

Getting to Know Jesus, the Christ

Nov 2, 2014 – Communion

Jesus Calls Us

Ps 43 & Luke 22:14-16

(563, 548, 530, 556)

When I was growing up in Niagara Falls,
we neighbourhood kids played a game called 'Round Round Hole in the Ice Box.'

It was basically a version of 'hide and seek.'

The person who was seeking would lean up against the hydro pole
in front of our house at 552 Fifth Ave,
covering his or her eyes with their forearm.

One of the hiders would draw a hole on their back
with a finger, saying the words.

Then the seeker would count to 10 and start looking.

You could hide anywhere around the five houses
on either side of the pole.

You were safe if you got back and touched the pole
before the seeker touched you.

We'd usually play the game in the late afternoon,
into the early evening.

The game ended with the first parental call to dinner.

I remember a wide variety of calls –
whistles, bells, voices of various timbers and tones.

Those timbers and tones change dramatically
if we ignored them too long.

In those days, the first call was usually from our mothers.

If we heard our fathers' voices,
that meant an immediate rush home.

What recalled those childhood memories this week
was this idea of being called to dinner,
called to the brightness and warmth

of a loving kitchen where food was prepared and served
to nourish us to flourish as human beings, as God's beloved children.

It wasn't just the food, though that was crucial for a growing boy.

It was the family, the community, the acceptance, the love.

It wasn't perfect, but it was well-intended and worked pretty well in the end.

The connection with our text this morning
is the idea of being called to dinner.
This time the voice is that of Jesus.
He has called his closest disciples,
those who have been with him throughout most of his public ministry,
to come together and eat the Passover meal.
This was not just any meal.
This was a special ritual meal that was central to their Jewish devotion.
It's closest parallels in our experience are probably Christmas or Easter dinners.

For Jews, the Passover meal reminded them,
helped live afresh,
the amazing grace of God their ancestors had experienced in the Exodus.
It was a liberation from slavery – from degradation, dismissal, despair, and defeat.
It was a liberation to significance – to dignity, to purpose, to redemption, to flourishing.
It was a renewal of God's call to be blessings to the world
in the ways God had called them to in the Law –
in Jesus' summary, "Love God, love others, and love yourselves."

This particular Passover was tense, as Jesus words suggest.
They were in Jerusalem and the powers that be were out to get them.
Jesus was clear where it would all end up – on a cross on Golgotha.
The disciples were frightened – to the point to abandonment and betrayal.
But Jesus still 'eagerly' wanted to invite them to this meal
and share it with them.

There is something about eating that bonds a community together.
Members of the community select, prepare, and serve the food.
Members of the community serve each other, first and seconds and maybe even thirds.
It's hard not to converse with each other as you eat together.
Eating together, at all levels of our beings, nourishes us to flourish.

I know for me, in the rush, rush ways I too often get caught up in,
this quality of eating together happens too seldom.
But I should make sure it happens more frequently.
Because it is so refreshing, so nourishing
to my basic dignity and worth as a human friend of God.

There is one place I know it will happen,
week after week,
month after month,
and that's here at Brentwood,
with a community that has become my family in the faith.

I think the quality of that community is enriched immensely
as a result of us having lunch together, not just coffee, after church.

To all of you who make that possible –
those who bring food, those who prepare the table,
those who can stay for lunch, those who clean up –
many, many thanks for creating this space for grace to happen.

The table we gather at this morning in worship – the Lord's Table –
is more formal and has richer religious meaning.

It is the Christian Passover.
It recalls the Christian Exodus,
the events between Christmas and Easter
when Jesus saved us from our slavery to sin,
when Jesus reconciled us to God as beloved children and friends,
when Jesus reassured us of being our God so we could be blessings.

This is what Jesus calls us to – salvation, reconciliation, and reassurance.

This is the spiritual food we feast upon this morning.
By the work of the Holy Spirit,
the simple elements of bread and grape juice
become for us the body and the blood of our Lord and Saviour,
powerful symbols of the suffering and sacrifice
that inaugurated the final realization of the kingdom of God.
It is in that kingdom or commonwealth
that we eat this meal again with Jesus this morning.

Our text suggests that the kingdom came with Jesus.
In his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, the world was saved.

And that's what Jesus calls us to –
nourishment for life in that kingdom or commonwealth,
nourishment for lives of love, joy, and peace,
lives of patience, kindness, and generosity,
lives of faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

There are many ways God addresses us with this call,
too many to explore this morning.
But I would suggest that the loudest, the most insistent, the most joyful
is the call to this table
where, in community, God in Christ through the Holy Spirit,
nourishes us to flourish in his grace and service.

Come, let us gather at the table and be richly nourished.