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Life In Christ

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Some of my fondest memories of both sets of my grandparents are around the kitchen table, some at big celebrations, others on a weekly basis. I always loved when my large Mackenzie clan would get together in the east, from all over Canada, for large family meals, I loved my grandmothers blueberry pie amongst many other things she would cook, all the different dishes my mom and aunts would bring, and then we might have music with my grandfather playing his fiddle or my grandparents dancing surrounded with family and friends. Many family reunions we have spent sharing food together.

I also think of every Sunday, my maternal grandparents would be in church with us, at which point once it was over we would all journey back to their place down the road, to have lunch together. I can still smell my grandmother's fresh bread, molasses cookies, or freshly baked pies. If it was in the summer time I might go with my grandfather to the garden to pick out cucumbers and tomatoes to go with lunch. It's where I learned to like old cheddar cheese. I didn't like it by itself initially, but they always served it with grammy's homemade apple pie and now I can't have apple pie without thinking of her and seeing if there is old

cheddar cheese in the fridge. There was lots of chatter around the table. I became extremely close with these grandparents, in large part because of our weekly meals together. I learned a lot about them and with them. We shared stories, and I began to understand who they were through these shared meals. We now continue this tradition with my parents as we share in Sunday night suppers together, which the kids, and now the dog, race to the car to get in when I say, you want to go see Nana and Papa?

Meals are one of the few times families consistently come together. They provide a natural space to talk, share stories, and check in on each other's lives. Regularly shared meals strengthen emotional bonds and family identity. Families often pass down traditions, culture, and faith around meals. Stories, morals, and family history are shared during conversation at the table. We learn manners, gratitude, and respect through the structure of family meals. Shared meals provide structure in a busy world. They serve as anchors in daily life, fostering a sense of safety and belonging. Meals provide a space to celebrate achievements, mourn losses, or give thanks. In many families, mealtimes become rituals of gratitude, prayer, or shared reflection. The act of sharing food mirrors care and generosity, creating an environment of love. Meals teach how to share, resolve conflict, and show respect for others'

needs. Meals are much more than nourishment—they are the glue that holds families together. They are spaces for relationship-building, teaching, tradition, emotional connection, and even spiritual growth.

We read today the account of The Last Supper, according to The Gospel of Luke, though accounts of The Last Supper are found in some of the other gospels, with slightly different tellings, there is a reason I picked the Gospel of Luke. Luke's gospel loves meals, and the idea of eating, more so than any of the other gospels. Jesus did a lot of teaching within meals. Let's have a brief overview of how Luke lays this all out.

It begins in Luke 5 with a discussion of fasting in Luke 5:33–34 “Then they said to him [him being Jesus], ‘John’s disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink.’ Jesus said to them, ‘You cannot make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you?’” and similar conversations in Luke 7.

Right after this Luke tells about Jesus being asked by a Pharisee to have dinner with him and so Jesus went to his home. As Luke 7 finishes off: A woman known as a sinner comes into the Pharisee's house where Jesus is eating. She weeps at Jesus' feet, washing them with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing them, and pouring perfume on them. Simon, the Pharisee judges Jesus for allowing such a

woman to touch Him. This meal reveals Jesus as the prophet who knows the hearts of both Simon and the sinful woman.

Jesus responds with a parable to Simon: two people owed money—one a large debt, one a small debt. Both debts were forgiven. Jesus asks Simon who would love the forgiver more. Simon answers, "the one forgiven the bigger debt." Jesus agrees and contrasts the Pharisee's lack of hospitality with the woman's great love. Jesus declares that the woman's many sins are forgiven because she loved much, and He tells her, "*Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*" Jesus uses a meal to reveal hearts—both the proud and the repentant. Meals are more than food; they are windows into the soul. Who is at your table?

When Jesus was preaching in Luke 11 a Pharisee invites him to his home for supper. While dining, Jesus is silently criticized for not washing before the meal. He responds with strong rebukes, exposing the hypocrisy of focusing on outward cleanliness while neglecting inner purity and justice. Who is at your table?

Luke 14 speaks of Jesus on the Sabbath eating dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees and the people were watching him closely. A man with swollen joints is there, and Jesus heals him, challenging the Pharisees about whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. They remain silent.

At the meal, Jesus notices how guests scramble for the best seats. He teaches a parable, urging them to take the lowest place instead, so that the host may honor them. The lesson: *“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Jesus turns to the host, advising him not to invite only friends, family, and wealthy neighbors who can repay, but to invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. Such generosity will be rewarded at the resurrection. Who is at your table?

He then tells the parable of the Great Feast: Of a man who prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. When the feast was ready, the invited guests all made excuses: one had bought a field, another had purchased oxen, another had just married. Because of their excuses, none of them came.

The host became angry and told his servant to bring in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame from the city streets. When there was still room, he sent the servant to the roads and country lanes to bring in even more, so that his house would be full. The parable ends with a warning: *those originally invited who rejected the invitation will not taste the banquet. Who is at your table?*

*Through this meal and parable Jesus teaches of God’s kingdom, painting a picture of the kingdom as a radical reversal: the last become first, and those who thought they belonged miss out because they refuse God’s invitation.*

Continuing in Luke 15:1–2 “Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

The story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10 tells of Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector, who wanted to see Jesus but was too short to see over the crowd, so he climbed a sycamore tree. Jesus saw him, called him down, and said He would stay at his house. The people grumbled that Jesus was visiting a sinner, but Zacchaeus repented, promising to give to the poor and repay anyone he had cheated. Jesus declared that salvation had come to Zacchaeus’ house, for He came to seek and save the lost.

It is during the time of Jesus going to Zacchaeus’ home that Jesus reveals the purpose of his coming, a life-transforming visit to Zacchaeus. “The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” A simple meal becomes the stage for transformation. Gratitude and grace collide at the table.” Who is at your table?

So, far Luke has shown Jesus to be a guest of tax collectors, sinners, and of the Pharisees. But Jesus also is a guest of his own followers. He visits Mary and Martha in Luke 10 Martha is distracted with preparations, while Mary sits at Jesus’ feet, listening to His teaching. Martha complains, but Jesus gently reminds her that Mary has chosen the

“better part.” This story happens in the setting of a household meal, but the focus shifts: being with Jesus (spiritual nourishment) is more important than being busy with serving. When we look at the story of Mary and Martha Jesus as guest becomes host when stating to Martha to not worry about the work she is doing, there is only one thing to be concerned over. He himself now provides the “main course” - his Word.

He appears to his disciples in Luke 24 after His resurrection. The disciples are startled and frightened, thinking they see a ghost. He reassures them by showing His hands and feet and asking for something to eat, proving He is physically risen.

He opens their minds to understand the Scriptures, explaining that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. Jesus then commissions them to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. He promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, who will empower them for this mission. Here Jesus uses eating (having them give Him food) to confirm His resurrection body and reassure the disciples that He is truly alive. Meals serve as moments of recognition and tangible encounters with the risen Lord. Who is at your table?

So far we’ve seen how Luke portrays Jesus as being the guest but he also portrays Jesus as the host.

In Luke 9, at the feeding of the 5000. Jesus withdraws with His disciples to a remote place, but a large crowd follows. He welcomes them, teaches them about the kingdom of God, and heals those in need. As evening approaches, the disciples worry about feeding the crowd. Jesus asks what food they have and multiplies five loaves and two fish. Everyone eats and is satisfied, and twelve baskets of leftovers are collected. Here Jesus provides a miraculous meal, meeting both physical and spiritual needs. The feeding highlights His compassion, the abundance of God's provision, and the foreshadowing of the kingdom feast. Peter realises that Jesus is more than a prophet; he is the Messiah of God. Who is at your table?

At the end of Luke on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24: Two disciples walk with the risen Jesus, not recognizing Him. Jesus explains the Scriptures about Himself, but their eyes are opened only when He breaks bread with them at a meal. Then Jesus disappears, and they rush back to tell the others. Recognition of Jesus comes in the breaking of bread—the meal becomes the moment of revelation and communion with the risen Lord. Who is at your table?

Few, that's a lot of meals. These meals are marked by Jesus questioning the status quo, an important point Luke wants to share. He is looking to the "then" of the life of Jesus to question the 'now' of current Christian practice. As Neyrey says, "Jesus' inclusive table fellowship mirrors the inclusive

character of the Lukan church: Gentiles, tax collectors, sinners, as well as the blind, lame, maimed and the poor are welcome at his table and in his covenant.”

So far Jesus is a guest and a host at these meals. It is once we get to Luke 22, the scripture read today, that we see Jesus also as servant at a meal; host and servant. Jesus’ ended his Galilean ministry when he fed the 5000, now he is concluding his ministry in Jerusalem by hosting a meal for his disciples.

There is a lot of importance in this meal. There is significant emphasis on its preparation with the use of the verb, prepare, a lot in the first few verses and then Jesus says, in Luke 22:15 “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” Eagerly desired. If you continue further into Luke 22 than what we read today you will hear how Jesus proclaims at this meal that one will betray him, one will deny him and others argue over who is the greatest. Think of your own table—who do you welcome, and who do you avoid? At the last supper, at the table with Jesus’ is Judas, who he knows will betray him, Peter who he knows will deny him, and some of the other disciples are arguing over who is the greatest. Jesus eats with people who fail, even at the Last Supper. Jesus is there with the broken. Luke has drawn this theme, which has marked so many of the meal scenes throughout his gospel. This meal, is not just a meal, it’s Jesus’ final discourse with them, before his

departure. As Jesus continues at the table in Luke 22:25–30 “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. “You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” He knows they are broken disciples, and yet, he establishes them as his legitimate successors; service is the sign of true greatness.

At the Last Supper, as a teacher and host Jesus makes arrangements for the meal, and presides over the Passover meal with his disciples, he commits his life to them in the shape of bread and wine but as a servant, not only serving the disciples at the table, but also guaranteeing them seats at his table in his Kingdom. He gives the meal a future perspective in referencing eating and drinking in the Kingdom of God. Jesus states at the end of Luke 22:19 “Do this in remembrance of me.”” He wants them to keep doing it in remembrance of him. After his death, this shared meal will be the context in which his visit will be remembered, his presence experienced, and his table in the Kingdom

anticipated.

As Michaelis Dippenaar states, “the breaking of bread; the table fellowship, the eating together that was so typical of Jesus’ ministry. In future, it will be at their shared meals that his disciples will both remember his table fellowship with them in the past and anticipate partaking of his table in the Kingdom of God. By continuing to break bread together, they will remember Jesus and continue to experience his presence among them.”

Just as I learned who my grandparents were over bread and conversation, we learn who Jesus is over a shared meal. Who is at your table? This week, notice the presence of Jesus—at the table, at the counter, in the simple act of breaking bread. And remember, every meal is an opportunity to encounter Him. The Gospel of Luke suggests that table fellowship with Jesus is essential to understanding who Jesus is. Teaching and eating happened a lot throughout the Gospel of Luke, and often times these two came together. Table fellowship is where Jesus reveals himself, his mission, and the grace of God. Perhaps in all that Luke shares in meals he wants to emphasize that any meal can be the occasion for a meeting with the risen Lord, that he is present wherever his followers gather together for a meal. How might Jesus be present in your everyday meals, in your kitchen, or your dining room? Invite someone you wouldn’t normally invite

for a meal this week. Experience Jesus' presence in that simple act. Remember that, as we partake in the Lord's Supper together, and in any meals you share together with fellow believers; the Lord is there with you. He invited broken people then as he still does today because it's nothing we did, but everything Jesus did. He is present at every meal, and because of that every table becomes a place of grace, transformation, and encounter with the living Christ. So, who is at your table?