

“What Will We Do?”

Aug. 29, 2010 Calvary sermon by Brian Henderson

Text: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Have you ever disagreed with someone? I know...that’s a silly question. When you have disagreed with someone...what was it about which you disagreed? I won’t ask with whom did you disagree?

Admittedly...I grew up in a family that was relatively irenic...we were for the most part a peaceful family...and oh...don’t get me wrong...our parents had their moments and me and my siblings had ours...and me and my siblings had moments with our parents too...but by and large...we got along fairly well...and fortunately we still do.

Now that we’re all adults...it’s interesting how things have changed a bit however...especially when we gather around the family table—this table which literally sits in our parents’ kitchen has had five generations of our family meeting around it to eat—*the table’s over a hundred years old.*

Our family comes from Scottish, Irish-Catholic and German roots. So...you can imagine the “stubbornness-quotient” present in our family...*it’s pretty high*...and so you can also imagine how this might contribute sometimes to family conversations around the table. While some would say it’s easy to see how we’re all Hendersons...it’s quite intriguing how differently each “Henderson” views the world—especially when it comes to faith and politics and social nuances and professional sports teams.

You'd think something awful happened if anyone of us around *the table* mentions Barak Obama or George Bush. Just by mentioning a president's name—and it doesn't matter which one—our mother will give us the look that communicates so much without even uttering a single word.

And then trying to be the peacemaker that I am, when I mention Jimmy Carter's name—everyone around the table gives me the look! And heaven help me...if I dare mention the Denver Broncos! My younger brothers are diehard New York Giants fans.

You can imagine the grief I'm getting from them as Tara and I are going to see the Broncos play the New York Jets later this year! ☺

It's sometimes baffling to me what we can talk about and what we ought not talk about around the table. In Jesus' day...I suspect there were dynamics that took place around the tables of first century life as well.

The Gospel of Luke suggests so much. Dynamics happened around the table. We see that here in Luke 14 for sure. We see it too near the end of Luke when Jesus is sharing his final meal with the disciples and we watch the disciples around the table argue among themselves as to who is more important.

And then finally at the very end of Luke...it is around a table...a meal...that the frightened and bewildered

disciples realize that it is the risen Jesus who stands among them.

Table dynamics and realities. For those living in antiquity and in the first century...there was a very defined table etiquette that was to be followed and this etiquette was most important to those with status and means.

In other words...there were rules...probably spoken and unspoken. There were places for one to sit and there were places where one ought not to sit. Like around the Henderson table...there were probably things people could talk about freely and there were things that were taboo.

So leave it to Jesus to shake things up. Leave it to Jesus to make folk think. Leave it to Jesus to challenge the status quo. Leave it to Jesus to love people who did not have status and means.

That's what we witness here in the fourteenth chapter of Luke. And far be it for Jesus to let anyone off the hook...he first addresses others who've been invited like himself to eat at the house of a leader of the Pharisees...and then he challenged the person from whom he was given the invitation to come.

Having someone come to your house for dinner only to tell you how you should have prepared and served your food differently, probably isn't as bad as it would be to have Jesus tell everyone how they ought to handle differently the generally understood etiquette of the day.

Essentially...Jesus' words indicate that folk were getting it wrong when it came to how they acted in society...and they needed to do things in a new way...they needed to act differently and they needed to treat people differently.

I believe Jesus' words still speak to us today...

For all who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, [the misfits] and the blind...And you will be blessed...

In other words...if we think we're better than anyone else...for any reason...there's probably a dose of humility still for us to take.

I know this is often the case for me. Even as a pastor...there are moments when I think more highly of myself than I ought. And if this is true for me...I can only imagine it's true for others.

I was reminded by a friend this week of something I believe is good for us all to remember. It seemed to be good by Jesus.

The idea of Jesus' words saying: "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame [the misfits] and the blind..." seems to me to be Jesus' way of saying, "Make sure you have people around you that keep you thinking...that challenge you always to love...that stretch you to go beyond your comfort zones."

I wonder if Jesus were to sit at my family's century old table...the table around which generations have sat...that table which has an etiquette to which we Hendersons are to follow...

I wonder if Jesus might ignore our mother's look...and the looks we can all give around the table...so that we might just be challenged to address more directly and effectively the realities that are part of our lives...realities that too often keep us separated from each other and that keep us thinking we're better than everyone else.

The next time we gather around this table as a church family to share in communion...perhaps Jesus would want us to forget about what color our political parties are...what sports teams we support and that can keep us from gathering around this table...perhaps Jesus would challenge us to consider more what we have in common with each other...and what we can do together for God's kingdom.

Jesus wants us to learn from each other. Jesus wants us to respect and love each other. Jesus wants us to do together what none of us can do on our own. Unlike the disciples who argued among themselves as to who was the greatest at the table....Jesus wants us to have fellowship together Calvary so we *can* be a Christ-like community that experiences and shares God's love.

And as the risen Jesus revealed himself to the disciples at a table reminding them of who he was...and whose he was...and the power he has...so the risen Jesus wants us to live today in and with such power.

Calvary...what are we going to do? Will we live in and with this power? Will we be a Christ-like community? May it be so. Amen.