

The Table

Week 4 | The Wedding Supper of the Lamb

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The table was set and all the side dishes were ready. My husband cut into the Thanksgiving turkey that we'd worked all day on. It was bright pink and completely raw in the middle. I burst into tears. He immediately tried to console me, "It's okay, honey, we'll just cook it longer." I appreciated his words, but it wasn't really about the turkey.

First of all, I was nine months pregnant. My stomach was huge, my feet were swollen, and I felt more like a butterball than the turkey. My son was due any day, so we couldn't go to Houston to be with the rest of my extended family.

There was more. As I looked through my tears at those seated at the table — at my mother in law, father in law, mom and two young kids — there was one face that was missing. A week earlier we'd buried my dad. We were all trying to make the best of it by doing some normal things like cooking a turkey on Thanksgiving. It was a valiant effort, but there's no papering over grief that raw. So no, my crying had very little to do with the undercooked turkey sitting on my table.

A few days later my son was born, and he was perfect. Ten fingers, ten toes, and strong enough to hold his head up right out of the womb. We were so happy. There was so much joy at his birth. So there we were one week after the turkey incident, gathered around the table once again, celebrating my son's homecoming over a casserole provided by wonderful neighbors. But we still felt the loss. Our son wouldn't know his Pop this side of heaven.

If you've lived enough life, you know that it's sometimes like that — the highs and the lows served at the same meal. Sometimes the best and worst sit side by side on the table. As much as we might want it, no one sweeps away all the bad, so we can only taste the good. At least, not yet.

For the last few weeks we've been talking a lot about tables. We've seen how Scripture tells the story of the tables God sets for us where he offers us his presence, provision, and peace. We've challenged ourselves to set tables for others and invite them to experience his abundance. But all these tables just point us to the ultimate table — the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, where all of God's family will gather and we will celebrate the union of Christ and his bride. At last, all the bad will be swept away, and elation will never again be soured by grief. We'll savor only joy.

This week we'll look forward to that heavenly meal and think about how to invite others to it. Because not only will we all experience this feast together in the future, by the power of the Spirit, we can enjoy a taste of it right now.

Day 1

Our key passage this week will be Revelation 19:6–9, and our key verse is verse 9. Let's just focus on it today.

Revelation 19:9

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

- Who is described as blessed in this verse?

Reflect

The wedding banquet depicted in Revelation is a celebration of all of God's promises coming to fruition. Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, will also be a victorious warrior over the forces that torment humanity. Evil, death, and sin will be vanquished. All of God's family will come together in peace and enjoy his presence.

For the last several weeks we've reflected on how God's table is open. Because of Christ, God welcomes everyone to join the family meal regardless of ethnicity, nationality, class, or background. We have the privilege of sharing the good news of Jesus with others around tables right now, so they can experience life in the Spirit right now. Those who place their trust in him in this life are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb at the end of days. Because of Jesus we are forgiven and made new. As the Bridegroom, he will bring his bride, the church, home, to live with him forever.

In a word, we are blessed. And if we doubt that, we have the word of an angel to reassure us — these are the true words of God. Even though we will experience hard times and suffering in this life, we will find only abundance and joy at God's eternal table. What's more, we can find a foretaste of that joy here and now. We don't have to wait for heaven.

For the last few weeks we've been unpacking our new vision here at Christ Fellowship: to reduce loneliness, anxiety, and addiction by having meaningful conversations where people experience Christ through us. We've talked about how we can gather around tables with all kinds of people to connect and share the love of Christ. This is a vision that meets people with God's mercy, compassion, grace, and wisdom in the difficult times they face now, and gives them hope of gathering around God's heavenly table in the future.

All who receive the invitation are blessed. Let's share the gospel with people who don't know Jesus, so they can join us at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Let's walk with people as they deal with life's hardships now, in anticipation of the glory that is to come.

Respond

- How does God allow us a foretaste of the joy to come right now? How can you praise him for those moments?
- How can you be present for someone who is going through a difficult season? Without being trite, or falling back on clichés, how can you encourage them to put their hope in the blessings that are to come?

Day 2

This week we're focusing on the final table in our series, the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. The idea of God as a groom and his people as his bride is well established in Scripture. We see it in places like Isaiah 54:5 where the Lord says to Israel, "For your Maker is your husband— the Lord Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth." We also see it in the New Testament where it is Jesus Christ who is depicted as the groom who is coming for his bride, the church.

In a series of three parables that Jesus uses to teach about his second coming, he encourages his disciples to prepare for his return. In the first, he insists that his followers need to be ready, because his return will be unexpected. In the second, he emphasizes that they will be held accountable for their actions in his absence. In the parable we are reading today, we see that his followers also need to be prepared for a long delay.

Read

Matthew 25:1–13

¹ "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.

⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' ⁷ "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

⁹ “No,” they replied, “there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.”

¹⁰ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹ “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

¹² “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

¹³ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

- How does Jesus describe the two groups of women? What do they do that earns them that description?

Reflect

Jesus invites us to consider the story of a wedding procession where some members of the bridal party were prepared, and others weren’t. Weddings in the ancient near east were often long affairs that involved the parties traveling to multiple locations. The maidens in this parable may be attendants of the bride, or servants in the bridegroom’s home, or perhaps friends and neighbors and “are waiting to escort the bridegroom in festal procession, probably in the last stage of the ceremonies, as he brings his bride home for the wedding feast.”¹

In a world without street lights, these young women are charged with lighting the way for the procession. All of them bring their lamps for the task (many commentators note that they were probably more like torches), but only half bring oil. For a reason that is not explicitly stated, the bridegroom is delayed. He is such a long time in coming that the girls fall asleep waiting.

When word comes that he is almost there, they all wake up and light their torches, but the ones who didn’t bring additional oil are panicked. The girls who were prepared cannot share their oil without leaving everyone in the dark, so the foolish maidens must go off to buy some more. They return too late. After the doors are shut and the banquet has begun, the bridegroom will not let them in. In fact, he treats them as if they are strangers.

Jesus is emphasizing the importance of being prepared for his return. Jesus is contrasting the wise with the foolish and inviting the listener to decide which they’d rather be. The wise are prepared, the foolish are caught unaware and unequipped.

¹ R. T. France, 354.

Nearly 2000 years have passed since Jesus ascended into heaven, and we are still awaiting his return. Yet, over and over Scripture tells us that our bridegroom is coming. How can we take this parable's message seriously and be ready? How can we persevere through the long wait?

Jesus left us with important things to do. We don't wait idly, twiddling our thumbs. We have been commissioned to share the good news that Jesus is Lord, to make disciples, and help people see that God's way is the better way. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can love people with Christ's love. By inviting people into our church family, we can alleviate their loneliness. We can pray with them through their anxieties and addictions and help them find resources that can help. By pointing them to the Word of God and being willing to learn alongside them, we can discover more and more of who God is and what has done, is doing, and will do for us.

In doing all of that, we are showing that we are ready for Christ's return, whether he comes tomorrow or in the next millennia. By making his priorities our priorities, we demonstrate that we are ready for the kingdom life that awaits us upon his return.

Respond

- Take this question before the Lord in prayer: if Jesus returned today would you be caught off-guard? Why or why not?
- How are you investing in God's kingdom now? Invite the Spirit to guide you.

Day 3

There is a special kind of joy that comes from celebrating a victory. It can be a triumph at work or the successful end of a school year. The sweetest victory celebrations come after a hard fought battle, such as the "all clear" from a doctor after a long illness. When we are finally able to put a difficult season behind us, victory tastes all the more sweet.

We're making our way to Revelation 19, to the wedding supper of the lamb. But Revelation is not the only place we glimpse the victory celebration that God has planned for his people in the future. The prophet Isaiah anticipates a glorious feast in a world without sin and disgrace.

Read

Isaiah 25:6–9 (NIV)

*⁶ On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.*

⁷ On this mountain he will destroy

*the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
8 he will swallow up death forever.*

*The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.
The Lord has spoken.*

*9 In that day they will say,
"Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."*

- How would you describe this feast? How would it feel to be in attendance?

Reflect

Every culture has times when people come together to celebrate special occasions, and we love it when the gathering has at least a hint of extravagance. After all, it's the out-of-the-ordinary touches that mark the occasion as special. In America, we enjoy plates piled high with barbecue on the 4th of July, beautifully frosted cakes at birthday parties, rich desserts at Christmas, and scrumptious buffets at wedding receptions. Good hosts honor their guests by laying out their best.

Lavish meals in a beautiful setting are a sign of the host's welcoming generosity and a symbol of their joy in showing abundant hospitality to their guests. God's table is no different. God's abundance is on full display, and Isaiah makes the point that this feast is for *all* people.

Scholars call this banquet a "messianic" banquet. The Jewish people during the time of Isaiah looked forward to the Day of the Lord where God's final judgment would bring righteousness and peace to the world. These verses point to the time of the coming Messiah who will right all wrongs and vanquish all enemies.

In his commentary, Alec Motyer describes verses 7 and 8 beautifully:

"Until that Day dawns, the whole world is in the shadows. We are born into it and therefore we do not recognize that what we call light is but twilight. Paul expressed it by saying 'the night is nearly over; the day is almost here' (Rom. 13:12), and the same thought lies behind the emphasis on the brightness (Is. 24:23) that is to come. In banishing everything that darkens life, the Lord will in particular *swallow up death forever*."²

² J. Alec Motyer, [*Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 20, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 193.

Death stalks us on this earth. It degrades our bodies and steals our loved ones. Fear of death threatens our sense of peace. Yet by his death and resurrection, Jesus defeated death. This is the victory that we will celebrate one day at God's table. We will praise him for his faithfulness because he will have fulfilled his promises. Our salvation, body, soul and spirit, will be complete. This is a party we want everyone we know to experience!

Isaiah's prophecy gave hope to Israel when they were in exile in Babylon. God had not abandoned them. It gives hope to us as well. As we interact with the people around us, we can share this hope. The struggles of this life do not have to have the final say. We worship a God who brings light into dark places and brings the dead back to life. We can experience him through Jesus today.

Respond

- Praise God that "he will swallow up death forever." How does knowing this affect how we live now? How can you share this hope through meaningful conversations.

Day 4

When my husband and I got engaged, there wasn't money for a big wedding. We couldn't afford a fancy venue for the reception or a sit down meal. Honestly, I was okay with that as long as I got to walk down the aisle of a church wearing a beautiful wedding dress to meet my groom. I loved him, and I just wanted to get married. And well, look good doing it.

In our series, The Table, we're considering the final supper that the Bible describes. It's a table that we will all gather around when all the enemies of God have been banished and we are set to rejoice with God and one another for all eternity. This feast won't be just any feast, but is described as a wedding supper of the Lamb.

John, who has received this vision, describes a scene in the heavenly realm.

Read

Revelation 19:6–9 (NIV)

⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah!"

*For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.*

*⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.”
(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)*

⁹ Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

Reflect

Imagine the world’s best banquet. The food is delicious, the company is sublime, and the host is not only generous in what he serves, but with his presence. There is no conflict or awkwardness. Everyone feels comfortable and welcome. God promises us such a time of feasting and celebration at the end of days, and this passage from Revelation calls it a wedding feast. As amazing as the image is, the church will be Christ’s bride and we will all celebrate at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In Ephesians, Paul expounds on the idea that the church is the bride of Christ. We usually think of this passage primarily as a teaching on marriage, but Paul seems much more taken with what earthly marriage represents. Notice the parallels between Paul’s description and the one offered in Revelation 19.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:25–33)

It is a profound mystery, isn’t it? Our union with Christ?

Until that day, we gather around another table for another meal. As Christ’s expectant bride, we celebrate the Lord’s supper. We remember the sacrifice our Lord made and experience his presence through the bread and the cup. We unite to share this meal with fellow believers as brothers and sisters in Christ in our own local community, knowing that the Lord’s Supper is celebrated by believers all over the world. Because of the new covenant in his blood, we know that this table is a mere foretaste of the one that is to come.

Both tables are open to anyone who longs to be fed and looks to Jesus for the soul satisfaction that nothing else provides. All those who are looking for a place to belong can find a seat at God's table. Who are you going to invite?

Respond

- Spend some time in prayer pondering the future that God has prepared for us. Dwell on your union with Christ. Rejoice in the Spirit.

Day 5

Happy Friday! Since this is the final week in our Table series, we'll look back at the whole series. Consider how it connects with our new vision and how you plan to be a part.

Reflect

Consider the big takeaways from this series (if you missed any of the sermons or weeks of the Engage God Daily, they are available at cfhome.org/resources).

Week 1: God's Tables. How are tables a theme throughout Scripture? How does this theme relate to our vision to reduce loneliness, anxiety and addiction by having meaningful conversations where people experience Christ through us?

Week 2: The Last Supper. How did Jesus show us the importance of humble service, being vulnerable with one another, and treating each other with love?

Week 3: The Lord's Supper. What was community like in the early church? The Lord's table is an open table, free from favoritism. How can we invite all kinds of people to our tables?

Week 4: The Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Who will be invited to this meal? How can we extend the invitation to others? How can we celebrate our union with Christ now, and prepare for his return?

Connect

One of my friends, Heather Heaton, wrote a beautiful reflection on a childhood blessing that she sung in childhood around her table, and now sings each night with her children:

Every night, as we gather around the table for dinner, we sing "grace." It's a song that travelled from my childhood, carrying with it the melody sung by my brothers and parents. The words jolted something within in me the other night, a revelation of sorts that I've been trying to piece together the past few days.

Here are the words... you may know them.

*“The Lord is good to me,
and so I thank the Lord;
for giving me
the things I need,
the sun, and rain, and the apple seed.
The Lord is good to me.
Amen.” (Which my youngest son, Sam always yells.)*

Thousands of times I have sung this song, thinking it was weird to thank God for apple seed when we were sitting down for dinner. I had always wanted to change “apple seed” to apples, or some other actual food that we consume, but then the song wouldn’t rhyme. I wanted to thank God for the fruit, not the seed. Because the fruit is what we consume, what we look for in life — the evidence of blessings and gifts and abundance.

Or so I thought.

She goes on to say that during this season of COVID-19, when she’s not accomplishing all that she’d like and is feeling unfruitful, God is teaching her to be grateful for the seed.

As we’ve been reflecting for the last several weeks on Christ Fellowship’s new vision, her post reminded me that as a church, we will also need to be grateful for the seeds. Our vision isn’t flashy. It will be hard to quantify. There won’t be a tangible building or ministry program that we can point to as “fruit.” But Lord willing, there will be changed lives. Because having meaningful conversations with people is like planting seeds. It begins by caring enough to try and get to know someone and working to build enough trust to get beneath the surface. It’s being present, available, and willing to share the love of Christ. A conversation is small thing. It’s a seed. But there is massive potential in every seed.

This week we contemplated The Wedding Supper of the Lamb, and it is something too wonderful for us to truly grasp. It reminds us that we’re living in the season before the final harvest. We’re still waiting for all God’s promises to be fulfilled. But there is something precious in the promise of fulfillment. There is something precious in the seed that will grow into a mighty oak. An acorn looks nothing like the tree that grows from it, but all the potential is there, just waiting.

Our lives are like that. There is potential in who we are now. There are seeds we can plant in the relationships that we build, the acts of goodness and justice that we do, and the prayers that we pray. God can convert that potential into reality according to his will. He can take simple conversations, and use them to help a person grow spiritually. He can take a small investment of time in doing what’s right and make a real difference.

We may have to wait until heaven to see all that we are come to fruition. We will leave so much undone here in this life. But our God is the Lord of the harvest, and he can and does make things grow. In the meantime, let’s be grateful for the seed.

Respond

How has your relationship with God been impacted by reflecting on his tables? What can you praise him for? How is his Word changing ways you think or act?

We've asked all of Christ Fellowship to commit to having a meaningful conversations this fall. Have you made your list? Be praying over the future conversations you will have.