

Message Extras

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

Message Extras accompany the [weekly message](#).

My mom tells the story of how I used to pray before dinners when I was three years old. I would fold my hands, bow my head, scrunch my eyes, and thank God for our dinner and for the people seated at the table, stealthily opening one eye to glance up and see who I was thanking God for that day. My mom, dad, and siblings would typically get a mention, but as often as not, there was someone at the table whose name I didn't know. Apparently unfamiliar guests were common enough that my prayers often included, "thank you for *her*" or "thank you for *that red hair lady*" or "thank you for *that guy by my dad*." My mom had, and still has, the gift of hospitality. When my husband, children, and I travel to visit my parents, it is not uncommon to find ourselves sharing space with someone that they have welcomed into their home, for a meal, an evening, or even to live with them for a while.

In the message this week, as we continue to strive for *Highly Questionable* lives, we learned about hospitality through Jesus' example. In Luke 19, Jesus shares a meal with a tax collector named Zacchaeus. This was not a man who was popular with his peers. Not someone who would have had regular dinner invitations from the neighbors. Yet Jesus takes notice of Zacchaeus and goes to his home to spend time with him.

The people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled. (Luke 19:7)

Jesus could have chosen to visit the home of a prominent, respectable, upstanding citizen. He could have chosen to give in to the pressure of the people scrutinizing his every move. Instead, he made his mission personal. He chose to invest his time with Zacchaeus, whose life was thus forever changed.

Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." (Luke 19: 9-10)

In addition to Jesus' example, we see the model of the early church and church leaders using mealtime for fellowship and building relationships.

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer... They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— (Acts 2:42, 46)

In Jewish culture, table fellowship was an essential part of life together. An invitation to one's table meant inclusion, and allowed for trust and intimacy. We heard from our speaker that "Inclusion of sinners in the community of salvation at the table was the most meaningful and redeeming message of the love of God." Following the examples of Jesus and the early church, 1 Peter 4 tells us how we can use the gifts God has given each of us to his glory:

...continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. (1 Peter 4:8-10)

If we were to look at the connectedness of people in our society today based on the number of friends on their social media accounts, we would assume people are more connected than ever. But according to the Survey Center on American Life, more than 60% of Americans report having three or fewer close friends, and fewer than 40% of these individuals report that they are satisfied with their friendships. We crave connection. Perhaps an ideal setting for the connection our hearts desire is the dinner table. Through small acts of hospitality, we can work to "Love people into the kingdom one meal at a time." (Jon Mark Comer; Bridgetown Church, Portland, OR)

Questions for Reflection:

1. Our speaker shared that it has been said that Jesus got himself killed because of the way he ate. What does this mean? Do you agree?
2. Who might be a Zacchaeus in your life? Who is someone that others might see as undesirable, or even appalling, to be invited to your home? Would the judgment of others stop you from extending an invitation? Why or why not?

3. Why is sharing a meal important? How can lives be changed through this everyday function?
4. Which of the examples of hospitality shared in the sermon most spoke to you?
5. At the end of the sermon, we were challenged to invite a neighbor, co-worker, or someone we don't normally spend time with to share a meal. Will you?

