



MINISTER
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Luke 14:15-24

Intro: Our reading this morning is from the Gospel of Luke. It is a wonderful parable about God's gracious and amazing invitation to supper. Let us listen for God's word to us.

For All the World

This past week we have just completed our stewardship campaign. It was an interesting learning experience for me to be part of the planning process to set up the parties where we would talk about stewardship. I remember at one of the early planning meetings the question was asked "how will we ever get people in here to talk about money?" Who knows the answer? They'll come if you serve food!

Have you ever noticed that Jesus always seems to be doing something with food? Presbyterians did not invent the potluck. Look at Jesus as he ministers, he is like his own catering outfit at times. He attends a wedding banquet and supplies the wine. He preaches a sermon and then offers to feed all who come to listen. He enters a town and tells the most hated man there he's going to have

dinner with him that night. When he speaks he uses food to illustrate what he means. Thinks about all the times he mentions salt, or yeast or fruit. Jesus even calls himself the "bread of life." And remember he teaches his followers that the best way to serve him is to feed the hungry and the best way to remember him is to eat a meal together.

Around the world today, people are gathered around the communion table. World Communion Sunday started fifty years ago as a way of acting out the global, universal, radically inclusive grace of God. Today as Christians, we celebrate God's grace embodied in Jesus, but God's grace is even bigger than the distinctiveness of Jesus. God's grace existed before Jesus was born. World communion Sunday is the day when we envision a table big enough to

host the whole world – a table big enough to hold Christians and Jews and Muslims. Afghanis, Americans and Iraqis. Israelis and Palestinians. And in this time of heated political debates, Republicans, Democrats and the swing voters! Everyone is welcome and everyone is invited. World Communion Sunday is the day when we are bold enough, perhaps foolish enough to imagine a world where lambs and wolves can lie down together, a world

Number 10 on your bulletin. (There are no number 10's <1% have been on the internet)

Number 11 on your bulletin. (1 person would have a college education)

Number 12 on your bulletin. (20 people, you would live less than \$1/day)

Number 13 on your bulletin. (6 people, would own better than half the world's wealth and all six would be US citizens.)

And Jesus uses a meal as an image of life in the realm of God. In Luke's parable of the Great Banquet, Jesus creates a scene where the most unlikely characters play the leading roles. The richest man in town tries to host a major banquet, inviting all the "right people" to be there, but no one wants to come. So, instead he invites those who would not be accustomed to feasting at all, let alone with a rich man. All the local outcasts, the ones who did not fit in are asked to come to dinner. And they begin to arrive... people come limping in or stumbling in through an unfamiliar door. All those you say yes to the invitation come in and stare at the heaps of food.

It's an odd group assembled there, and the rich man realizes there's room for more. As someone has said, "There's always enough to share." So he sends out for all who are in the streets of the

city, and even outside the gates, to come and join the feast. The banquet is big; the table, enormous. All those in town and from the surrounding area are there, save the privileged few who mumble excuses, stay away, and miss the party. What Jesus conjures up in this parable is nothing less than the heavenly banquet, when the entire world will be invited to feast with him in glory.

The realm of God is something like that, Jesus said. Throughout the Gospels, he himself demonstrated a wide-open banqueting style, eating with outcasts and sinners. People were astonished at the wide range of people he chose to join for a meal. He understood the power of breaking bread together and sharing the cup. It can be threatening to the established order of things.

Is it any wonder that Jesus left banquet instructions for us to remember him by? "This is what I want you to do," he said. "Come together at a meal. Eat together. Drink together. Remember me. Celebrate my risen presence with you." And if you can do it in such a way that you open yourselves to the world, especially those who are poor and who suffer, then it would be a good feast, a joyful feast, indeed.

There is a familiar story, told by the ancient rabbis that tells us something about what Jesus was doing, there in the darkness of the Upper Room, when he first took bread and broke it:

An old rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had begun.

"Could it be," asked one of the students, "when you can see an animal in the distance and tell whether it is a sheep or a dog?"

"No," answered the Rabbi.

Another asked, "Is it when you can look at a tree in the distance and tell whether it's a fig tree or a peach tree?"

"No," answered the Rabbi.

"Then what is it?" the pupils demanded.

"It is when you can look on the face of any man or woman and see that it is your sister or brother. Because if you cannot see this, it is still night."

In the light of this morning, let us come to this global table. Let us look, and really see our global brothers and sisters. Let us eat the rich food of solidarity and hope. And then, sharing our own body and blood, let us become hope for the world. AMEN