

## Receiving an Invitation: *Luke 22:7-20*

Norwalk Christian Church, World Communion Sunday 2016

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I had one person this week ask me why we celebrate World Communion Sunday. After all, communion is something we celebrate each week. I don't know about you, but I don't just get excited about holiday meal gatherings. I get pretty excited about almost every meal opportunity I get, and that happens several times each day. So yes, we should still get excited when we come to the table.

In our homes, we spend time planning out meals, cooking them, some of us plant our own food, and take the time to prepare it for table. Why? Because we want something nutritious. We care about what are family eats. We want something healthy that will sustain us.

Some of us include others in our feasting. That's when, what I refer to as southern hospitality, reminds me of Christ himself. You welcome people in, offer them water if they're thirsty, food if they're hungry. You serve them yourself, making sure they're treated like as guests should be, as if they were royalty.

World Communion Sunday started in 1933, as a way to unify a few churches. Then by 1936, a whole denomination participated, again for unity. And by 1940, churches across denominational lines and individual churches throughout the world all came together in Christian unity, as one body of Christ, all coming to one table, Christ's table.

Each time we come to the table we remember the passover feast on that Thursday in an upper room. Each time we come together we celebrate Christ.

I don't know about you and your dating life, but for me, most of my dating life has revolved around food. Actually most of my relationships, regardless the kind, revolve around meals and mealtimes. We'll go out for dinner, we might catch up at a coffee or tea shop, we might do brunch. Why? Because we take the time to get to know each other when we share a meal with someone. We listen to them, we share with them, we know each other.

The Old French literal translation of the word companion means 'one who breaks bread with another.'

That's what Jesus did. His companions, the disciples, joined him in that upper room. This whole table idea isn't new. As you heard when we walked through the book of Mark, Jesus loved sitting down and eating with people. Sharing a meal is one of the most normal yet intimate times we share with one another. This is one reason we intentionally provide opportunities for us, as church, to gather and eat. As silly as it may sound, we create potlucks and picnics and special events to provide more opportunities for table fellowship.

That table fellowship is one thing we need to always have. I think this church realizes the importance of eating together around tables. We have coffee fellowship after church each Sunday and even an extra coffee time on Tuesday mornings. No agenda, just time set aside to gather around tables.

When you first get here, and walk through the doors, what do you do? You look for your friends. You look for new friends. You are here to seek community. Each week we affirm that welcoming spirit, we affirm that Jesus is alive in us, working through us.

For Disciples gathering at table, is a vital part of our time together. We are known for our chalice. The symbol telling all how important we view Christ's table.

Everything we do when we gather together to worship leads us to the table. Our music, our scripture, our sermons, they lead us to Christ's table each week.

To find nourishment in each meal, each time we come to the table. It's a way for us to humbly accept an invitation we could never earn. It's a way we practice welcoming everyone. It's a reminder of our spiritual unity. The bond we have with Christ and with humanity is stronger than any one of us.

Remembering that this vital act is vital for all. All need community. All need welcoming. All need their faith reaffirmed. Yet not all are given this gift. My prayer is that there will be a day when everyone is given this gift of meeting Christ at the table. That the injustices of this world will cease. That communities of faith will all meet together to rejoice in the gift of being one in body and in spirit.

Sharing in communion, sitting at table with people who are more like us than we often see. People like us who are loving, kind, and welcoming, just as Jesus displayed table to us. This we do every time we gather at the table. Any table. A table in a home, in a church, at a restaurant, on a hillside, or in the middle of a jungle. This table that we celebrate is already out in the world. It's where we are. Wherever we are. It is always there, a table, a picnic blanket, a space for us to gather with others. It's in our homes, it's at our work, tables and spaces are everywhere.

A table of compassion and love for all the world. An invitation extended to all. Let us not be so immune to coming to the table, that we forget how exciting it is to be invited to the table.

You're invited. Won't you come, and sit at the welcome table?