

Dinner With Jesus
*Guess Who's Coming to
Dinner?*
March 6, 2022

Good morning everyone!

I'm so glad you are joining us today as we begin a brand-new series called *Dinner With Jesus* ... which is actually inspired by a sermon I heard while on vacation last summer.

Typically, every summer our entire family goes to the Lake. I'm talking ...

- All three daughters
- Plus their husbands
- Plus our six grandchildren.

It's a lot of fun and a lot of noise.

And whenever we go to the Lake, we always pack everyone into the minivans on Sunday morning and head on over to *The Church at Osage Hills* – which is located in Osage Beach just off of 54 Highway ...

... and is, in many ways, a lot like *this* church, North Heartland.

I tell you that because I know that a lot of *you* go to the Lake on *your* summer vacation and I want to encourage you to go to church somewhere, especially if you're a Christian.

After all ...

- Jesus is still Lord
- And Sunday is still the Lord's Day

... even when you're out of town on vacation.

Anyway ... last summer while we were there, the pastor (Ken Lumley) did a great message about Jesus having dinner with some of His friends ...

- Which inspired me to do a little more research ...
- Which inspired me to do this series ...
Dinner With Jesus.

And I've been very much looking forward to it because I think it will make God a lot more real and a lot more accessible to many of us.

I say this a lot because it's true:

The only conception many people have of "God" is as a totally other-worldly Being.

In other words, God (if God exists) is "out there" somewhere in spirit-land. And he/she/it *may or may not* be interested in what happens here in

our world and in our lives.

It's kind of hard to tell.

But the testimony of those who knew Jesus of Nazareth is that while God *is* in part “other worldly,” God is also very near and very interested in this world and in each of us.

One of Jesus' best friends, the man Christians have known for centuries as “The Apostle John”

...

... once put it like this:

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and
the Word was God.*

*Through him all things were
made; without him nothing was
made that has been made.*

*In him was life, and that life was
the light of all mankind. John*

1:1,3-4 (NIV)

In other words, there's a creative force behind everything that exists which the Greeks called "the Logos" or, in English, "the Word."

But then an amazing thing happened.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

The Word that was with God and was God ... the Word that made everything that exists ... became a human being.

"We saw Him" John says.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NIV)

And where did they see his glory?

- Obviously, in the moments where He did

the miraculous.

- And, obviously, in the days and weeks after his resurrection from the dead.

But they also saw it *at dinner*.

They saw his glory at those times when Jesus would sit down at a table and share a meal and then a story or a particular truth that might be *encouraging* or, occasionally, *convicting* and even *confrontational*.

They saw it when Jesus got up close and personal to real people with real hopes and dreams and real challenges and concerns.

And, as we go through this series, my hope is that *you* will experience that kind of glory, that up “close and personal” dynamic with Jesus

I hope that you will hear Jesus saying to *you* some of what He said to others who ate and

drank with Him.

The “Son of Man”

Now having said *that*, it should also be said that

...

- Because you and I are 20 centuries removed from those events ...
- And because we live in a very different culture (we’re not Jewish men and women living under the thumb of the occupying Roman Army) ...
- And because we’re at least somewhat familiar with the story of Jesus ...

... it’s likely that we don’t fully grasp the significance of what it meant to have dinner with a guy who went around (as Jesus did) referring to himself as “the Son of Man.”

Whenever *we* talk about Jesus – especially those of us who are Christians – we tend to refer to him as “the Son of God.”

And that’s OK. After all, we just read that Jesus’ best friend, John, spoke of him that way.

But whenever Jesus referred to himself, his favorite term was “Son of Man.”

In fact, in the Gospel according to Luke (which Luke says he had carefully researched by interviewing many of the eyewitnesses) ...

In Luke’s recounting of the ministry of Jesus, on 25 separate occasions, Jesus refers to himself in this way.

The “Son of Man” this ... The “Son of Man” that.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, the term shows up 30 times.

So, if we really want to understand the significance of dinners with Jesus, we should begin by understanding the significance of this term ...

... which originates in the writings of the Old Testament book of Daniel.

And every Jewish man and woman, boy and girl of Jesus' day would have been very familiar with that part of Scripture as well as the term and what it meant.

So let me read it to you.

*"In my vision at night I looked,
and there before me was one like
a son of man, coming with the
clouds of heaven.*

And if you're familiar with the New Testament you probably recognize that Jesus used that exact same language to describe his return (or his "Second Coming.")

Anyway, Daniel continues:

“He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.” Daniel 7:13 (NIV)

The Son of Man – whoever he is – Daniel says, was led into the presence of Almighty God (who the Jewish people sometimes called the “Ancient of Days” because God has been and will be around forever).

And after the Son of Man was led into the presence of Almighty God ...

... Daniel says that ...

“He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him.

Whoever this Son of Man is, he must be somehow equal to God because, in Jewish

theology and thinking ...

- Only God is deserving of worship.
- Only God has ultimate authority, glory, and sovereign power to reign over all nations and people.

Daniel concludes the telling of his vision with these words:

“His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Daniel 7:14 (NIV)

And since that had not happened, the Jewish people understood that what Daniel saw in his vision was the culmination of human history – the end of time ...

- When God finally becomes King over the world that He created ... a world which has

rebelled and turned against Him.

- When God finally sets all things right.

Point being – the “Son of Man” was a really, really, really big deal to the Jewish people.

Furthermore, given that, at the time of Jesus, the nation of Israel had been dismantled and was under the rule of “godless heathen” invaders ...

... expectations were very high – and you can actually go back and read the literature of the day which is reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls ...

Expectations were very high that the Son of Man might soon appear to save them and usher in the Kingdom of God which would certainly include restoring Israel to its former glory.

So, when Jesus of Nazareth goes around the countryside ...

- Talking about the Kingdom of God ...
- Doing miracles that demonstrate the power and presence of the Kingdom of God ...
- And referring to himself as “the Son of Man” ...

... the expectation is that *He* is going to do *that*.

The Unexpected

Of course, as we know, that's not what happened.

In fact, Jesus *literally told them* it wasn't going to happen at that time and that they didn't have the complete story as it concerned the Son of Man.

Mark (who was most likely recounting the story

of Jesus as told to him by Peter) ...

Mark writes:

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. Mark 8:31 (NIV)

Slide

He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Mark 8:32 (NIV)

You can almost imagine Peter recounting that event to Mark.

“Yeah, that’s what Jesus said and then, stupid me – I try telling Him that he’s wrong and that he doesn’t get it because *that’s not what Daniel*

said.”

“That didn’t go over very well. He actually called me Satan and told me to get out of his way.”

And since Peter and the others didn’t get it, Jesus repeated it again on several other occasions.

“Hey guys ...”

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

Somehow, in addition to what Daniel had written, the purpose of the Son of Man included dying as a sacrifice for sin.

But there was more purpose that they and everyone else didn’t understand.

On another occasion, when Jesus is questioned

as to why He has gone to the home of a tax collector (and a sinner) by the name of Zacchaeus he responds ...

“I did it because ...

*“The Son of Man came to seek
and to save the lost.”* *Luke*
19:10 (NIV)

... which was not only an explanation of his behavior with respect to Zacchaeus; it was another expansion and redefinition of the purpose of the Son of Man ...

... at least as it was understood by the people of his day, particularly the religious establishment.

They didn't expect the Son of Man *to save* the lost. They expected the Son of Man *to destroy* the lost.

And Jesus was saying “but that's not how it is.”

And they didn't expect the Son of Man *to die for*

***the lost* and their sins. They expected *the lost to die* for their sins.**

But Jesus again was saying “that’s not how it is.”

So, you see what’s happening here?

Again and again, Jesus is blowing the minds of first-century Jewish men and women by calling himself “the Son of Man” and doing things and saying things that just seem weird and crazy – if not blasphemous!

To quote the song we sang earlier, “God was bigger than they thought He was.”

Of course, to you and me 20 centuries later, this is not big news. We’ve heard the story so often that we *do* “get it.”

We understand that, in addition to receiving glory and power at the end of time, the purpose of the Son of Man was to seek and save the lost

and to give his life as a ransom for many.

If we're Christians, we talk about it all the time. We're recipients of it.

However, there's something about the "Jesus the Son of Man" that might seem as strange to us as it did to them.

In chapter 7 of Luke's Gospel, we read that, one day, followers of John the Baptist come to Jesus to ask him a question.

By the way, this particular "John" isn't Jesus' best friend. That's another "John."

This "John" is Jesus' cousin who, before Jesus came on the scene talking about the Kingdom of God and referring to Himself as the Son of Man ...

This John lived in the desert eating only locusts and honey, wearing camel's hair and a leather

belt while wildly proclaiming that ...

- God was about to do something incredible (referring to the coming of the Son of Man, the Messiah)
- And that everyone should therefore repent
...

... which got him thrown into prison because Herod, the puppet king at the time, didn't like hearing it!

So, John is in prison and his followers are feeding him reports about what Jesus is saying and doing.

And just like everyone else he, too, is confused because ...

- The Son of Man isn't supposed to save the lost. He's supposed to destroy the lost.

- And the Son of Man isn't supposed to die for the lost and their sins. The *lost* are supposed to die for their own sins.

So, John sends his followers to ask: “are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Now, what's interesting about this scene is that, according to Luke, a crowd is watching and listening to this exchange between Jesus and John's followers.

And Jesus turns to them and says ...

“John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’”

“You said, ‘He's too weird. He's crazy.’ And you didn't want anything to do with him.”

“And *then*,” Jesus says – and notice the

terminology here.

And then ...

*“The Son of Man came eating
and drinking ...*

“The Son of Man *didn't* come crazy and wild-eyed pronouncing judgement on all who don't repent ...

- As John the Baptist did.
- And as you *expected* the Son of Man would do.

“Instead, he comes eating and drinking – with open hands and an open heart, sitting at the table ...

- With real people ...
- With real hopes and dreams ...

- With real challenges and concerns ...”

“The Son of Man comes eating and drinking with them ...

... and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’” Luke 7:34 (NIV)

“You slander him for it.”

“So, what’s it going to take, because you’re not happy with the fire and brimstone approach and you’re not happy with the friendship approach!”

Now, lest we be too hard on the folks of Jesus’ day and think ourselves better than them, a lot of us have the same problem.

How many times do we walk out of here saying “that Rick (or that Shannon or Ladell or

Andrew), they're just too harsh – always talking about sin.”

And then another week it's “that Rick (or that Shannon or Ladell or Andrew), they just water everything down. It's always grace, grace, grace.”

But that's not where we're going today or in this series.

Instead, we're going to focus on the incredible – and unexpected – pattern of Jesus, the Son of Man, who “came eating and drinking.”

Snapshots

Now, we've talked about what the Jewish people expected. Let's talk about *our* expectations.

When you think about how the good news of God's kingdom should be proclaimed, what

comes to your mind?

If you're like most people – especially if you're a Christian – you probably think of what I'm doing right now.

- You think of a guy or a gal on a stage who is preaching.
- Or maybe you think of a person standing in front of a class teaching the Bible (like we're going to be doing in several of our CORE classes this afternoon).
- Or maybe you think of someone standing up and leading worship as happened earlier in the service (and will be happening at this Wednesday evening's worship night).

And there's nothing wrong with any of those methods.

- In fact, Jesus often stood up to preach to a crowd.
- And He often gathered his inner circle together so he could teach them.

But neither of those were surprising.

What *was* surprising was that “the Son of Man came eating and drinking.”

And this wasn’t just an isolated occurrence. It was typical behavior.

Someone has pointed out that food and drink are noted in every single chapter of Luke’s Gospel ...

... and that, in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is either ...

- On the way to a meal

- At a meal
- Finishing a meal
- Or talking about a meal.

Nine times, Luke writes something to the effect of “And Jesus, sitting at a table with them ...”

And in the weeks that follow from next Sunday through Easter, we’re going to look at some of those dinners with Jesus.

And I want to give you a quick snapshot of each one of them so that you know where we’re going.

First of all, next week, we’ll be looking at the dinner which immediately follows this statement of Jesus.

It’s recorded in Luke 7 and takes place at the home of a religious leader by the name of

Simon.

And during the dinner, a “loose woman” walks in and begins washing Jesus feet with her tears and drying them with her hair ...

... which leads to a very interesting discussion between Jesus and Simon over the nature of forgiveness.

After that we'll look at the story recorded in Luke 5 where Jesus eats with a bunch of tax collectors at the home of Levi ...

... who, after coming to believe in and follow Jesus himself, invites Jesus over to a party with his friends.

Then, in Luke 11, we'll see Jesus eating with a group of religious leaders ...

Good people, all of whom would say they love God and who not only respect Jesus but actually think of him as “one of us.”

But something happens at that dinner that causes Jesus to unload on them in spectacular fashion and totally changes the dynamic going forward.

In Luke 14, we'll see Jesus at a large banquet talking about who God invites to *his* banquet table ...

... and making a very uncomfortable point about who the People of God should be inviting to *their* banquet tables.

Then, in Luke 22, we'll look at the dinner Jesus had with the disciples on the night before his crucifixion ...

... which became the basis for what Christians call communion which, unfortunately, has come to be a source of great consternation and confusion for many.

And we'll try to clear some of that up.

And then, finally, on Easter Sunday, we'll jump over to John's Gospel and look at a breakfast on the beach ...

... after the resurrection where Jesus serves the (now) 11 disciples and has a gut-wrenching conversation with one of them.

So What?

And I have to tell you, again, that I'm very much looking forward to talking about and learning from all of these dinners (and a breakfast) with Jesus ...

But I think the question at this point is probably "so what?"

"So what" that the Son of Man came eating and drinking? So what?

And in the time that remains, I want to talk about that.

I want to talk first about what it teaches us about God and about life ...

And second, I want to talk about what it says to those of us who are Christians and trying to follow in His ways.

So, here we go.

ABOUT JESUS

I think one of the things the “eating and drinking Son of Man” teaches us about Jesus is that ...

1. God really has been “one of us.”

If Jesus ...

- Sat at so many tables eating and drinking with all kinds of people ...
- And He also hungered in the wilderness

when He was tested and tempted by Satan

...

- And was thirsty enough beside a well in Samaria to ask a woman to draw him a drink from it ...
- And was desperate enough on the cross to cry out “I thirst” ...

... then the Word that was with God and was God *really* did become flesh and live among us.

And that means that God isn't distant and unconcerned about the physical and emotional realities of our lives. He is near. He gets it.

And we can turn to Him and trust in Him.

I think the second thing an “eating and drinking Son of Man” teaches us is that ...

2. The physical aspects of life are good and

intended to point us to the God who is good.

A lot of Christians over the centuries have believed that the best way to be “holy” is to deny themselves of all types of physical pleasure as if there is something inherently evil about the physical world.

Now, there’s no doubt that there’s value in fasting for a season from the material world in order to connect more fully with the spirit of God.

But if “the Son of Man came eating and drinking” then the ideal for life – the norm for life – is not the *suppression* of material satisfactions or the *rejection* of physical pleasures.

It’s the *consecration* of those things.

It’s using those things to remind us of the goodness of God and to point us to God.

This is why I think it's so important – if you're a Christian – that whenever you eat, you say a prayer of thanksgiving.

And this is why it's so important – again, if you're a Christian – it's so important that you give back to God on a regular basis whenever you make money.

Those kinds of habits remind you that the physical world God made is good and that He is good and has blessed you.

Finally, the third thing an “eating and drinking Son of Man” teaches us is that ...

3. God really is a “friend of sinners.”

When they called Jesus “a glutton and a drunkard” (both of which were extreme statements) and “a friend of sinners,” it was meant to slander Him.

But, in fact, what it really does is bear witness to a glorious truth: *that people who were not like Jesus, liked Jesus.*

And Jesus liked them.

The mutual attraction between Jesus and “sinners” was unmistakable. Prostitutes as well as little children seemed to be drawn to Him.

Of course, this is what infuriated the religious leaders of his day.

Prostitutes and sinners were supposed to be cast out.

But instead of *casting* them out, Jesus *sought* them out ... often at a table around a meal which, in that culture, was a sign of acceptance and belonging.

So, the “eating and drinking Son of Man” teaches us ...

1. That God really has been “one of us” and therefore “gets” what it means to *be* us.
2. That the physical aspects of life are good and intended to point us to the God who is good.
3. That God really is a “friend of sinners.”

TO US (CHRISTIANS)

Alright, now let’s talk about those of us who are Christians and trying to follow in Jesus’ ways.

What does it say to *us* that “Son of Man came eating and drinking” and was considered to be “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners?”

Two things, I think.

First of all, I think it says that ...

**1. Relationships matter more than
“preaching and programs” in reaching the
“tax collectors and sinners” in our lives.**

Not that preaching and programs aren't important. They are.

But Jesus didn't run projects, establish ministries, create programs, or put on events. He ate meals.ⁱ

As one commentator puts it, “Before Jesus picked up the cross, he picked up the fork!”

Jesus did “evangelism” (and discipleship) around a table with grilled fish, bread, and a pitcher of wine.

And so did the early church.

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, one of the things they include from the very beginning in their “rule of life” (how they were

going to live out their faith in Jesus) ...

One of the things they include *in addition to regularly gathering as a large group* in the temple courts for teaching and preaching and worship ...

One of the things they include that turns out to be a game changer ...

... is that they ...

... broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and – get this – enjoying the favor of all the people.

Sounds a lot like Jesus who *also* enjoyed the favor of all the people who were thought of as tax collectors and sinners – not good enough, according to the religious leaders, to be included in the Kingdom of God.

The very first Christians broke bread in their homes and ate together.

They said, “Hey, let’s have dinner together, and let’s talk about life. Let’s share what’s happening in our lives and where God is because something sacred might just happen at a real ordinary table.”

And it did.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47 (NIV)

Sounds a lot like it was the gracious hospitality of the first Christians that led to the explosive growth of the church.

So, here’s a question ... and this is the second thing I think it says to us that Jesus, the Son of Man, “came eating and drinking.”

The question is – and again, this is for Christians. If you're not a Christian, this really doesn't apply to you.

The question is ...

2. What if we began to see our kitchen tables and our living rooms as a mission field?

What if we began not only to *think* like Jesus but to *eat and drink* like Jesus – using meals as a way to create connection and openness with people who don't yet know Him?

And meals can do that because when you sit across the table from someone, you're not shoulder-to-shoulder. You're face-to-face.

Now, I know that with COVID it's been really hard to think like that. For a lot of us it's not even been an option because of concerns about health and safety.

But I think what's happened to a lot of us – and I can say this because it's happened in our home ...

What's happened to a lot of us is that we've adopted a new mindset and a new set of habits from two years of being hunkered down.

We've turned inward.

- And home is now a place where we go to get away from everyone and everything and protect ourselves from whatever (and whoever) is “out there.”
- Home is a place where we eat our dinners on the couch while watching the latest catastrophe unfold on CNN or FOX NEWS.
- Home is a place where we binge watch shows that lead us to care – and sometimes deeply – about people who aren't even

real.

And all while there are real people in our lives who are doing the exact same thing. They've hunkered down and turned inward.

What if some of us who are Christians decided to break out of the mold and say to a few people every once in a while, "would you come over for dinner?"

And just see what happens.

I've mentioned several times in recent months that Jetta and I are moving to a new neighborhood. We sold our house of 27 years and we're moving next week.

And, as I've been thinking about what I want it to be like in our new home, one of the thoughts that keeps coming to me is that we have a real opportunity to break out of the mold.

We have a real opportunity to do more of what Jesus did.

And one of my hopes is that our home would become a place where people break bread together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of the rest of the neighbors.

Of course, even saying that terrifies me a bit because ...

a) I'm not a people-person by nature. I'm much more task-oriented.

b) Neither I nor Jetta have the spiritual gift of hospitality.

But here's the thing: it doesn't have to be every night or even every week.

Nor does it have to be a huge production. It doesn't even have to be a dinner. For most

people dessert will do.

But it does have to be intentional like Jesus was intentional.

Anyway ... for those of us who are Christians, I think it says two things to us that the “Son of Man came eating and drinking.”

- First, that relationships matter more than “preaching and programs” in reaching the “tax collectors and sinners” in our lives.
- Second, that we could begin to see our kitchen tables and our living rooms as a mission field.

Conclusion

Now, I could probably end here, and I think

everyone would have more than enough to chew on.

Get it? Chew on?

Anyway, I could probably end here but I think there's one more thing that needs to be said to all of us.

And not from me but directly from Jesus himself.

And here it is. Jesus says ...

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

Revelation 3:20 (NIV)

The Son of Man – Jesus – God in the flesh – to this day continues to eat and drink with tax collectors and other sinners.

He's still the "friend of sinners" which means that He is your friend, and He is my friend because you and I are most definitely sinners.

So the question is will you open the door to him today?

Will you allow him to come in and speak to your heart and mind and soul in the same way He spoke to those who first knew Him?

I hope you will.

in fact, let me pray for you to that end.

Endnotes

¹ Tim Chester, A Meal With Jesus