

Unstoppable Kingdom

With Diversity: Manners of the Table

Acts 10:17-48

Last week the message was entitled “Room at the Table” from Acts 10:1-16. Today, I am going to continue that theme with the title “Manners of the Table.”

My parents established our family’s table manners long before I was born. We weren’t too fancy; we only used one fork, for instance, but there were certain expectations. Like, chew with your mouth closed, don’t talk with your mouth full, no elbows on the table (for my brother and me), and no singing at the table (for my sisters).

Main Idea: The King has Established Table Manners in the Unstoppable Kingdom

¹⁷ Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate ¹⁸ and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. ¹⁹ And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.” ²¹ And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?” ²² And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” ²³ So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. ²⁸ And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.” ³⁰ And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour,^[a] and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.” ³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the

dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” ⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.” **Acts 10:17-48**

Three Essential Table Manners in the Unstoppable Kingdom

I. The King Will Always Be in Charge

In this passage of scripture we see the sovereignty and providence of God. In addition to visions (vs. 17), the Spirit’s instruction (vs. 19), the angel’s direction (vs. 22), and the Spirit falling on Gentiles (vs. 44), there were specific instructions given to Peter about Cornelius and to Cornelius about Peter. It is crystal clear that God is in control!

“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.”

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

Someone shared this week how their future wife had to explain the specific table manners of her family to him because they had different customs and traditions. He had never heard of the “elbow rule” and others like it, so thankfully the girlfriend’s family was patient with him. Why didn’t they all adapt to his way of doing things? Because the owner of the table sets the manners of the table.

“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.” **Psalm 24:1-2**

II. Prejudice will Never Be Tolerated

The Jews hated the Gentiles and did not want them participating in their faith tradition.

“And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.” **Acts 10:28**

“Peter began with a joyful and wondering expression of his new-found realization that Gentiles are as acceptable to God as Jews. Then he presented the gospel.” **F.F. Bruce Prejudice is gone!**

“God’s attitude to people is not determined by any external criteria, such as their appearance, race, nationality, or class. Instead, and positively, ‘God

accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.’ (vs. 35)”

John Stott Nobody is more "savable" than anybody else!

“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’”

Revelation 5:9-10 God desires diversity within his Kingdom!

A missionary described a powerful communion service in Africa he attended. Beside him sat an elder of the Ngoni called Manly-Heart. The old chief remembered the days when the young warriors of the Ngoni had left behind a trail of burned, devastated towns, coming home with their spears red with blood and the women of their enemies’ tribes as their prizes. They often ravaged the tribes of Senga and Tumbuka, And now, who were sitting in that communion service together? Ngoni’s, Senga’s and Tumbuka’s. Their past violence, feuds, and prejudices were forgotten in the love of Jesus!

Do we see others around us as potential heirs of God’s grace? Or, do we only see the parts of them that we do not like? Prejudice is a deal-breaker!

“Next to the blessed sacrament, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.” **C.S. Lewis Prejudice undercuts the love of Jesus!**

III. **Everyone Comes to the Table the Same Way**

Peter and his Jewish companions traveled over 10 hours to Caesarea. As he arrived, Cornelius had the entire neighborhood gathered to hear the gospel.

“You never know when your witness for Christ is exactly what somebody has been looking for.” **Warren Wiersbe**

Ripe fruit vs. Green fruit. We can’t tell the difference, so share openly!

“As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” **Acts 10:36-43**

Everybody comes to the King’s table the same way. At the invitation of the King, in full submission to his authority and Lordship! Everyone is welcomed, no one is affirmed, and the Gospel is the only access we have.

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Matthew 7:13-15

We all come to the King’s Table off that wide road to destruction. Your broad road looks differently than my broad road, but they all lead to the same place...death, hell, and destruction! The narrow gate and hard way that leads to life that few find is describing life around the King’s table!

It’s important to understand that these table manners will not take root in our lives instantaneously once we come to the King’s table. **Surrender is immediate, but transformation takes time around the table!**

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” **Romans 8:29**

The King has made room at his table for you. He will always be in charge, prejudice will never be tolerated, and everyone around the table came the same way. So, have a seat at the King’s Table and the manners will come!

Song: Exalted, He is Exalted

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *CSB Study Bible* – Trevin Wax, General Editor (2021)
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- *The New American Commentary: Acts* – John B. Polhill (1992)
- *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* – F.F. Bruce (2017)
- *Acts for Everyone* – N.T. Wright (2008)
- *Acts: The Church Afire* – Kent Hughes (1996)
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- *The Kingdom of God* – Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1992)
- *Kingdom First* – Jeff Christopherson (2015)
- *The Kingdom Agenda* – Tony Evans (1999)