

Week 5: P.U.L.E. - Eat (Table Value) - Pastor Theresa

February 1-2, 2025

Today, we're going to dive into the incredible power of the table as a place for connection, not correction. Throughout history and across cultures, the dinner table has been much more than just a place to eat; it plays a crucial role in building community, fostering trust, and developing relationships.

In the Bible, we see how Jesus often used meals to show grace, break down barriers, and bring people closer to God. The early church thrived by gathering in homes, sharing food, and enjoying each other's company. These gatherings weren't just about filling their stomachs—they were about creating a sense of belonging and strengthening bonds.

Whether it's at home with family or with friends, coming together around the table allows us to connect deeply with one another and experience the manifest presence of God. Today, we'll explore how sharing a meal can lead to spiritual growth and healing while inviting God's presence into our lives and communities.

Let's rediscover how breaking bread together can help us form meaningful connections and strengthen our sense of community. The enemy has torn us away from table time causing a sense of scattering and division within homes and communities. God is calling us to take back table time, by slowing down, clearing distraction and prioritizing this transformational time!

As always, we look to Jesus' example through the word to learn key principal of our table time. Let's first look at Matthew 9:10-13,

Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?" (Matthew 9:10-11 NLT)

Woah... that's kind of harsh! Scum is a strong word.

When Jesus heard this, he said, “healthy people don’t need a doctor - sick people do.” Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ for I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.” (Matthew 9:12-13 NLT)

From this story, the first principle, we learn is there is no room for judgment and a critical spirit at the table. Therefore,

1) There should always be an empty seat at the table.

What does that mean, an empty seat at the table. Simply stated, it’s an attitude that says, all are welcome because we are all sinners in need of a savior, can I get an amen. Not only are all people welcomed, all conversations are welcomed. Let people say whatever it is on their minds, because then you’ll know what’s in their heart. When you know what’s in their heart, then you know how to invite the Holy Spirit to bring healing and homeless into that person’s life.

With this kind of openness at the table, you create a sense of safety, transparency and vulnerability. Why is this so important? Because its in this kind of environment that one can receive truth, and be transformed.

Now remember, the table time is not just the time you share in your home with your family. It is to include when you make time to gather with others sometimes in your home, but also when you gather outside of your home. Jesus emphasizes and exhorts us in this passage that we should be open to all people. In one commentary it said that in every society, certain groups of people are considered “untouchables” because of their political views, their immoral behavior, or their lifestyle.

When Jesus said, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ Jesus, is making reference to Hosea 6:6, “I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings”

Jesus is speaking this morning, church. Let us have ears to hear! We should not give in to social pressure and avoid these people, but rather, show mercy, and dare to share with them the good news of the gospel. I know what you are thinking, but P Theresa when I share the good news they don't receive. And that's ok. You did your part of planting a seed. Now, continue to love them not their sin until another time arises to contend for truth in love.

Let's look at another story found in Luke 19:1-10 where Jesus shows this kind of love towards one that was considered untouchable, the worst kind of sinner,

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass the way. (Luke 19: 1-4 NLT)

Now many of you who had the privilege of going to children's ark are familiar with Zacchaeus' story and can probably sing songs about him. I'm sure what the kids remember most was that part that he was a little man who climbed up a tree.

However, I want us to focus on the significance of who he was and where he was. First Jericho was an important toll site in ancient Palestine. To finance their great world empire, the Roman's levied heavy taxes on all nations under their control. The Jews, of course, opposed these taxes because they supported a secular government and its pagan gods.

Regardless, they still had to pay their taxes. Tax collectors were like the scum of the earth to the Jewish people, because they were often Jews by birth who chose to work for Rome which made them known as traitors to their own people.

To make matters worse, it was common knowledge that tax collectors were making themselves rich by charging their own people, their fellow Jews, more than what was required so they could take their cut. Like Matthew, Zacchaeus would be considered the untouchables. Let's continue reading, in verse 5,

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" He said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." (Luke 19: 5 NLT)

I love this! Jesus just invites himself to Zacchaeus' house! Church, don't you know, that's what Jesus did with us? Sure, we invited him into our lives. BUT, He first chose to reveal himself to us and in essence said hey I need to come into your life! We simply like Zacchaeus said, ok, come on in! Hallelujah! Someone say thank you Jesus! Let's keep reading verse 6,

Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. 'He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,' they grumbled. (Luke 19: 6-7 NLT)

Church can I encourage you not to be moved by the murmurers. Instead, be moved by the Master to move out in HIS mercy. AMEN?!

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!" (Luke 19:8 NLT)

Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and [to] save those who are lost." (Luke 19: 9-10 NLT)

What an amazing transformation! In this story, we see a change of heart in Zacchaeus after being in the Lord's presence! Jesus acknowledges that He

has been saved. The evidence is in his total change of heart! Scripture tells us that where your treasure is, their heart will be as well.

Zacchaeus demonstrated inner change with outward action. Following Jesus in your head or heart alone is not enough. You must show your faith by changed behavior. Has your faith resulted in action? What changes do you need to make? When Zacchaeus gave half of his wealth, he was not talking about just his income but rather all that he had. One moment in the manifest presence of God caused a dramatic change in every area of his life. The second principle I want us to see regarding table time is...

2) At the table we invite the Lord's presence so that we can be transformed!

Although we said earlier that the table is a place of connection not correction, Jesus often showed that it can also be a place for instruction. The last Supper is a perfect example of this.

Jesus knew he was about to meet his time of death, and realizes he has to prepare his peeps for this time! Oh what to do, right? Well, he uses his table time to prepare them and teach them on things to come. NT Wright', from his book entitled *The Last Super: A Study of the Eucharist*, says it best,

“When Jesus himself wanted to explain to his disciples what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn't give them a theory, he gave them a meal.” - NT. Wright, *The Last Super: A Study of the Eucharist*

As we read through the account of the last supper, may our hearts be open to catch the heart of Jesus regarding the dinner table,

Luke 22: 14-30 NLT
The Last Supper

14 When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. 15 Jesus said, “I have been very eager to eat this Passover

meal with you before my suffering begins. 16 For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

17 Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. 18 For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come."

19 He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

20 After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.

Now, we are familiar with what's going on here. We just celebrated communion last week. So I won't go into explaining that today. What I want to focus on is context, read the room, what is the atmosphere right now. Can you imagine hearing the Lord say what he just said. Brother and sisters, this is some heavy stuff. He wouldn't be eating a meal with them again. His blood is going to be poured out. Needless to say it was getting serious.

21 "But here at this table, sitting among us as a friend, is the man who will betray me. 22 For it has been determined that the Son of Man must die. But what sorrow awaits the one who betrays him."

23 The disciples began to ask each other which of them would ever do such a thing.

Ok now it just got startling serious. Trust me. They aren't gathering around and being jovial. Although this is getting heavy, the deep connection, trust and relationship developed over that last several years could withstand this type of heavy conversation. None the less, it cause them to argue. Let's continue,

24 Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. 25 Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' 26 But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. 27 Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.

28 "You have stayed with me in my time of trial. 29 And just as my Father has granted me a Kingdom, **I now grant you the right to eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom.** And you will sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Final principle I want to highlight today,

3) We've been given the right to eat and drink at HIS table, let us come to him daily for connection and instruction!

- Where we are not criticized or condemned
- Where we can be transformed and changed
- Where we can receive truth and instruction

This is what His disciples did daily. After Jesus' death, they carried on the discipline of table time,

The worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47 NLT

In conclusion, the dinner table serves as a powerful symbol of connection, transformation, and instruction in our spiritual lives. With an attitude of

always welcoming everyone, we recognize that there is always an open seat at the table for anyone who seeks to join. We have been granted the incredible privilege of coming to His table every day, where we can freely eat and drink without fear of criticism or condemnation. It is here that we can experience genuine transformation and receive the truth and instruction we need for our journey. This practice was fundamental for Jesus' disciples; after His death, they continued the tradition of gathering around the table, worshiping together, sharing meals, and celebrating the Lord's Supper in homes. As they praised God and enjoyed the goodwill of their community, they exemplified how the table can foster joy and generosity. Their commitment to this sacred practice not only deepened their relationships with one another but also attracted others to their fellowship, resulting in a vibrant community of faith. Let us embrace this model, coming to the table daily, allowing it to change us, instruct us, and draw us closer to God and to one another.

OG Questions:

- 1) What was your experience with the dinner table growing up? How is it today?
- 2) What does it mean to that God wants you to show mercy not just give sacrifices? Who is the Lord calling you to love and show mercy to?
- 3) Is there an empty seat policy at your table? Why or why not? Who is the Lord asking you to sit with for table time fellowship?