

You Asked For It...The Table!

I Corinthians 11:23-28

August 4, 2019

The Table!

Shortly after Loreen and I were married 28 years ago we were having to look for a large dining table for our family of 6 to be able to sit around for meals. We looked all over. We walked into this one local furniture store that is known for its oak wood made by the Amish.

Loreen fell in love with this solid oak table that expands to easily seat 10 people.

It was gorgeous. The wood had an amazing look and finish. I eased around the table so I could get a glimpse of the price tag. Gulp! I almost sat down in one of the 6 oak chairs that came with it when I thought I would pass out. I can't afford this! I finally looked at Loreen and asked her if she could see us sitting around this table with our grandchildren. Her eyes smiled at me and she lovingly and convincingly said she could. We will have shared a meal with all 6 of our grandchildren when we enjoy a meal with our 7 month old grandson Bo today at the table.

The Table!

We have shared so many meals with family and friends around the table. We have enjoyed meals with our grandchildren around this table. I'm now looking forward in the future with meals around the table with great-grandchildren!

The Table!

There have been times of laughter and joy of sharing stories and remembering memories. There have been moments of tears of thanks remembering those who had sat at the table who are no longer with us. There have been scenes of renewal of family love as we have shared a meal at the table.

The Table!

No one has been turned away from the table. When we sit down at the table and join hands for prayer, there is such a sense of oneness.

The Table!

I am so glad Loreen was able to see in that table the grace, love and oneness of family and friends celebrating life together. All I saw was how much it was going to cost me.

The table has been with us for over 27 years. The table is not going anywhere except wherever we go. The table will remain in the family.

The Table!

We each have that place where we have our meals. It may be a simple table or a gorgeous oak table. It may be a table out under the oaks or a small card table in an efficiency. Whatever the table, I want to ask you, "Can you see Jesus sitting with you at the table?"

The Table!

Today we are going to take a look at a table and ask ourselves, "Can you see yourself sitting at this table?"

The Table was in an upper room that Jesus had arranged to have set for his final meal with His disciples. (Luke 22:7-13) Jesus was to be the host.

Let me stop here for a quick note about preparing and arranging a family or friends meal celebration. I have no idea how much it takes to plan a meal. I have never, from start to finish, planned out one of our family meals at the table. I am usually part of the clean up crew.

The meal starts with selecting what will be served. Then there is shopping for the food. There is also the delegating with family and friends about what they might bring to help with the meal. The host or hostess is the go to person for coordinating the meal around the table.

Jesus called his disciples to the table for a final celebration. No disciple was left out...even Judas, the one Jesus knew would eventually sell him out to the authorities, was welcomed to the table. (Matthew 26:20-25)

The meal was the traditional Passover meal. Jesus purposely scheduled his final meal during this traditional meal families celebrated each year. The Passover commemorated Israel's escape from Egypt when the blood of the lamb was painted on the doorposts of their homes. This saved the first born from being killed by the angel of death. This event foreshadowed the blood Jesus shed on the cross to save us from sin and death. As the spotless Lamb of God, his blood would be spilled the next day after this final meal with His disciples. His body and blood would be the ultimate sacrifice for all who believed and received. (Exodus 12:1-16)

During the meal Jesus took the common loaf of bread. He held it up and said grace...gave thanks to God His Heavenly Father. He broke it and passed it around to each person seated at the table. He shared with them that this would represent His body which would be given for them.

Then near the end of the meal, Jesus took one of the cups of wine. He held it up and again said grace and thanks to God the Father. He told the disciples this would represent His blood that would be shed for them and for many for the forgiveness of their sins.

At the table Jesus established a new covenant of love. Then He gave this command, "Do this often. When you do; do it remembering my love for you."

The Table!

A place that re-presents Christ's once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of those who come to the table.

The Table...a "**channel of grace**" as John Wesley referred to it. Grace...that undeserved gift of God's love through Jesus.

We call this meal different names, each with their own meaning: **The Lord's Supper** at the table. We remember the Passover meal connection and that Jesus is the Lamb of God whose blood takes away our sins. We are all sinners and yet His grace is available to all who come to the table. There is enough grace for all.

The Eucharist at the table. This simply means thanksgiving. We come to the table with thankful hearts for all Jesus did for us on the cross. His body and blood shed for us to give us victory over sin, guilt and death.

Holy Communion at the table. Communion...a time where we commune with family and friends and strangers at the table of God. A time where the family of believers come together to renew the oneness we have in Jesus.

The Table...no matter the name...is a place of grace! A place where we find hope, peace, forgiveness and a love that will never let us go. The table...**a place of grace to remember and renew.**

The Table!

A place of oneness.

The table of Christ is a place where many-ness becomes oneness. Reuben Job wrote these words about the equality of the table in his book, A Wesleyan Spiritual Reader.

"The place of absolute equality is at the Lord's Table. Here, at no other place, we realize our oneness with Christ and our oneness with each other. Each person stands on equal ground; none is higher or lower. We all come incomplete and broken, we all come seeking wholeness and healing. We all come needy and with empty hands. And soon or late we all realize that only God can mend us, heal us, redeem us, and feed us on the bread of life. This table says little and cares less about what we have done or are doing. Primarily this table testifies to what God has done and is doing.

There are many places in our lives where each one of us is excluded. The Table of the Lord is one place where all are included. At the table power flows equally to all; none is excluded, and none need go away empty. No matter how broken, hungry, or needy I am, there is always enough of the bread of life for me. No one is shortchanged or denied what is needed."

There is always a place for you at the table of grace. There is a chair for you. We all have fallen short of God's expectations and yet He still has a place for us at the table. (Romans 3:23)

The Apostle Paul affirmed this oneness where we are many with this assurance:

"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of one loaf." (I Corinthians 10:17)

The Table!

You are invited...do you see yourself at the table with all who are invited? No one has the right to point at anyone and ask, "What are they doing here? Who invited them?" Jesus invited them. His grace has a place at the table!

The Table!

This is a sacrament Jesus called us to do often. He didn't want it to be a once a year religious festival. The table is a part of our daily. Bread is a common daily. Jesus invites us to the table to remember and renew His love in us. The table is an outward and visible representation of Jesus' love for all who find themselves seated at the table.

The Table!

We all have a part in the preparation. We are not the host/hostess. However, we all have a part in preparing ourselves to come to the table. We are asked to bring something to the table.

The preparation is 3 fold:

Examine your motives... Test your heart... Come in holy awe...

(I Corinthians 11:28 Message bible)

Where are you in your life with Jesus?

What sins do you need to confess to Jesus?

Do you have any bitterness towards someone that you need to give up to Jesus and to go from here and settle in peace with that person?

Who do you need to forgive, just as Jesus forgives you?

Who is it you would not want to be seated next to at the table of grace? Save their place next to you.

Is the table just another part of the service or is this a heart renewing moment in your relationship with your Heavenly Father?

Does your heart say to you that you have no right to be here at the table?

Your heart is right, but the body and blood of Jesus' grace offers you a place at the table.

Prayerfully remember and renew your relationship with Jesus as you remember and renew his love in your life. Come in holy awe of the holy host...Jesus!

As you come to the table look around at those who are joining you and celebrate our oneness in our many-ness through our host, Jesus.

The Table!

It is amazing, gorgeous and beautiful.

It comes with a cost...you can't afford it...but the Good News is you don't have to pay for it...Jesus already has!

It is a table that you can see yourself sitting around with family and friends as long as you have life.

The Table!

It has been around for over 2,000 years. Many have found their place at this table of grace. The Table, Jesus promised would last forever.

Jesus promised to sit with us again at the table when He calls us all to Him in the Kingdom of God! (Mark 14:25) There will come that day when all who have gone ahead of us will be reunited with us as we gather around the Table.

The Table!

Jesus, our host, has prepared a place for us.

The Table!

In our many-ness and differences there is a oneness.

The Table!

Come to it with hearts prepared in a spirit of holy awe!

The Table!