



Theme: B.L.E.S.S.- Loving Others to Change the World **“The Blessing of Eating”**

Weekly Memory Verse:

11 Give us today the food we need... – Matthew 6:11

*For this series of sermons, we invite you to read the book, **B.L.E.S.S. – 5 Everyday Practices to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World** by Dave and Jon Ferguson. We encourage you to pick up a copy, or download one, and **read chapter 5 this week**. The readings below will complement this chapter, focusing on the moments when Jesus invited others to his table.*

Monday, October 17 – Read Exodus 12:39-42 and Luke 22:14-19. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Give us the food we need...” in Matthew 6:11, he connected to memories of God caring for his people around a meal. Unleavened Passover bread reminded Hebrews of God rescuing them from Egypt in Exodus 12:1-18. Bread and food also defined their spiritual identity: “Only unleavened bread was eaten during the yearly Passover in Exodus 12:8, a reminder to Israel that even when settled in Canaan they remained a pilgrim people. With the cross just ahead, Jesus expanded the Passover meal’s meaning for his disciples. Now the bread and cup would recall his even greater act, dying and rising again to set all people free.

🕯️ God acted at Passover, and the annual celebration also shaped his people’s identity in the present. Jesus made Passover the Lord’s Supper, not just to recall the cross, but also to point forward. Do you trust that Jesus’ promises point to a future you can count on? How can the full meaning of the Lord’s Supper fortify your trust and hope? What does it mean to you that EVERYONE is invited to this meal?

🕯️ None of the gospels quoted Jesus, facing the cross, as saying, “I’ll eat this with you again IF we ever get to God’s Kingdom.” For him, there was no “maybe.” Even as the darkness closed in, he was sure that in the end, love and goodness would defeat hatred and evil, and God’s kingdom would become reality. When life’s darkness seems to be closing in on you, how can Jesus’ “until” remind you that the darkness never has the last word?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you delivered your people from slavery in Egypt. You defeated hatred and death. Keep me anchored to your power to lift my life out of the shadows and into your eternal light and life. Give me strength to share a meal with others, remembering that you have invited us to give thanks at every meal for the life you give us. Amen.*

(Meditation Moments –October 15-16, 2022 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

Tuesday, October 18 – Read Mark 6:35-37. This situation must have felt scary. It was late in the day, with no food trucks or drive-ins nearby, and a large crowd who had gathered to hear Jesus teach was hungry. Jesus’ disciples, using human common sense, said, “Send them away.” Mark said Jesus’ reply, amazing and even alarming, was “You give them something to eat.” But when they gathered what they had, which was clearly not enough, Jesus’ power turned their little into lots of food to share with the hungry people.

☛ Summit’s sanctuary seats 200 or more at capacity. Imagine facing nearly 70 times that many hungry people (noting that only the men were counted in the 5000 number) when Jesus said, “You give them something to eat”! Jesus gave the disciples the privilege of serving as a channel through which his power could feed the crowd. How is God calling you to be channel through which Jesus’ power can work to feed the hearts and lives of others over a meal?

☛ Note the contrast between how Jesus responded to the crowd and how the disciples did. “You give them something to eat” seemed to alarm the disciples. When you see people hurting, are you more inclined to respond like the disciples or like Jesus? What concerns or fears do you have, if any, about what might happen if you more often responded to suffering with active compassion?

Prayer: *Loving Jesus, sometimes I get stuck wondering just “how” you produced all that food. Remind me that what mattered most was that you did it—and that your power is still waiting for the chance to work through me. Amen.*

Wednesday, October 19 – Read Luke 14:1-35. The watching Pharisees surely weren’t shocked when Jesus again ignored their Sabbath healing rules. But Jesus shocked them in a different way. They loved to talk about the end time feast for God’s people in verse 15. But in Jesus’ feast story, the chosen said “no,” and God called street people instead! Making him your Lord, Jesus said, is costly. Count the cost before you set out on the Journey.

☛ The picture of a divine feast for God’s people came from Isaiah 25:6-10. Isaiah said this banquet would be for “all peoples,” “all nations,” “the whole earth”—but in Jesus’ day, the religious leaders wanted to limit it just to their own group of Israelites. What does Jesus’ picture of inviting people from “the city’s streets, the busy ones and the side streets,” “the highways and back alleys,” tell you about the wideness of God’s mercy, and about the church Jesus was creating?

☛ Jesus at times used extreme words to focus his hearers on priorities. “Hate” in verse 26 didn’t always mean active malice; it could be a Middle Eastern way to describe making something less central to your life. It can be a challenging spiritual exercise to ask in prayer, “Lord, are there any things, people or dreams I love more than you?” If you do this, make sure you’re willing to shift priorities to honor any insights you get.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, of course I want to be one of the guests at your great end-time feast. Give me a heart that will continue to rejoice in being there even if some of the other guests might initially make me uncomfortable. Amen.*

Thursday, October 20 – Read Luke 15:1-32. “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them,” was a familiar charge. With sinners and tax collectors gathering around to listen to him, Jesus could hardly deny it—and he didn’t want to. He embraced the “charge” with three vivid stories in which finding a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost boy set off big celebrations. To the last story, he pointedly added an older son who didn’t want to welcome the lost boy home.

☛ The Pharisees labeled people “good” or “bad,” and saw “bad people” as unlikely to change. Jesus saw people much more as “lost,” like the sheep, coin, or boy, and what’s lost can be found. When have you lost your way spiritually and needed finding? Jesus pictured God rejoicing each time a heart responds to God’s love. Whose model has most helped you see God as more eager to find a lost person than to punish a bad person?

☛ Jesus left the older son’s story open-ended. The last we hear is the father beseeching his resentful older boy: “We had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.” We know most of the “older brothers” in Jesus’ day stalked away into the night rather than welcome prodigals’ home. If you’ve been at the party of faith for a while, how do you respond to the Father’s appeal to welcome home the lost who are found? What would it take to shift our hearts to enjoy a meal together with anyone and everyone?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, it’s true—you always had friends in low places. But you were always seeking to draw them to higher ground. Give me the heart and the wisdom to live out both parts of your example. Amen.*

Friday, October 21 – Read Matthew 9:9-13. Tax collectors like Matthew worked with Israel’s Roman occupiers, collecting taxes (usually excessive) from their fellow citizens. Jesus clearly, even shockingly, welcomed and loved people like that, individuals the “righteous” people of his day called “sinners.” For another example of his behavior, see Luke 7:36-50. Jesus refused to neatly separate the human family into “good” and “bad” members—he aimed to extend love to all.

☛ Matthew was an outcast from respectable society. So, imagine the type of friends he had, who came to his house to eat with Jesus! The Message version of the Bible paraphrased “tax collectors and sinners” with vivid precision as, “crooks and riffraff.” Is there anyone in your neighborhood who might be seen as “tax collectors and sinners” in 2022? If so, how do you believe Jesus would treat, and have you treat, such people?

☛ When Jesus said, “I didn’t come to call righteous people,” who were the people he had in mind? Was he saying he actually considered those people “righteous,” or was he saying ironically that THEY thought they were “righteous”? Is anyone, including you, so righteous that you do not need Jesus’ loving, merciful acceptance?

Prayer: *Loving Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. Help me to see others, especially my neighbors, through your eyes, which lit with love and compassion at the sight of a “sinner.” Amen.*

Saturday, October 22 – Read Luke 7:36-50. Luke said the uninvited woman at Simon the Pharisee’s home was, “a sinner.” Women in that day had fewer options. They couldn’t, for example, embezzle, or be tax collectors, so “sinner” almost always meant a prostitute. The Pharisee Simon saw only a fallen woman at his dinner table to which he had invited Jesus. Jesus said for everyone at dinner to here that he’d forgiven her “many sins.” In Jesus’ eyes, Simon, who seemed to feel no need for forgiveness, was in much greater spiritual danger than the woman grateful for forgiveness.

☛ In verse 44, Jesus asked Simon a telling question: “Do you see this woman?” Simon only saw brokenness, but Jesus saw the woman and her lavish display of humility, nurture, generosity, and love. He saw a beloved child of God, cause for a party in heaven as read about the prodigal child in Luke 15. How did Jesus’ pointed contrast in verses 41-47 show the spiritual hollowness of Simon’s pious front, fed in part by his patriarchal assumptions of male superiority?



Jesus was famous (or, in some circles, infamous) for forgiving. He gave this woman the priceless gift of freedom from guilt, which also gave her freedom from feelings of shame before others. If not, she would not have been able to be so socially bold in expressing her gratitude and love to Jesus. Have you ever felt “ashamed to show your face” for any reason? How can opening your life to God’s love and forgiveness set you free to live more fully and invite others to the table to eat?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, Simon didn’t see the woman, just the “sinner.” But you saw her, and you valued and forgave her. Heal my inner sight from any self-righteous blindness that hides any of your beloved daughters or sons from my sight. Amen.*