

“Supper at Simon’s”

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A Series on Practicing God’s Presence in the Lord’s Supper

Luke 7:36-50

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See the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

Simon does not know what he’s getting, when he invites Jesus to dinner.

A leader in his community, Simon is spiritual, devoted to God’s ways, smart, wise, committed to the faithfulness of God’s People. He has heard of Jesus, who seems to be the real deal . . . though Simon has concerns.

He invites Jesus over, for good food, conversation, study and debate.¹ As was the practice, they and all the honoured guests recline on couches, heads toward the table and feet behind. Others crowd the edges. Houses being more open than we’re used to, people could come, watch and learn from these teachers.

Then she arrives! Sin-Full! Her transgressions might be things she’s done, boundaries she’s crossed, or something about her.² We don’t know. Of course, we all sin; we know that. “Sins” are offenses we commit. But Sin-full is offensive! She does not belong. It is Simon’s house, and Jesus is his guest.

But mindless of everyone glaring, she comes to Jesus. Tears! Sorrow? Shame? (But hers look like joy.) She unfurls her hair, in seductress style! (But she is using hers as a towel, with devotion.) Kisses! His feet! (But are her lips mumbling gratitude?) Bathing his feet? Oil? No, costly perfumed oil! (Such a price for her to pay, for him!)

In Simon’s house! With Jesus his guest!

Look at him! Jesus! He doesn’t get it! Does he get anything? A vile sinner has nothing more in common with a holy man, than does a she-wolf with a pure lamb.³ But he doesn’t kick her away, or pull himself back. No sneer of disdain! A smile of delight?

Scandal! In Simon’s house. Jesus is his guest!

¹ There is no reason to suspect anything suspicious in Simon’s motives. Klyne R. Snodgrass, [Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus](#) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 85.

² Most commentators have assumed she was a prostitute, but there are other possibilities. See the discussion in Snodgrass, 609 (note 98).

³ The Wisdom of Ben Sirach, a Jewish wisdom text written within a couple of centuries before Jesus, offers: “*What does a wolf have in common with a lamb? No more has a sinner with the devout.*” (13:17)

II

Push “pause” on that supper scandal, and come around our table. Jesus is everywhere God’s Kingdom is breaking in. He is here, at his Meal, in a particular (and peculiar) way. He hosts us here. He gives us his bread-body-broken, and wine-blood-poured. We share in him: his gifts, his life, Jesus himself.

Then we leave. We go to our tables, where we eat and drink through the week. Our tables where we welcome and host others: family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, strangers. We are what we eat, or Who. So we host others as Jesus hosts us. Hosting as Jesus does, we break through standards of status and shame, wealth and poverty, power and weakness, importance and insignificance. As Jesus’ People, the tables where we host become radical reorientations of the world. Our tables are places of intrusion, where his Kingdom breaks in through simple eating and drinking together.

But there is a third type of table.⁴ One is where Jesus hosts disciples. Two is where disciples host others. Then there are tables where we are guests of others. These are secular spaces, where we don’t begin with a grace nor end with an amen. Where the conversations are un-Godly. (Which doesn’t mean “disgusting,” just that God’s not discussed.) Teachers’ lounges, power lunches, coffee shops, break rooms, board rooms, bar rooms, maybe your dining room — these and more can be this third sort of table. Where we are not in charge, where we don’t call the shots or set the tone.

Is Jesus there?

Well, it seems he is quite comfortable being a guest. Jesus seemed to relish making himself vulnerable to the hospitality of others. *“Zacchaeus, when you get down from that tree, let’s go to your house.” “Levi, get up from your tax-collecting table, and follow me . . . to your dining table!”* Jesus loved to dine on the Pharisees’ dime, starting with Simon’s.⁵

He sends us to be guests, too.⁶

III

Jesus has a story for his host, scandalized Simon.

Two people. Both owe money, though one owes ten times what the other does. Neither can pay. Both have their debts forgiven? So I wonder: which of them loves the forgiver more? Simon?

“The one forgiven more . . . obviously,” Simon says.

⁴ David Fitch develops the typology of these 3 tables in his Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2016).

⁵ Zacchaeus: Luke 19.1-10; Levi: 5.27-32; Pharisees: 11.37-54, 14.1-24

⁶ Luke 10.1-12.

Okay, so let's evaluate the love that's being shown here in Simon's house. Simon has treated Jesus, his guest, just fine. *Just* fine.

"But do you see this woman?" (Simon sees scandal. Jesus sees differently.) Let's compare. Simon gave no water nor towel for Jesus feet. (Have you seen those roads? And they wear sandals.) But her! Tears and hair! Simon, no kiss on Jesus' cheek. But her! Lips on Jesus' feet. Simon, no oil for Jesus' hair. (Jesus had style!) But her! Precious perfume, poured out.

Who has shown more love to Jesus? Who knows they've been forgiven more? Sin-full? Simon? Who has been forgiven much, and who ten times as much? Or, do the amounts matter? Neither could pay! Who of these two knows that without forgiveness they're finished?

Which of them knows that Jesus is the One who forgives the unpayable debt we all owe?

Simon did not know who he was getting, when he had Jesus as a guest.

Grace! God's grace, in person.

God's grace for Simon. But he was too focused on Sin-full's deficits—which were real; she had been forgiven much—he was too focused on what was wrong with her, to see his own need, his own bankruptcy.

He had invited Jesus to dinner, not knowing he was getting Grace. Then Sin-full came in, but Simon did not see what Jesus saw. Simon saw Scandal, while Grace saw Celebration.

IV

In your minds, walk through town.⁷

- Ashanti Café, a couple at a table talking over coffee and pastry.
- If it's Saturday morning, a dad and his kids are having breakfast on one of the sidewalk tables at Box Social.
- If it's Thursday evening, friends are playing a board game on a table at Twice Loved Books.
- But if it's Tuesday, the tables have beer and nachos at Shepherd's Pub; it's Trivia Nite!
- Maybe some folks are using the box the large pizza came in from New Orleans, and sit on the benches in our Serenity Garden.
- Of course, all over town, people are eating at tables in homes.

Is Jesus a guest at those many tables? Maybe he is, but people don't realize it yet.

We hunger for each other's presence. We all hunger for God's presence.

⁷ David Fitch tells having this sort of experience; see p. 63.

Let me try this: What if all those table-times, eating and drinking in those secular spaces, are already instances of Jesus' Supper . . . meals of Communion already happening . . . just waiting to be revealed?

What if, when we are at those tables, Jesus is sending us? To be guests there. To attend to him there? We who are living into Jesus' presence around this Table here — learning his story, recognizing his rhythms, hearing his heart — we now go to those other tables. Not to take over. Not to claim them. As guests. Sitting. Being present. Humbly. Vulnerably. Listening. Waiting.⁸

Who knows? Sin-Full might show up. Or, Awk-Ward. Or, Set-Aside. Or, Heart-Broken. Or, Bit-ter. Or, Si-mon. Maybe she's invited, a guest like you. Maybe he intrudes, but still belongs because Jesus is there.

Maybe, instead of a Scandal . . . it will turn into a Celebration of Grace.

Because you are there.

The good news of Jesus the Messiah. Thanks be to God.

⁸ Fitch, 64.