

Discipleship Moment

Text: John 6:35-58

Tables are impressive things. Have you ever thought about how much wood it takes to build a typical table (assuming the table is real hardwood)? Rough math puts a typical 4-foot by 12-foot table at 91 feet of timber. 91 feet of wood! Oftentimes, tables are the most expensive piece of furniture in our house.

When Sara and I were getting ready to move to Dixon from Madison, we had, at the time, a really nice table. But this table was big, bulky, and heavy. It had a leaf in it to extend it, but that just added to the weight. On top of that, the chairs were bulky and hard to manage. So, we decided to sell it. We were going to buy a new one that was lighter and easier to move around; but we refused to have our table be any smaller. We were able to find a table at Ikea that actually allows us to fit more people at our table than our previous one. Our goal is to use our table for our neighbors and friends often. So many great things happen at the table: conversations, food, prayers, tears, laughter.

The early Christians had a peculiar practice: they gathered around tables in their homes often (according to Acts 2:42, everyday! Although I doubt this practice sustained everyday) and had meals. We're told by some of the earliest Christian documents that they would take bread and say the words of institution, break it, and pass the piece of bread around. They would then eat their meal. After dinner, they would take a cup of wine and give thanks, say the words of institution, and pass the cup around and everyone would take a drink. This is one of the earliest practices of Communion recorded. With this, as we read the New Testament, we get the sense that the first Christians practiced Communion around a literal dinner table. As the Church grew, there seems to have been a necessary change in how we organized our worship, because you can't fit 100 or 200 people into a home, so we met in catacombs and built buildings for us to gather in. But the table stayed the same. No matter how big or small the church building was, there was always a table.

Our worship service, what we call the Divine Service, is, in essence, a party. We are invited by God to gather together, he invites us in, we confess our sins, sing songs (worshiping him), hear from one of the family leaders, pray, and then we have a meal. It is God's house, God's table (we call it an Altar, now), God's bread and wine, and God's grace. He invites us to the party as the generous host, but we oftentimes behave like spoiled kids at our own birthday party when we didn't get the present we wanted. We cry and demand to our parent "give us what we want," we scream that we hate our parent, and we scream about how our parent doesn't care about us.

God has been so gracious to us: to open up his table to us miserable, horrible sinners—fakes and hypocrites, addicts and weak-minded fools. We are all welcome to his table, and his table is big enough to fit everyone.

On Sunday we heard that God has come to us in Jesus Christ. And he continues to invite us to his table to receive Jesus each week in Communion. By eating the bread and drinking the wine, we eat the flesh of Jesus and drink his blood; we receive the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and life through these two things (bread and wine). We don't understand it, but we trust Jesus, and Jesus said so. He said we abide in him and he abides in us by eating and drinking these things.

God has invited us to eat a meal with him. He has invited us to his party. Let us receive his grace with gladness!

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once.

1. What is your favorite memory that happened at a table? Was it a conversation? An announcement of news? Or something else?
2. Why are tables so important in our lives? Why is it important to eat meals with each other?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-26, Paul quotes what we call "the words of institution." Where did he say he got these from? Why would Jesus give the words of institution to Paul to pass down to the churches? What are the implications?
4. Paul makes a connection between receiving Jesus through the bread and the wine and caring for one another: what do you think is the connection here? Why is there a connection?
5. Read John 6:35-58 every day you are able this week. Let Jesus' confusing, provocative teaching style sink into you. Pray in response to this passage as often as you read it.