

Living it out (Application):

Next week Lent starts. Why not accept the challenge to use your mealtimes as an opportunity to experience and share God's grace with others? Be intentional about the way you use mealtimes. Don't simply see it as refueling, but as an opportunity to share God's love. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. Sometimes you may want to make a special effort and celebrate the goodness of creation in a fancy meal. But most of the time it is just a question of sharing an ordinary meal with people. Invite members of your Christian community for your evening meal. Meet up for breakfast with someone on the way to work. Use lunch in the canteen to get to know your colleagues. If you're single, then entertaining families might be difficult, but invite them for dessert or cake. Try to invite unbelievers together with believers so your unbelieving friends are introduced to the Christian community.

Coming Up at St Mark's

Next Sunday we will be publicizing our **Lent Mission Course** – there will be opportunities throughout Lent at different times of the week for us to do kingdom activities together.



Please pray for...

Pray for **Tim and Jenny Chester** in this time of great sadness, that they will be strengthened by God's presence in their grief.

Continue to pray for **Monique Teo**, moving to India after many months to work with children involved in temple prostitution. Please pray for protection for Monique, and strength for the task.

Continue to pray for **Andrea, Di** and others in need of healing and strength at the moment.

Pray for our **pastoral care** – Alison Glover will share this Sunday about the recommendations of the Restoration subgroup as to how we can grow in being a caring, healing community.

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for **Ron and Jeanette Happ** who need to reapply for a work/study visa in Nepal, and ask us to pray for peace and grace.

Please do take the opportunity for more prayer requests/feedback - it's a wonderful way of sharing.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!



Services in church: 11am and 7.30pm. Communion, "ashing" and a journey of worship.

Worship:

At the beginning of Lent, spend 5 minutes praying the Jesus Prayer silently. It means just repeating this prayer slowly, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." Seek to become conscious of Jesus' presence as you pray.

The Way of Jesus 5: Reaching out: Sharing God with 5 senses

Briefly reflect on the main way God spoke to you through this Sunday's teaching:

2 Cor 5:16-21 & Luke 10:1-12 How do you experience God's love? How do you share God's love?

The film *Babette's Feast* tells the story of an 18th-century Christian community in Denmark that has lost its way becoming joyless and legalistic. Babette is a refugee from Paris who comes to live with two sisters. For 12 years she serves as their housekeeper, learning how to prepare their humble food. Then she wins Fr.10,000. (Each year a friend has renewed her Paris lottery ticket and this year the number has come up.) Babette asks if she can prepare a banquet for the community. She serves up course after course of the most exquisite food culminating in a dish of baby quail. A visiting general exclaims he has only ever tasted food like this at the famous Cafe Anglais in Paris. As the meal unfolds the community rediscovers joy - feuds are ended, sin is confessed. The evening ends with the community hand-in-hand around the village fountain singing the old songs of faith. Meanwhile the two sisters find Babette in the chaos of the kitchen. With a faraway look in her eyes she says, 'I was once cook at the Cafe Anglais.' 'We will all remember this evening,' the sisters say, 'when you have gone back to Paris.' But Babette will not be returning to Paris. She has spent all the Fr.10,000 on the feast. A lavish meal has bought transformation to a joyless community because it embodied grace.

We were created in the image of God, we created with 5 senses that enable us to experience the variety and beauty of God and the world he created. Whether it's a beautiful snow covered mountain-scape up in the dales, the crashing of waves on the seashore, the smell of freshly baked bread and freshly brewed coffee, the taste of freshly toasted muffins covered in melted butter and honey or the touch of.....**We were created to encounter his love in a multitude of ways - He made us that way.**

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 10th February 2013

At St. Mark's our vision is to 'inspire each other to love and follow Jesus Christ everywhere in everything'. Like Jesus our goal is to make disciples. Jesus strategy was to concentrate his energy on a small group of people, that they might become more like him and continue his mission when he had gone. At St. Mark's we place a strong emphasis on being in a small group or accountability group. These are places where we grow and are formed into the likeness of Christ.

Jesus' plan was to share his life with his followers, how did he do this? Read the gospel of Luke through and see how many times there are references to a meal, to eating and drinking. There are three ways in which the New Testament completes this sentence, 'The Son of Man came...' 'The Son of man came not to be served but to serve' (Mark 10:45) 'The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost' (Luke 19:10) 'The son of Man has come eating and drinking (Luke 7:34) Interesting isn't it the first 2 are statements of purpose and the **third is a statement of method – it's the how**. Jesus came eating and drinking.

Jesus didn't run projects, establish ministries, create programs or put on events. He ate meals. If you're routinely sharing meals and have a passion for Jesus, then you'll be doing mission. It's not that the meals save people. People are saved by the Gospel message. But meals will create natural opportunities to share that message in a context that resonates powerfully with what you're saying. **Meal times provide a place where people can encounter the love and grace of God in a tangible way**. The care with which they are welcomed, made to feel at home, providing a place where they belong. A place where interest and care are shown for the individual. A place where the host serves the guests, thinking of the needs of others. It is a place where love is encountered.

Meals enact mission. But they enact mission because they enact Grace. We don't know what Zacchaeus already knew or what Jesus might have said over the meal. But we know that the invitation of Jesus scandalised the crowd the invitation expressed God's grace, and God's grace transformed Zacchaeus's heart. Meals can be a visual representation of our hearts. If our hearts are concerned with position, honour, status or approval that will be reflected in our experience around the meal table. How do your meals express your vision for life? Think about who is invited? How they're served? The time you give to mealtimes? What you hope to achieve and the layout of your home? Do they express the vision of the kingdom of God?

Consider for a moment what happens at the feeding of the 5000. God gives out bread on a massive scale. Or think about the wedding at Cana. Jesus turns 450 to 700 litres of water into wine. Quality wine. At the beginning of the Bible story, the first thing God does for humanity is present us with a menu: 'The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man who he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food". At the end of the Bible story, God sets before us a perpetual feast. A banquet in the presence of God – it's a picture of the Kingdom of Heaven. God likes doing the catering. He thinks food is a good thing.

The point is that food isn't just fuel. It's not just a mechanism for sustaining us for ministry. **It's a gift, generosity, grace**. Jesus gave thanks and broke bread. In doing so, he affirms that food is to be received as a gift from God. Food matters as matter. It's a physical substance, and part of God's good world. **We're to embrace the world as it is-not simply as a picture of some other spiritual world**. Food is a central ingredient in our experience of God's goodness, not merely an illustration of God goodness, love and grace.

The other day I was at a meeting where everyone was asked to share their ideal evening, no limitations. Without exception everyone around the table said that it was basically good food, good, wine and good company. Some were more specific with the nature of the food or drink consumed. But all said it was about sharing a meal with people. It's not that surprising, in the Psalms it says 'Taste and see that the Lord is God'. In the Old Testament we see that the Jewish faith is based around meals. The Passover – the meal where the Jewish people re-enact the salvation of God's people as a way of remembering that Yahweh is their God and they are his people. It is about forming their minds and hearts as the people of God, a reminder of their identity and what God has done for them. Sabbath is celebrated by special meals and the reading of God's word. It's a place where God is learnt about and experienced, God made it that way.

When Jesus was about to leave his disciples – he gathered them together for a prayer meeting... sermon....a healing service... No he gathered them together for a meal. He said when you eat and drink do this in remembrance of me. Meal times are meant to be a time where we share fellowship with others. A place where we remember who we are and who God is, a place where we experience the grace and love of God in a tangible way. We experience God's love through the senses he gave us. **He created us to experience his love in our hearts not merely know of his love in our minds. It's the difference between information and formation**. Meals can often be occasions for disclosure. As we relax around the table, we share our hopes and fears and reveal something of our true selves. In Luke's Gospel the identity of Jesus is also revealed through meal we see things as they really are.

Think how different the dynamic is when we sit and eat with someone. We meet as equals. We share together. We affirm one another and enjoy one another. A woman said to me, "**I know people do a lot to help us. But what I want is for someone to be interested in us**". People don't want to be projects. The poor need welcome to replace their marginalisation, inclusion to replace their exclusion, a place where they matter to replace their powerlessness. They need community. They need the Christian community. It's then that they experience the love of God.

Study

Read Luke 10:1-12. In What sense was the harvest plentiful in Jesus day? Is it plentiful today? If so, in what way?

Read Luke 5:27-31. What was Matthew's response to Jesus? What is our response to Jesus?

Read Luke 14:1-12. What are the values of the Kingdom that are being expressed here? Are we like the Pharisee? If so, how?

Read Psalm 34:8. In what ways can we do this?