

Dinner with Jesus: Satisfied in God's Presence
Scripture reading: Matthew 14:13-21 CEB

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Before we begin: Health Update

Hello NCF family and friends! My name is Melissa Logsdon and I serve as Associate Pastor. Before I go into the teaching I wanted to share a brief health update:

Recently, I went for a check in appointment with my neuromuscular specialist down at Wash U/ Barnes. The good news/bad news:

Overall the appointment went well: no new diagnoses, only a recommendation for some changes to reduce my infusion dosing, since I'm doing so well. (Hopefully, it will give me some time back on my calendar, but I'm a bit wary because I don't want to regress). One difficult update is that the ongoing consistent scattered neuropathy on my left side is part of this disease and not necessarily going to get better.

AND YET...we walked out of that appointment (my husband Steve reminding me that 2 years ago he was wheeling me out) and we went to St. Louis Union Station to do the ropes course—suspended 3 stories up! I was able to do the course (think Indiana Jones bridges and American Ninja Warrior type challenges!) it was fun, and a bit terrifying...but the cool thing is my body was able to do it! To which I celebrate, and THANK GOD!

I share this with hope and thankfulness to all those who pray for me. Thank you.

I. Intro

A. Dinner Guest Question?

Dinner with Jesus: Satisfied in God's Presence

I want to start with a perhaps well known icebreaker question: If you could invite anyone to a dinner party with you, who would you invite? (You don't need to know them, they can be famous, they can be long dead...) Most of us would pick at least some people that fit in one or more of those categories, wouldn't we?

Will you join me in some imaginative contemplation? I have a few questions for us to consider:

- a. If God was the one hosting the dinner party, who do you think God would invite to the party?
- b. If Jesus was the one hosting the dinner party, who do you think Jesus would invite to the party?
- c. Did your list of people differ? Did you include yourself on either or both of the guest lists? Why or why not?

B. Continuity of Teaching

***I Hope by the end of this teaching today that we will all easily put ourselves on the invite list—not because it is the “Right” answer, but because it deeply resonates with our souls. To be included. AND if you already do, perhaps this time will give you space to consider the people that God, that Jesus includes on their guest lists and to consider if there are any on that list that you wouldn't invite, and if that contemplation changes that for you in some way.

Two weeks ago:

Renee: God chooses us not because of our goodness, but because of God's faithful love and forgiveness—across generations: This idea that God is with us now and was with those that went before us, and is with those that come after us.

Last week:

Ron: encourages us to be present with God more than/so that we can live for God (change of perspective, from doing for, to abiding with)

Today/this week:

That we are invited to be satisfied in God's presence/ abiding with God.

Psalm 23: table prepared (Ron mentioned this psalm last week)"he prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies"

(Image of the grapes from the cool brook under the shade trees in the forest in Lebanon; with us)

"As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness." NRSVue. Psalm 17:15

II. Dinner with God

A. Youtube show the promised land

(free on Youtube) series "The Promised Land"

Honestly, I really was skeptical, not usually interested in bible based movies/series. However my friend said it was funny and I do love comedy. However, I was a bit skeptical. I gave it a shot though and found the show to be biblically literate AND so funny. I love "mockumentary" style shows though!

Witty story of Moses and the Hebrew people in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.

I want to share one of the surprising stories that I had to fact check:

Story of Hebrew people with God:

The leaders joined Moses and Aaron in meeting God on the mountain and ate in God's presence! What?! How did I miss this? (I was left sitting with the reality that they still go down the mountain and within about a month of that experience make and worship the golden calf instead).

B. Dinner with God

Here's the account:

9Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel went up, 10and they saw Israel's God. Under God's feet there was what looked like a floor of lapis-lazuli tiles, dazzlingly pure like the sky. 11God didn't harm the Israelite leaders, though they looked at God, and they ate and drank.

Exodus 24:9-11 CEB

9Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel climbed up the mountain.
10There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a surface of brilliant blue lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. 11And though these nobles of Israel gazed upon God, he did not destroy them. In fact, **they ate a covenant meal, eating and drinking in his presence!**
NLT

C. Who are they with and significance?

Location:

“Something like a glass sea, like crystal, was in front of the throne.” Revelation 4:6 CEB

Scholars seem to agree: Divinely provided covenant meal

A covenant meal in the biblical context is a ceremonial meal that signifies the establishment or renewal of a covenant between God and His people or between individuals. This meal **serves as a tangible expression of the covenant relationship, symbolizing fellowship, commitment, and mutual obligations.** Covenant meals are deeply rooted in the ancient Near Eastern culture and are prominently featured in the biblical narrative.
(Bible Hub)

The Sinai Covenant: In [Exodus 24:9-11](#), after the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascend the mountain and behold God. They eat and drink in His presence, **signifying the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel. This meal underscores the communal aspect of the covenant and the peace established between God and His people.**

Covenant meals in the Bible are rich with theological significance. They represent God's initiative in establishing a relationship with His people, **His provision and sustenance, and the communal aspect of faith.** These meals are not merely ritualistic but are **deeply relational**, inviting participants into a deeper understanding of God's promises and their responsibilities within the covenant.

III. Dinner with Jesus

A. Scripture today

Today's lectionary passage from Matthew, tells the event of Jesus feeding 5000 people at the end of a long day, out in an isolated place with little to no provisions to be found.

[13When Jesus heard about John, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. When the crowds learned this, they followed him on foot from the cities. 14When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion for them and healed those who were sick. 15That evening his disciples came and said to him, “This is an isolated place and it’s getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

16But Jesus said to them, "There's no need to send them away. You give them something to eat."

17They replied, "We have nothing here except five loaves of bread and two fish."

18He said, "Bring them here to me." 19He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves of bread and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them and broke the loaves apart and gave them to his disciples. Then the disciples gave them to the crowds.

20Everyone ate until they were full, and they filled twelve baskets with the leftovers. 21About five thousand men plus women and children had eaten.]

B. What we normally focus on: the miracle?

18He said, "Bring them here to me.

The miracle of a few fish and some bread multiplying to be more than enough...the miracle of multiplied provision.

So much so that it is recorded:

"They all ate their fill"

(Mark 6 and matthew 14 account in the message)

What I think is interesting is how Jesus did this. He didn't do a soup kitchen line. Jesus had the people sit down on the grass. (Rest, picnic, ps. 23 comes to mind)

I wonder: did Jesus sit down and enjoy the meal with them? Other accounts of Jesus dining with people showed Jesus reclining and taking time to be with people; present with them.

C. What we are invited to see, the WHO, and what is the significance?

Did any of them realize the significance of this moment? Of Jesus eating with them? Of the covenant meal? Communal nature. Relational. Curious if the disciples later reflected on that? There's no commentary on that in the gospels. Or I wonder if they were all just so happy to not be hungry, to have full bellies and slept better that night? And not to judge them...how often do we respond similarly? Thank God for coming through on x,y, or z. We declare "Thank you, Jesus!" but how do we turn from the provision, to the person? To abide WITH Jesus in that moment...with God's presence and see that is the REAL significance of this moment.

IV. Psalm 23

A. Dinner in presence of enemies, invite for us all...we recite it and claim it...in our worst moments

The account of the feeding of the 5000 calls to mind psalm 23.

Psalm 23:5 "you prepare a table before me"

Satisfied on food. But was God at the table? Is it more than food? Where is the peace coming from?

Earlier in psalm we read:

Psalms 17:15 CEB

15But me? I will see your face in righteousness;
when I awake, I will be filled full by seeing your image."
Satisfaction in God's presence (from God's presence)

Msg version of Psalm 17:15

"And me? I plan on looking you full in the face..."
Image of face to face with God. Satisfaction in God's presence on earth

"As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied,
beholding your likeness." NRSVue. Psalm 17:15

(Isaiah 55:1-5) seeking God/God's word for fullness (not earthly food)

B. What could be the significance of this?

Could we really find the same level of satisfaction in God's presence as we would in God's provision? IF we believe this, how does that change our perspective in our daily circumstances? Our current difficulties, our current abundance?

C. Story of my week focus, and being present

Journal notes/ how I got here. Aside from the assigned scripture and the tv show, I also have had a few words from God. Reminders:
Abide; Be Present

A few moments to practice these words:

Last week: In my daily truths time, I sensed God reminding me that my strength doesn't come from what I do, but from just being present, just being love in my world.

To which, I felt upset when later that day I ended up with my day-long headache becoming a migraine and me missing LT! :(I had this argument with God: I thought what I offer isn't from doing, but from being...and I was going to be present and now I can't be. To which Renee reminded me that I had helped prepare. And then Steve reminded me that I was present, at home with him. How many of you can relate? Feeling a sense of defeat/frustration when you can't do as you want? And yet, if we listen, God calls us into abiding. With others, with ourselves, with God. To be present. Even when the room feels empty and quiet. To know that that is enough, more than enough. How do we change those quiet, perhaps lonely moments, from a pity party, into a feast? Because isn't that what God invites us to? (Ps 23)

Last Friday, I got such a feast in God's presence: I was able to spend some extra time driving, sitting at a coffee shop having a cappuccino and a croissant, traveling to see a good friend for the day, had extra time and went kayaking on Kickapoo Lake. God's presence in each of those spaces, filling me, satisfying my soul. Feasting on God's goodness.

The next day, my in-laws were staying with us. I laid aside my plans and was present with my mother in law. We enjoyed early morning coffee and cinnamon rolls (which I picked up on my road trip) . We made breakfast together, and then I invited her to tag along when I went to the gym. When we got done, it was about noon, and I was ready for some rest (and maybe a bit of time alone to recharge). However, on our way home, my sister in law (out of town) called asking if we could stop at the hospital to check on a young man that used to be in their youth program years ago. His mom had just died suddenly and this young man was at the hospital. So we went over to be present. My mother in law went inside to find the young man. Many of his relatives were outside crying. I introduced myself to them and provided what comforting presence I could in the moment. The uncle seemed very appreciative. I was just consoling and present in that very painful grief-full moment. My mother in law was able to bring some words of comfort to the young man and a hug. We left knowing grateful we were willing and able to provide some comforting presence in that moment.

I share these stories, for 2 reasons:

- 1: Last Saturday was not at all how I had planned. And yet, there was more beauty, purpose, and connection than what I had originally planned for my day.
- 2: I wonder if I would have been as quick to engage in these connecting and ministering moments if I hadn't been feasting in God's presence the day before?

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(BTW: When I got home, I did take a much needed nap!)

As we read scriptures: there are so many accounts

Jesus tries to get away to be with God

The crowds come and Jesus is present with them and ministers

And then the very next time he gets a chance, we see Jesus getting away to be with God...and getting rest (like falling asleep on a boat!)

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Perhaps Jesus knew that abiding in God's presence was the ongoing need of his soul to continue to lovingly be present

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V. Conclusion & one final story

Were the Hebrew people planning to enjoy a meal? Planning to see God?

Were the people following Jesus hoping for a miraculous feast? Hoping to know Him? Or only hoping for a radical salvation from their circumstances?

What about me?

Am I willing to sit in God's presence and enjoy God's presence? To eat with God so to speak?

Do we truly believe we are on the invite list for the dinner party?

Or do we feel like we don't make the cut?

Maybe we enjoy the moments of provision, but don't engage with the party host?

How do we not get distracted, give up, forget?

A prayer moment with God

One final story.

A few weeks ago, I was reading an account of Jesus inviting someone to receive healing prayer. Not unusual. There's lots of accounts of Jesus doing so. And so, I closed up my Bible. I was sitting outside on my patio and finishing up my coffee, when all of a sudden I felt a strong presence of God with me. And a soft invitation. To list each and every disease/diagnosis that impacts my body, and one by one to pray asking for healing for that issue.

A word about me and healing prayers. I've prayed hundreds/thousands of prayers for myself over the years and for others. I have seen relief and healing in some miraculous ways. Others (including at New Covenant) have prayed for me and I've seen much healing. Nearly everyday for the past 6 years, my husband Steve has prayed for healing over me. And, there's many prayers that I haven't seen answered yet.

So, I'm not going to lie. It was VERY difficult to be that vulnerable (I was ready to just say, gee that was a lovely story that I just read and o, look at the time, I must be on with my day).

AND YET...

I felt God's loving, invitational presence so strongly that I was encouraged to pray through them all. It was difficult to lay them all out, one by one, a big long list.

As I did, a strong peace settled over me. Comfort. Presence.

And as I opened my eyes, I was awestruck by the view before me... the sky was THE BLUEST blue I had ever seen, ever. And the trees were the greenest green too! It was like I was right in God's presence (which i know I am, I was, but I was so fully aware of it). I felt at that moment the closeness to God's presence...The fullness of God, the satisfaction in God.

It's been a few weeks since that moment. I still am dealing with so many difficult to manage symptoms each day. So, no I don't believe I was healed in that moment, but I met with THE HEALER. AND I do know that after this present age, I have the hope of eternity in God's presence with a healed renewed body.

And, all the amazingly strong things I am able to do, that I shared in the intro, have all happened since this prayer.

And in the meantime, perhaps this satisfaction in God's presence, moment by moment, from one experience to the next is THE thing to pursue, the ONE to pursue over all other things. I know this...but I need reminding from time to time.

Let's pray.

God, thank you for your presence with us. Help us to be fully satisfied by you...even when our circumstances are challenging, distressing, or overwhelming. As we continue to increase our

enjoyment and rest in your love and care, may we feel emboldened to do the purposes you call us to each day.

And may the images of the covenant meals we heard today bring even more unity and nearness for us with one another and you as we take the communion elements. (For those online, consider pausing the podcast and taking a moment to take communion (a cracker, a bit of juice, or anything else you may find on hand)). In this moment I invite you to sit in the awareness that you are part of God's people right where you are and God is present with you, with us all, together. Bask in what aspect of God's presence you need to be aware of today. Peace be with you and Amen.