

LENTEN DEVOTION – WEEK 5

APRIL 7-13, 2019

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Sunday | LUKE 5:27-32

I love Levi's reaction to Jesus. Levi, that sinful tax collector, leaves everything and then throws a party in Jesus' honor. He invites all his tax collector friends and colleagues. He cannot contain his joy at being found and called by Jesus. He wants to let others in on this great happening. Jesus doesn't hesitate to attend the banquet, eat with the disreputable and join with those others seek to avoid. The religious righteous want nothing to do with this scene. They grumble, question Jesus' judgment and ask why he would sink so low as to eat with the likes of Levi and his kind. Jesus who feeds thousands and eats with multitudes, replies unequivocally, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Jesus is exactly where he needs and wants to be: feeding the hungry in body and spirit, eating with those in need of transformation, healing the sick, bringing home the lost, calling sinners to repentance as he mingles among the guests at Levi's dinner party.

Where do we see ourselves in this scene? As the righteous unwilling to be associated with Levi and his ilk or as a sinner in need of Jesus' salvation? Are we hungry for the bread of life, eager to be fed by and eat with Jesus or self-satisfied and certain of our own ability to take care of ourselves without need of Jesus' intervention?

This week we will sit at table with Jesus. We will join the crowds on the grass and be fed by bread blessed and broken. We will be invited to help feed others, passing the baskets and collecting the leftovers when all have eaten and are full. We will invite Jesus into our homes, just as they are, and listen to his words, ask him to supply our every need and be fed by the one who is the bread of life that never fails to nourish and sustain us.

Lord, you eat with all those who invite you to dinner. You do not hesitate to rub elbows with those society deems unworthy. You call sinners to repentance and never fail to feed us on the bread of life that offers forgiveness, mercy and redemption. We relish your presence, your goodness, your grace. Amen.



Monday | LUKE 6:1-5

Jesus makes sure his disciples are fed, even if it means doing what some see as unlawful on the Sabbath: picking grain. Jesus insists that people come before rules, even important religious rules. Today, consciously try to put people first. Make note of how this impacts your words, choices and actions.

Jesus, you promise to care for your followers, making sure they are fed as they go about your work. You put people before rules, mercy before sacrifice. Show us how our religious rules impede your will. Do not let our righteousness become a stumbling block for your goodness. Amen.

Tuesday | LUKE 7:36-39

Giving and receiving radical hospitality entails more than food. Just because we invite Jesus to dinner does not mean we welcome him into our hearts. The Pharisee gives Jesus food, the sinful woman tends to Jesus with her whole self. What are you are holding back from Jesus. Why?

Lord God, you hold nothing back from us, offering your body and blood, the bread and the cup, your life in exchange for us. Yet, we resist giving you more than just the bare minimum. We invite you to dinner, but fail to welcome you fully into our homes. We offer you a meal, when you ask us to give our lives. Take whatever we offer, bless and use it until our faith compels us to hold nothing back from you. Amen.



Jesus feeds



Wednesday | LUKE 9:10-17

The disciples want to send the crowd away. Jesus says instead, “You give them something to eat.” What do we have to offer Jesus that he can bless, break and distribute to feed the needy crowd? Make a list of what you can offer to Jesus so that he can feed others.

Too often, God, we forget that everything we have comes from you. We hoard that which you tell us to share. We send away those whom you tell us to tend. We fail to understand the extent of your power to provide. Thank you for enlisting us in your service of compassion, even if at first we resist. Thank you for allowing us to participate in your miracles of abundance, despite our doubts. Amen.

Thursday | LUKE 11:37-44

What truly matters? That’s the question at the heart of this dinnertime exchange with the Pharisees. Is it more important to look good or be good? Critical to appear righteous or live with integrity? When you examine your life, what does it tell you about what matters most to you? Do your priorities match those of Jesus?

Gracious God, we rejoice in your goodness, your never-failing kindness, your consistent character of mercy and grace. We pray that our values and priorities match not just our words but your Word. We seek not so much to appear righteous to others, but to act in ways that reveal a purity of heart that desires only your will. Amen.

Friday | LUKE 14:15-24

Jesus feeds whoever is willing to come to his banquet. His guest list includes those who respond to his expansive invitation. Do we respond to Jesus’ invitation to come and be fed, or do we make excuses and neglect his call? Consider the excuses you make that prevent you from being with Jesus.

We are so full, Lord. Our calendars are full. Our days are full. Our heads are full. Our homes are full. We are stuffed to overflowing with that which does not really satisfy. Hence, we keep trying to find more and more and more. We make excuses to avoid answering your invitation to empty ourselves in order to be filled by you. Today, we simply say “yes” and sit at table with you. Amen.

Saturday | LUKE 15:1-7

We end the week where we began: with the Pharisees complaining about Jesus’ propensity to eat with sinners. As you have considered being fed by Jesus and eating with him, has your sense of who is around the table with you expanded? Who is still missing and needs to be invited? Who is still lost and needs to be sought out and found?

Lord Jesus, you notice when we are missing from around your table. You miss us. You leave the other 99 in order to come find us. We are awed by your love for us. We rest in your care, rejoice in your attention and abide in your kindness. We give thanks that you have found us and will never abandon us. Amen.