

(PP1) The JESUS we never knew x42. Sunday 15 October_2017.

Read: Revelation 3: 14 - 22. Jesus wants to eat with his churches.

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. (We have been thinking about the metaphor of relating through eating with Jesus).

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. Here in Revelation 3 we hear the Spirit speaking to the Church at Laodicea. They have managed to shut Jesus out of the church and he says: ***Listen! (behold) I stand at the door and knock; if anyone opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they will eat with me. Rev 3:20.***

Any reading of the Gospel accounts will show that the sharing of food happens on many occasions in Jesus' public ministry. (Food is mentioned 90 times in the Gospels, and eating at least 109 times: *Rev Margaret Minnicks*). 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). **Jesus was labelled as someone who "ate with tax collectors and sinners"** – something that many people (Jesus' teaching on a brother or sister who sins against us - *Matt 18: 15 – 17*) thought holy people didn't do. He broke with custom and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink. Jesus encouraged hosts to include the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind among the guests (*Luke 14: 13*) – this has real relevance in his approach to the Christians at Laodicea since **he said that they were "poor, naked and blind" as well as being lukewarm towards God.**

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 every time 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. **So, Jesus literally ate with his disciples to enjoy their company and for them to get to know him. Jesus**

continues post resurrection to use the metaphor of eating with us – because getting to know us and us him resembles a meal.

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.

What It Means When People Eat Together

Eating is more than the consumption of food. People bond over meals. When you eat with someone, it says you are friends and that you share a common bond.

- Eating is a sign of rejoicing and celebrating.
- Eating is an opportunity to share not only food but conversations also.
- Fellowship is more special when it is done over a meal.
- Eating is a sign of contentment. Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon. He told them to build houses, and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produced (Jeremiah 29:5). Eating in this case, was a sign of contentment and peace.

The Laodicean Church (through the Spirit Jesus spoke to the churches of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) about their spiritual state as far as he saw it. John in exile on Patmos was commissioned to pass on these messages of Revelation. (Like Colossae it is in the Lycus valley – just 10 miles apart. PP Slide). The Risen Christ regards them as worthy of being spat out and yet he wants to be re-united with the people of the church. Jesus seems to prefer zealously hot or even coldly uncommitted but lukewarm NO. (The metaphor seems to have been drawn because the water supply to the city was lukewarm in contrast to the hot springs of the nearby Hierapolis and the cold pure waters of Colossae).

They seem to have **deceived themselves** about how they are with God. They are overconfident in their opinion of themselves and their spiritual performance. Self-deception is not difficult for any of us but it puts us in a precarious position spiritually. V17 They are boastful saying, ***I am rich, and well off; I have all I need.*** Jesus who is the “Amen – the faithful and true witness” speaks out what the church of Laodicea needs to hear. **TRUTH** as we shall discuss today (Mission Catalyst group) is often in short supply. In the world in which the church shares and witnesses to Jesus – BUT says Jesus it can also be in short supply in the churches, where we too can deceive ourselves. We too can be deaf to what Jesus is saying to us and blind to what he shows us. Verse 20 starts **“Listen” or behold: idou – Jesus is revealing the true** situation to those who have locked him out. Jesus is taking the initiative – he could force his way in -even the

gates of Hell can't prevail against him – but he is calling for response – he **knocks and he speaks** – but it appears no one is listening. He is talking to a collective local church but he is also appealing to anyone in the church, any person, any individual who hears him to open the door.

It is vital that we know our own “spiritual poverty” before Jesus. (*Luke 2: 52, 53. Magnificat and Matthew 5 Jesus*). Without a doubt God will lift up those who know that they are spiritually poor but take down those who are spiritually arrogant). Jesus counsels them as to how they need to change but he says that he **v19 rebukes and punishes – those he loves!** He is calling them to turn away from their failings and discover healing. (There is spiritual wealth, spiritual clothing and spiritual healing for all their arrogance and deception – **in Jesus** – get these things from me.

If you open the door (of your heart: center of faith and feeling) – if you undo the locks and turn the handle then I will come in and eat with whoever has answered my cry. Our relationship will be restored and we will enjoy richer fellowship says Jesus. **Listen** – are you feeling him knocking and are you hearing his voice – then open up, be prepared to change and admit your need, he knows your shame, he knows you have neglected loving him but he still loves you. He wants us to eat together with us. (We thought about this when he went up to Zacchaeus and called him down out of the tree so that he could go to his house and here it is again. Jesus “*eats with tax collectors and sinners*”). The Laodicean church – Jesus followers had locked Jesus out of his church by their arrogance and their lukewarm response. He still loves them but he doesn't want their lukewarm love and spiritual self-satisfaction.

Jesus loves us also and wants us to know him and love him deeply and intimately – with a passion. He wants us to be *earnest* and v21 to “*have the victory*” in our lives over those things which build up a barrier of sin: arrogant pride, and self-satisfaction. V21 He does not just want a deep relationship with us now but promises those who overcome that they will share with him, sitting alongside him in the future even as he rules in the heavens.

