

Building Tables- Week 1: Thoughtful Table Design

- Introduction

- Have you ever felt isolated?
- Have you ever felt excluded?
- Have you ever felt uninvited?
 - Think about being a kid on the playground, hearing your friends talk about a party that you realize you didn't get invited to.
 - Think about being an adult and being left out of an important meeting that directly affects your job?
 - Think about being left out when you see on FB that all your people got together, but you somehow didn't get the invitation that everyone was gathering.
- Imagine for a second, the emotions you might feel.
 - Confusion, hurt, anger.
- When faced with these situations, a deep sense of questioning starts to happen.
 - Are we really friends?
 - Did I do something wrong?
 - What's the matter with me?
- It's painful to feel the emotions that come with the thought that we are being left out or excluded – that we are not good enough or that we are lesser.
- This is the tension I want you to feel as we read a passage in Luke.

- Luke 7: 36-50 (SLIDE – NIV)

- ³⁶When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.
- ³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."
- ⁴⁰Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."
- "Tell me, teacher," he said.
- ⁴¹"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^[c] and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"
- ⁴³Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."
- "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.
- ⁴⁴Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven— as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."
- ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."
- ⁴⁹The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"
- ⁵⁰Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

- Building Tables Series

- We are going to be in this series for 7 weeks.
 - You're going to hear from teachers one week, and
 - The next week you will hear a recap of the sermon and then we are going to hear stories about tables being built that united people together.
- This is a series where we are going to wrestle with different concepts.
 - Wrestle with the spiritual practice of hospitality.
 - Wrestle with what it means to be the "other."
 - Wrestle with what it means to be forgiven. To be forgiven and to need to be reminded over and over about this reality.
 - We will wrestle with the meaning of the table and potentially flip the script of how you see the table.
 - We are even going to wrestle with what it means, as a Christian – a believer, a disciple, to take the posture of being a guest at the table.
 - This is hopefully going to be a series that stretches us to "love our neighbor."

PRAY

- Symbols of Christianity
 - o When we think about Christianity, there are many symbols that have meaning.
 - One of the most obvious- The Cross (Picture Slide of Cross)
 - o The cross represents what it means to be an empire.
 - o Symbol of power, fear, and force.
 - o Threatening presence that makes the empire the empire.
 - o Jesus stole this – repurposed it.
 - People don't see crosses anymore and think about the Roman Empire.
 - Jesus took what was meant for death and made it something completely different.
 - It now stands firmly at the center of the empire of the king who sits upon the throne in heaven.
 - It means the opposite of what it meant to the Roman Empire and to those who lived in the shadow of the empire.
 - The Table (Picture Slide of Table)
- Main Point:
 - o ***Just as Christ has repurposed the meaning of the cross, he has repurposed the meaning of the table.*** (SLIDE with pic of table and text)
 - The table was a place for religious leaders to exert power and control through legalism.
 - Jesus repurposes the table to be full of grace and hospitality.
 - The table was a means to exclude.
 - Jesus repurposes the table by offering an invitation to all
 - o Everyone is welcome at the table of the Lord
 - The table was a place to showcase wealth.
 - Jesus repurposes the table as a place where a community of equals gather
 - o The one thing that we all have in common is that we are poor in spirit and in need of forgiveness.
- Luke 7:36-39 (SLIDE – NIV)
 - o As we think about building tables, let's take this passage in Luke 7 and break it down.
 - **³⁶When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. ³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."**
 - Jesus is at a table. Not his table, but Simon's table. He would have been an honored guest at this table. Simon likely invited him because he knew he was a teacher.
 - o Set the scene – the guests would be reclined around all 3 sides of the tables on couches, leaving the fourth side open to allow servants to access the table. (SLIDE – Pic of table set up in Bible times)
 - o The guests would be leaning back with their legs behind them.
 - o It also would not be out of the norm for there to be spectators without an invitation watching this meal unfold.
 - Big meals like this were put on display to show wealth and power.
 - The woman had heard that Jesus was going to be present at Simon's house, and she plans to attend the dinner as a spectator and intentionally disrupt this meal.
 - o She is "the other," a "sinner" – the excluded.
 - Not only did she plan, but she also brought one of the most valuable items she owned.
 - When she shows up to the dinner she begins to weep. She becomes overwhelmed by the very presence of Jesus.
 - At this point, she steps out of the crowd and moves so close to Jesus so that her tears fall on his feet, she lets down her hair, and begins to wipe his feet. She kisses them and pours perfume on them.
 - A couple of things to consider . . .
 - Doesn't it seem like she has already had an encounter with Jesus? This doesn't come directly from the text, but some scholars think it is possible that she had already met Jesus.

- There is an insinuation that this woman is doing what one would do who has already had their sins forgiven, at the very least, she seems to know who he is and knows what he is all about.
- Maybe she has heard his message of forgiveness or maybe his reputation precedes him.
- While not explicitly stated, it seems like the original audience would have known what kind of occupation this woman participated in – she was not just other, she was likely a prostitute.
- We can also imagine how awkward this scene is.
 - A woman would never let her hair down in public like this.
 - The perfume would have produced a very strong fragrance
 - This would have been a major disruption to the dinner
- Despite the awkwardness of this woman intimately interacting with Jesus, he knows exactly what she is up to – he knows her heart.
- Simon doesn't like it.
 - WHY?
 - She is disrupting the dinner as an uninvited guest.
 - Simon doesn't like it because she is "other"
 - Simon doesn't like it because she is lesser
 - Simon doesn't like it because she is sinner
 - Simon's table was not built for sinners.
 - It affects his view of Jesus
 - Simon thinks that Jesus isn't a prophet because Jesus can't see what is going on here.
 - Jesus proves that he is a prophet because we see that Jesus knows exactly what is going on here.

- **Luke 7: 40-43 (SLIDE – NIV)**

- ⁴⁰Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.⁴¹ "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^[c] and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"⁴³ Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.
 - Jesus tells Simon a parable – a parable was a way of telling a story to make a point.
 - Jesus makes a point about forgiveness.
 - Both individuals in his story need to be forgiven.
 - Simon answers correctly when he realizes that the one who will love more is the one who has been forgiven more.
 - While he answered correctly, In this moment, Simon doesn't know what to do with the point Jesus is making
 - The point that Jesus is making disrupts Simon's world.
 - This is true for us too.
 - The grace of God is scandalous – even disrupting to our social norms.
 - We know we need forgiveness and we know that those who have the most debt need the most forgiveness and will choose to love more.
 - Sometimes though, we forget! Humans need their sins to be forgiven over and over again and this is what tables are for.
 - We gather at the table, and we receive forgiveness again.
 - Jesus knows that this woman is in need of forgiveness.
 - At the table is where forgiveness moves from theoretical to real. This is what happens for the woman. It moves from a theory or a hope to a real life act of mercy.
 - A life-changing encounter with Jesus that changes her trajectory.
- The design of Jesus' table is to proclaim forgiveness over and over and over again.

- **Invitation to the Table (Imaging Exercise)**

- Imagine this scene: You're at church.
- You get an invitation to come to the table. There are people ready to serve you at the table.
- You stand in a line, maybe visiting catching up with each other – offering a handshake, maybe a hug.
- You approach the person delivering the elements.
- When it is your turn, it is just your turn.
- There are 2 people.
 - One with bread.
 - One with cup
 - The man hands you the bread and says, "(Your name), this is Christ's body broken for you. You are forgiven."

- The woman at the table hands you the bread and says, “(Your name), this is Christ’s blood, shed for you. You are forgiven.”
 - We often wrestle with forgiveness, and sometimes, we need our name said to remind us of our sin – who we once were and why we need forgiveness. We need it to be personal!
 - Sometimes, I need you to say it again and I need everyone at the table to repeat it.
 - IF you are in Christ, your sins have been forgiven – you are no longer an outsider or the “other.”
 - You are welcome at the table of the Lord.
 - That’s a beautiful table.
 - Just as Christ has repurposed the meaning of the cross, so he has repurposed the meaning of the table.
- **Luke 7:44-50 (SLIDE – NIV)**
 - **44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” 48 Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” 50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”**
 - We are wrestling with what it means to practice hospitality during this series Building Tables.
 - It could be argued that Jesus is now the host of the table.
 - It certainly is not Simon.
 - Another lens to view it from would be that the host of the table is now “the other – the sinner – the unwelcomed guest” who is the host – the one who offers hospitality.
 - In this story, we see the “uninvited guest” become the “unlikely host.”
 - This is the upside-down kingdom of God.
 - Jesus repurposes the table and makes it something other.
 - Just as Christ has repurposed the meaning of the cross, so he has repurposed the meaning of the table.
- **Closing (Invite Band Out)**
 - This passage in Luke 7 reminds us that the “other,” the “lesser,” the “sinner” has gone from uninvited guest to unlikely host.
 - We see a table stolen from the religious elite, planted firmly in the kingdom of mercy and kindness, the kingdom of our king.
 - We see a woman who was compelled by forgiveness, show radical, sacrificial love to Christ at the table.
 - This is the call of the disciple
 - To love Christ at Christ’s table.
 - The gospels teach that when you love the “other,” you are loving Christ.
 - When I love another human being, I am loving Christ.
 - **Matthew 25: 31-40**
 - **31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ 40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’**
 - This is about having eyes to see – it’s about vision . . . (SLIDE OF TABLE PIC)
 - This is about seeing Christ in the hungry one, the insecure one, the thirsty one, the proud one, the one who just can’t seem to get it together, the afraid one, the sinner, the other.
 - It’s a reminder that we were once the one who someone had to take a risk on and see Christ in us – even when we were still sinners.
 - Even when we were dead in our sin, someone saw Christ in us and invited us to the table.

- This is a beautiful table – one that has been thoughtfully designed – for the sinner, all the sinners, with Jesus.
 - Church, we get to sit at it – together!
- As we prepare to dine at the Table of the Lord, let’s prepare our hearts.

- Communion

- “I want to welcome you to the table of the Lord”
 - The table of the Lord has an overflow or abundance of grace and forgiveness.
 - The table of the Lord is a table that is open to everyone.
 - The table of the Lord is a table where everyone is equal – the thing we have in common is a need to be forgiven and to be reminded that we need to be forgiven.
- **I Corinthians 11: 23-26**
 - ²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”
 - **The body of Christ.**
 - ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.
 - **The blood of Christ.**
 - Prayer