings. Right? Whatever. Superficial things.

I wonder if it ever works in reverse. Like if the people with wild hair and tats and piercings come out of a service occasionally, and they're standing in the atrium talking to one another. Man, I was really praying

for that guy in front of me today. He needs to know Jesus. Did you get to talk to him? No, I didn't get to talk to him, but I could tell. Really, how could you tell? He had on wing-tips, and a cardigan, wearing a tie. And his friends are all like, let's join hands.

I don't know if it works in reverse like that, but the reminder is that superficial for us does not get the job done. Jesus has come to transform the heart. And often we can't get beyond the superficial to understand what is going on in the heart. And so Jesus becomes a really bad dinner guest with people who can't get beyond the superficial. Religious folks. And He tries to call them back to a place where they start understanding it's the heart that matters and what He can do. It's the Table of Religion.

Then there's a big one. I'll call it the Table of Rebuke. This dinner party just got crazy because there was all kinds of awkwardness, like layer upon layer upon layer of awkwardness. It didn't just start awkward, it just kept on getting that way. Look in the very beginning of it in Luke chapter 14. It says: "One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, He was being carefully watched." Maybe they had heard, right, what kind of dinner guest Jesus was going to be with the religious people. "There in front of Him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? But they remained silent." Isn't that interesting? They were experts in the Law and they had nothing to say. "So taking hold of the man, Jesus healed him and sent him on his way." He obviously wasn't an invited guest because he sent him on his way. "Then He asked them, "If one of you ha a child or an ox

that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out? And they had nothing to say." If that wasn't awkward enough "when Jesus noticed how the guests had picked the places of honor at the table He started talking to all the guests and He told them this parable. When someone invites you to a wedding feast don't take the place of honor for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

So two really awkward moments, right? There's Jesus is sitting at a dinner party and there are other guests at the table clearly, but this man who is experiencing swelling, edema, is not one of the guests but happens to be one of the onlookers that's probably standing either just inside or just outside of the house that we know it and he's right across from Jesus and in His line of sight. And Jesus begins talking. By the way, this guy can hear, his body is swelling, but he can hear. And Jesus is saying to all of the religious leaders that are there, "hey, is it lawful to heal this man on the Sabbath?" These are experts in the Law. They say absolutely nothing. So you know what Jesus does? He heals him. And then after healing him, He says to everyone there, "If your child or your ox fell into a well on the Sabbath you'd rescue it, wouldn't you?"

Nothing. Crickets. Jesus was trying to help them understand some things here about how they are holding on to things and missing the spirit of things because of the Letter.

Then He turns His attention to the guests and He says, "by the way, I see that everybody's choosing the really great places at the table". He tells them a story. Now the story is not meant to just be good advice even though it's really good advice, just as a heads up. If you're going to a dinner party, trying to sit at the head of the table where the host would sit, probably a bad idea. Or if you're finagling, trying to get the best seat or whatever, probably a bad idea. This is good advice but this is not just good advice that Jesus is giving. Because what Luke is doing with all of these different episodes around the table, is he's helping us to begin to see what the kingdom of God looks like. He's trying to help us see that there are people that can be released from their sins, even if they have a really, really stained reputation. And that people can actually be brought in and helped even if they don't have anything to bring to the party and they are swollen. He's helping us see what the kingdom of God looks like.

And so, Jesus tells the story not just as good advice, but as a reminder to people that when you try and posture yourself in the presence of God, that's never going to work. Just because you look good on the outside, just because you make everybody think a certain thing does not mean that you are going to find favor with God. But those who humble themselves and recognize their need, it is those that He can take and exalt. So He's helping them understand what the kingdom is like.

It's awkward as can be, right? But Jesus decides let's amp up the awkwardness. I'm going to speak right to the host of the party. Here's what He says to the host, chapter 14 verse number 12: "Jesus said to His host, 'When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'"

He's basically saying, "hey, if you're going to keep up this I'll scratch your back and then you scratch mine kind of life, I want you to understand that the way of kingdom is different than that. And here's what I want you to do, Mr. Religious Leader, Mr. Priest, I want you to invite the lame, the poor, the crippled, and the blind. Why don't you do that, because they can't offer you anything in return. They can't pay you back."

Now on the surface when we read that it's awkward enough, right? It's rebuke enough to the host. But it's even deeper than you think because he's talking to a priest. And do you know that there were regulations around a priest and what a priest could do and could not do? And who priests could be and weren't supposed to be?

And in fact, if you listen to some of those regulations like you see in Leviticus chapter 21, you begin to hear some of the same words that Jesus used. This would not have been lost on the priest. Look at

Leviticus 21 and what it says: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron: "For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. No man who has a defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is a hunchback or a dwarf, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles." Yes, I'm reading the Bible. "No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the food offerings to the Lord. He has a defect; he must not come near to offer the food of his God. He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food; yet because of his defect he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the Lord, who makes them holy."

It is startling what Jesus said to this priest, because here's the thing with priests. They took their responsibilities very seriously under the Law. And when they were in the Temple they had to keep everything just so but do you know that kind of history teaches us that the priests considered their homes as mini-sanctuaries. And they kept them very free from defilement. And here's what Jesus says: "Bring in all of the people that you consider unholy and bring them into your mini-sanctuary right here, and have them over for dinner. Because this is what the kingdom of God will look like." A stinging rebuke.

But He's not done. It's the same dinner party, He decides to amp it up a little bit more, because apparently there's a guy who's hearing all of this rebuke who's at the dinner party, he's the guy who wants to make

everything kind of go like, let's smooth it out. But it doesn't work real well. Listen to what happens, verse number 15: "When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, 'Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.' Can you see him just trying to break all of the tension in the room? And Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' And another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' And still another said, 'I just got married so I can't come.' The servant came back and reported this to his master. And then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out and quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir, the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

Now, not only is Jesus kind of painting a bigger picture about Israel's rejection of Him and the inclusion of the Gentiles who are on the outside, outside of town, He's not only painting that picture, but he's reminding everyone at the table that when we exalt ourselves, we will be

humbled, and maybe we'll even be excluded if we think that we can do this all on our own. It's a Table of Rebuke.

You see, Luke is doing something very rich for us in his gospel. Luke keeps giving us these different stories, because he is painting a picture of what the kingdom of God is actually like, and he's using tables and meals to kind of help tell the story to anticipate what's coming in his gospel.

Specifically, I'll move over to the Table of Redemption. This is at a point in Luke's gospel where Jesus has been intersecting with all of these religious leaders and trying to help them understand what the kingdom of God looks like and who the recipients of the kingdom will be. And now, Jesus is in Jerusalem for the very last time, and He's gathering with His disciples for what would be a final meal for Him.

Here's what it says in Luke chapter 22: "When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.'"

Now you remember the Passover, right? This was the time of the Passover in Israel, and the Passover came from the time of the Exodus when Israel was in captivity to Egyptian bondage and God said to all of Israel that if you will take a spotless lamb and you will shed his blood and you will place that blood over the door post that when I come by or when the angel of the Lord comes by, when there is blood on the door post then the angel of the Lord will pass over that place and not take the

first born son. And that it was in that time where God did that and then freed the Israelites from Egyptian captivity and led them out through the Red Sea and making their way on toward the Promised Land.

You see, the Passover was a celebration of both deliverance and redemption. And when Jesus is seated with His disciples He is actually reflecting on the idea of deliverance and redemption because of what He's about to do. He's about to go to a cross and He's about to offer Himself. You see, Passover meals were very specific and they were very prescribed, you knew exactly what was on the table and what was going to happen in what order. They were doing this from generations long before the time of Jesus.

But at the time of Jesus, it's very interesting when you read the gospels that in the description of what was on the table many scholars note an absence of what was on the table. Some scholars would argue that the only thing that you find that's really not listed that should be listed, that should be on the table is lamb. Because they were actually supposed to eat and consume all of the lamb according to what Exodus said. But here when Jesus is taking the Passover there may not have been a lamb on the table, but that was because there was a lamb at the table, the One who was going to give Himself as the Passover Lamb. The sacrifice so that the judgment of God would pass over sinful people who put their faith and trust in Him as a sacrifice on their behalf. It's a Table of Redemption because it reminds us that the kingdom of Jesus is one that delivers people and redeems people.

But there's another table and it's in the same context. It's the Table of Remembrance. Let me explain. Jesus is still at the Passover meal. He breathes new life into it. Where it held a certain format all the time, Jesus does something very unique in this Passover meal. Notice what it says still in Luke chapter 22 beginning in verse 19. It says: "And He took bread and He gave thanks and He broke it and He gave it to them saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' And in the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" You see, Jesus transforms the Passover meal to being one that is a meal of remembrance of Him.

Now, if I could pause for just a second, I would ask maybe this question. What is it that we're supposed to remember? And given all that Luke has shown us in some of the Table meals that we see in Luke's gospel, what is it we're actually supposed to remember. Here's the first thing I think that maybe we should remember how we got to the Table to begin with. You see it is grace, ladies and gentlemen, that got us to the Table of Jesus to begin with. To be able to enter into the great banquet of His kingdom, none of us deserved an invite. We were on the outside looking in. But because of what Jesus has done through His death and resurrection, we now have the opportunity to respond to His grace. See what Jesus reminds us of when we take the bread and the cup, every time we do that do you know what we're reminded of? We're reminded that Jesus put His brokenness on display instead of ours. That the only reason we're at the Table is because we were carried there by grace.

But you know what else we should remember? We should remember who gets invited to the Table. Not only how we got there, which was an act of grace, we didn't deserve to be there but we should also remember who gets invited. You see, the stories in Luke kind of remind us that every different kind of person, those that are marginalized, those that have bad pasts, those that maybe have a physical ailment, it doesn't matter where you come from, what your background looks like, it kind of seems to me that every different kind of man, woman and child is invited to come. That's the beautiful picture.

Some of you haven't been able to do that for whatever reason, because you have felt labeled. But whatever your label is, that can change. You still get invited. Maybe your label that you've given to yourself or maybe it's what it is, is black or white or Hispanic, or Asian, or immigrant or refugee. Maybe it's rich or poor, special needs or gifted, Republican, Democrat, Independent, the Rents Too Dang High party, gay, straight, educated, uneducated, promiscuous, prudish, employed, unemployed, homeless, well-housed, single, married, divorced. Ladies and gentlemen, Jesus can change us all and when we come we can trade in our label for a new one, child of the King. This is the invitation. It is a scandalous grace that we receive. Hard for sometimes our hardened religious minds to wrap our minds around, and Jesus will not leave us the same. He will transform us as a heart level. We got to remember who gets invited to the Table so we don't become like the religious leaders who Jesus blows up all of their dinner parties.

There's a last Table. The Table of Recognition. You see after Jesus died and He rose from the dead, there were some disciples that still couldn't believe what was going on. In fact, there were two, one named Cleopas and then another one that's unnamed, probably Cleopas' wife, Mrs. Cleopas we'll say, that were walking outside of the city. Jesus came walking along with them, yet they weren't able to recognize it was Him, either through being stunned that it could possibly have been Him thinking that couldn't have possibly been Him, or maybe Jesus kept them from being able to recognize Him.

And so what happens? Well, Jesus begins to talk to them. Why are you guys so down? What's going on? And they said are you a visitor to Jerusalem and you've not heard about these things? And Jesus says "what things?" What? He's only changed the world through His death and resurrection. What are you talking about? And then the Bible says that beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus walked them through all of the Hebrew Scripture concerning Himself. And then when they were getting ready to be done with their journey, they were coming to a place and Jesus was going to continue walking along, they said "no, no, no, no please. Stay with us." So He comes in. And as Luke's characteristically showing us, He has a meal with them.

Look what it says in Luke 24: "When He was at the table with them, Jesus took bread and He gave thanks and He broke it and He began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight. And they asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us when He talked with us on the road and

opened the Scriptures to us?" Then they got up and they returned at once to Jerusalem. And there they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together saying, "It's true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when He broke the bread."

You see, what happened with these disciples is that they recognized Jesus, and they recognized what He had done, and they began to testify to the other disciples what had transpired. "We've seen Him! He's alive, He is the King that we thought He was. He will do what He said He's going to do." And then do you know what those disciples did? They began to testify to the world that Jesus is Lord and that He's risen from the dead! And they turned the world upside down. Do you know what happened? They still were a guest at the table through no work of their own, it was only by the grace of Jesus, but they moved from just being guests at the table to now being hosts, where they themselves were inviting people to come to the table of Jesus.

This is the mission that we have. The mission that includes every man, woman and child, that we go from just being guests at the table to being hosts where we, on the authority of Jesus invite people to come and know Him, to be transformed by Him to turn from their sin and by faith entrust what He has done on the cross and through His resurrection. That we go from being guests to being hosts. So, when we come to a Table of Remembrance like we're going to do today, we need to remember all of these things.

Here's what we're going to do. All of our ushers are getting themselves ready on every campus to distribute Communion. They're coming into place right now and in just a moment they're going to start passing the Communion plates down. Here's what I'm going to ask you to do, to take the elements out and if you want to peel back the thing to get a head start you can do that, that's fine. But while they are doing that, we are going to sing together a song just to reflect and to worship on the King who is the King, Jesus. And then at the conclusion of that song, we're going to remain standing and I'm going to lead us in the taking of the elements, and then we'll be gone.

But I do want to remind anyone here who has never come to a place where you have come and embraced Jesus and turned away from trying to be your own lord and savior, realizing you can't save yourself but only He can. I want you to know whatever your background, whatever that's looked like, if you've identified with somebody who's marginalized, who has a really bad past, or maybe you've been somebody trying to do it all on your own. If you come to Jesus and recognize that only He can save, He'll transform you, and He won't leave you in the same place that you're in. He'll make you new. That's the invitation that you have, that by faith in your heart you can entrust your life to Jesus.

I want you to peel off and take the bread in your hands and I want to remind you as you're doing that, that Jesus put His brokenness on display instead of ours. That is why we get to come to the Table. Eat and remember. If you'll peel back the juice, as I say often, there will be a whole world of people that will be partying today, some of them will be

drinking to forget their stress, their life, all their stuff. Not us. We drink to remember because it is through the blood of Jesus that we have a way to the Table. Because of His sacrifice on our behalf, no matter what our background, no matter where we came from, that the blood of Jesus can wash us clean of all of our sins and save us forever. Drink and remember.

As you hold onto these I'm going to give you a couple of things to remember on your way out. One, those that need to know more about what it means to begin a relationship with Jesus, to find a seat at the Table that He has made a way for you. I want to encourage you to come by the Fireside Room when we're dismissed. There are some pastors and some other friends in there that would love to talk to about that relationship. Secondly, if you're a guest and you have a moment or two, come by the bright orange tables out there. We'd love to just meet you personally. Send you home with something, tell you more about our church. And then lastly, take these and do our ushers a favor, discard them on your way out. There's trash cans on the way out, you can just dump them in there if you would.

I love you folks, God bless you. You're dismissed.