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Series: Power of Moments
Title: Power of the Table

Text: Luke 22:14-20; Romans 3:23, 6:23, Revelation 19:6-8, I Corinthians 11: 23-25

This morning, I sit at this table because tables carry with them a deep and profound significance. I want you to think about your table growing up or the table in your home as your children have grown up. While a table carries no implicit meaning, it has profound significance.

Consider this: a table offers connection and community. When we gather around a table it represents a “togetherness” as we share meals, discuss life, celebrate milestones, share ideas, and build friendships. Physically, a table stands on four legs, symbolizing foundation, balance, and support. It represents a stable space in the chaos of life where we can experience support, encouragement, and balance in life. Through history, tables have been the place where negotiations have been made, wars created, and conflict resolved. A table witnesses life’s journey – from a child’s homework to family dinners, romantic dates, introductions and farewells. It collects stories, laughter, arguments, and history, making it more than just a piece of wood, but a silent keeper of life.

Tables carry with them a deep and profound significance.

This morning, as we consider the profound significance of a table, I would like for you to turn with me to Luke 22. We will begin reading in v. 14.

“And when the hour came, Jesus reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, ‘Take this, and divide it amongst yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”

Around this table are men of all walks of life.

Peter – a fisherman, one of Jesus’ closest disciples, who is known to be impulsive, but deeply devoted. Peter will soon deny Jesus but will later become a pillar in the early Church.

Andrew – Peter’s brother, also a fisherman. Andrew was the first disciple that Jesus called and asked to follow Him. He also introduced Peter to Jesus.

James – Like Peter and Andrew, he was a fisherman and was one of the disciples who was in Jesus’ “inner circle.” He had the privilege of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus and was a silent observer of many of Jesus’ miracles.

John – self-proclaimed as the “beloved disciple,” was also a fisherman and brother to James. He was known to be the only disciple who stayed at the cross during the crucifixion. He would later go on to write the Gospel of John, three epistles, and Revelation.

Philip – more than likely a fisherman; was quiet and behind the scenes. While we don’t know a whole lot about him, we know he was a good friend, bringing Nathaniel or Bartholomew to Jesus.

Bartholomew (Nathaniel) – was likely of noble birth and known for his sincerity. Jesus praised him as “a man without deceit.” Later on, he would take the gospel to India and Armenia.

Matthew (Levi) – was a tax collector, a profession hated by the Jews. Mathew was a bit odd and misunderstood by many. He was known to have been very wealthy, but he left all of his wealth to follow Jesus. He would later write the Gospel of Matthew and preach the gospel in Ethiopia.

James – we know very little about James. Some say that he was Jesus’ cousin, but we really don’t know. More than likely, this is the James who spent his life ministering in Jerusalem.

Thaddeus – another of the disciples we know very little about. Later on, he will take the gospel to Persia.

Simon – was a former Zealot, a radical Jewish group who lived to oppose and fight Rome.

Let’s not forget Judas – known to be a businessman, Judas was the treasurer who was responsible for managing the finances of Jesus’ ministry. Ironically, the most trusted of all disciples becomes the most despised as he betrays Jesus.

I say all of this because, at this table, men from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, gathered around the table, where they experienced life together, shared stories, argued, told jokes, and

listened to Jesus' words. At this table, they found a common bond as former enemies became friends, friends betrayed friends, misunderstood people became understood. Outcasts found a place of belonging and those without purpose found meaning and significance in their lives. Around this table they weren't defined by their past, but defined by who they were following and the One who brought them together. At this table, they were loved, united, and found a home. On His last night, Jesus told the disciples in (Luke 22) v. 15, "*I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you.*" Jesus loved each of these guys and brought them together around His table.

Not only did this table create a unifying bond with the disciples, but this table found a unifying bond with all of history.

Notice that Jesus refers to this meal as the Passover. Every year, the disciples were used to celebrating the Passover much like we celebrate Thanksgiving or Christmas. But Passover at this table was a bit different; Jesus uses the bread and the wine as a metaphor to demonstrate how He is the culmination of redemptive history.

At the first Passover, when God was plaguing the Egyptians for not allowing His people to leave Egypt, His final plague was to kill all the firstborn in the land. As a way of salvation, God commanded the Jews to take an unblemished male lamb, sacrifice it, and take its blood and paint it over their doorposts. When the Angel of the Lord swept through the land, he would see the blood and "pass over" that house and that home would find salvation from death.

At this table, Jesus told the disciples that He is the true and final Passover Lamb. As they passed the bread around the table Jesus said, "*This is my body, which is given for you.*" In other words, as the bread is broken and shared among all the disciples equally, so too will His body be broken for them and offered equally to the world.

While these men had followed Jesus for three years, there was still something missing. Like the rest of the world, they were broken and in need of a savior. Paul nailed this universal experience when he wrote in Romans 3:(22)-23, "*For there is no distinction (doesn't matter who you are or what you have): all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" And because we have all fallen short of the glory of God, Paul writes in Romans 6:23, "*The wages of sin is death.*" That means that the sinful nature that we have all inherited has earned for us, death.

Last week, we talked about the weight of what Jesus was experiencing in the Garden. He was preparing to experience the physical pain of carrying the world's sin on His shoulders and the emotional and spiritual pain of silence and separation from the Father. By the way, as Jesus describes it in the gospel accounts, this is the very essence of hell and what Paul says we deserve for our sin. It is physical pain and silence and separation from God for all eternity.

At this table, the breaking of bread symbolizes that Jesus is going to go to the cross and stand in their place as their substitute just as the first lamb was killed in their place as their substitute. Just as the lamb's blood covered Israel as a sign and seal of redemption, so, too, does the blood of Jesus cover them. Jesus tells the disciples in (Luke 22) v. 20, *"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."*

At this table, Jesus reveals how He is the culmination of redemptive history, but also that because of what He was about to do, all of history would change. Because of His blood, a new community is formed and all are invited. Salvation is no longer for Jews, but the entire world. This salvation is for the forgiveness of sin, where the barrier between God and man is removed. No longer would man have to seek God's salvation through rules, regulations, and religious rituals, but by grace, through faith in the finished work of Jesus.

At that table, Jesus casts a vision for how everything was about to change. Everything, for His death will spark a new era where He will begin making all things new.

At that table, Jesus casts a vision for a future hope. For the second time, of the meal, Jesus tells His disciples two times that this will be the last meal He enjoys. In (Luke 22) v. 16 and 18, of the bread He says, *"For I tell you that from now on I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* And of the wine He tells them, *"For I tell you from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

What is Jesus referring to? He is referring to the next time that He will share a meal like this with His disciples will be in the realized Kingdom of God. He is casting their eyes to the vision John saw in Revelation 19:6-8 at the final Marriage Supper of the Lamb where all of the saints will gather together around His table and worship the Father together. *"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure' – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints."*

What a moment it will be for all the family of God to gather around His table for all eternity.

This morning, you and I, two thousand years after that night, gather together around this table so to speak, and hear and remember this same message. A message of unity, redemption, and hope.

I believe that it was Nelson Mandela who said, *"The most powerful weapon on earth is hope."* I think this is true and I think the disciples believed it to be so. In fact, when those men got up from that table, whether they knew it or not, their lives were about to change. After the

resurrection, the Holy Spirit took them back to that table as everything came into focus. For the first time they could see it all and their lives were changed. So much so, that history tells us that every one of these men died because of what was said at that table.

What I wonder this morning is - does this table have the same effect on you? Before we take a seat at this table, I want you to think, "Am I ready to sit at this table? Am I ready to take this table seriously with the understanding of all those who sat at this table before me?" Here is why - the table that we sit at today cost our King His life. The reason we are gathered around this table today is not because of tradition, or because it's what we are supposed to do, but because Jesus gave His life for us so we would, in turn, give all we have in return to Him. It is a commitment that we would live all our life for Him, not just on Sundays, but every day, everywhere, no matter the cost.

Moment of reflection.

This morning, I want to remind us all that this table is a table of grace. It is a table of new beginnings, of second, third, fourth, and plenty more chances. It is a table for imperfect people to come and be received and be transformed. It is a table where pride is exposed and envy dies. It is a table that equalizes us all. It is a table, as Paul says, of remembrance, where we remember the cost of the table and celebrate the gift that was given, as we look forward with hopeful hearts for when we will join Jesus at His table for all eternity.

I Corinthians 11: 23-24 *"On the night when he was betrayed Jesus took bread, 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." Please take and eat of the wafer.*

I Corinthians 11: 25 In the same way, Jesus also took of the cup and said, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* Take and drink.

Amen and thanks be to God. Let's pray.