

(PP1) The JESUS we never knew x40. Sunday 01st October_2017.

(PP2) Read: Luke 19: 1 – 10. Jesus eats with his disciples. Jesus and Zacchaeus.

AIM for this year and this theme: for each of us individually and together to become better friends with JESUS. That is the real Jesus – not the Jesus of sentiment or others invention. Aim to know both the historical Jesus and to know Jesus experientially now. To do this we need to be able to spend time with him relating.

Jesus spends time with his disciples not just teaching them with the parables of the Kingdom but also eating with them – often in their own homes. He wants also to spend time with us.

Any reading of the Gospel accounts will show that the sharing of food happens on many occasions in Jesus' public ministry. Human beings need the words from God's mouth but also bread to live. (Matt 4:4) "Bread" is more than daily fuel for our bodies. The sharing or breaking of bread together feeds our soul's needs as well as our body's needs. Jesus declared himself to be the Bread of Life (John 6: 27 fol) and he says that he "is the real bread from heaven (vv32 and 33) - he who comes down from heaven gives life to the world". (Come to Jesus, eat of Jesus and never be hungry, believe and never be thirsty).

Eating together "Jesus style" in itself causes us to worship and give thanks. We like him lift our eyes up to God together and acknowledge God's hand of provision and blessing. Everything we receive comes from God. We call it "saying grace" but in fact we are recognizing God's grace – God's gift to us. Just that simple act of lifting our eyes to heaven, breaking bread, thanking God and blessing the time together as companions is keeping us in touch with God.

The very first miracle of Jesus (John 2). Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding in Cana in Galilee involves a feast, a celebration and meeting with many others. It's an inaugural statement about Jesus. And the feeding miracles of Jesus (feeding more than 5,000 and more than 4,000) again shows Jesus' concern not just to teach the truth and open the people's minds to truth but to show his loving concern for the bodily and social needs of his disciples. When some accused him of being a "glutton and a drinker of wine" (Matt 11:19) and not an ascetic like John the Baptist he made it plain that there are times to feast and times to fast. His presence on the earth – the presence of the Bridegroom (Luke 5: 33 – 35) made it a time to not fast but celebrate. (The time to fast would come when he was no longer physically with them).

(PP3) In the meeting at the well in Sychar, Samaria that he engineered Jesus chose to ask this woman alone for a drink of water. As with his engineered encounter with Zacchaeus he chose to become a guest and therefore indebted to a sinful person. WHY? Because he wanted to meet with and offer relationship, friendship and even SALVATION to both the woman at the well and Zacchaeus in Jericho.

Jesus treasured his visits, his meals with his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 12) They and all those others who did the will of God became his family. In Bethany he also ate at the house of the healed leper, Simon. (Matt 26:6)

To be with Jesus. THOSE WHO LISTENED TO JESUS' CALL TO FOLLOW HIM WERE FIRST CALLED TO BE WITH HIM (Mark 3: 13, 14 & Matt 10:1) Need to be with Jesus before sent out.

The call to be with Jesus as I've said was not only to teach them but to eat with them and share with them in their context, Jesus taught them not just by what he said at these meals but also what he demonstrated e.g. at the "last supper" where he showed them that he loved them by washing their feet. At this meal he showed them by breaking bread and giving the cup of wine – as a New Covenant sign just what his love meant – how he loves us. (He taught them therefore that everytime or "whenever" they ate (bread and wine) to remember and give thanks for God's sending his provision of "bread from heaven" – Salvation in him, Jesus.

Jesus re-emphasized and expanded upon the Jewish idea of the great Wedding Banquet (Matt 22: 1 – 4) He extended the invitation to all (v9) – not least because so many in Israel declined to come. The feast of course symbolizes the coming of the Kingdom of God. He placed himself central to this great feast (Luke 14: 13 – 24) and also the need of followers to love and choose him before our own family, job and pursuit of wealth.

DISTINCTIVE: JESUS IS CALLING US INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND NOT JUST KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIM.

(PP4) This is very clear in his meeting with Zacchaeus. We are told the following things that were significant about Zacchaeus: -

- He lived in Jericho and was a Chief Tax Collector which meant that
- He was rich but consequently disliked by many who considered him a sinner
- He was very short but could climb sycamore trees
- He wanted to see Jesus!

We also learn some things of significance about Jesus: -

- He was discerning and observant to see Zacchaeus up a tree, apart from the crowd
- He took the initiative and invited himself to Zacchaeus' house
- He chose to meet some people and therefore make himself unpopular with others. They grumbled about Jesus...

- He knew what his life was all about. People said, “this man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!” (Guilty by association? Risk taking?) He declared (v10) “The Son of Man” has come to seek and to save the lost”.

People are lost (if they only knew it!) We need Salvation. This church is not for good people but people who know that we were lost until Jesus came and found us and saved us!

Was Zacchaeus’ salvation genuine? Jesus said, “TODAY Salvation has come to this house. This man is also a son of Abraham!” The evidence: -

- V6 Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus with great joy: though he was rich he knew he was spiritually poor.
- He declared publicly to Jesus: *I give half my belongings to the poor. (Would you do that?) And anyone I’ve cheated I’ll repay 4 times over.* So, he gave away and he gave back far more than the Law of Moses required. The Son of Man, Jesus found and rescued Zacchaeus that day and gave him his true identity.

Questions:

- Have you been found?
- Have you become a true child of God?
- Do you let Jesus come to your house and eat with you?

Response time – relaxing with Jesus – metaphor of settling in the arm chair – underneath are the everlasting arms.